Crop production is of paramount importance to every person in every country. It is essential for life. Increased crop production will be necessary to provide food, feed, and fiber to the growing world population, which is projected to reach 8 billion by the year 2015. Research has increased crop production in some countries sufficiently to meet these expanding needs, but in others the needs exceed the available resources and often exceed the monetary ability to purchase food. With the interdependence of all countries of the world, a shortage or even a temporary surplus in some countries has repercussions in other countries.

Research priorities define which research projects will be addressed and assign a relative emphasis to each. The choice of projects and the amount of resources devoted to each directly affect the progress which can be made in maintaining and improving crop production. Careful determination of research priorities is necessary to obtain funding from local or national governments, bilateral agreements, international bodies, and donor agencies. Each of these entities mandate and, thus, priorities that determine which research projects will be funded and the regional allocation of support.

An international approach to priority setting is important. The breadth of experience and understanding possessed by individuals with diverse backgrounds and vast experience will bring together the wisdom necessary to delineate the goals that need to be achieved. Knowledge of how advances have been made in solving similar problems in other countries is vital in establishing economically feasible solutions.