



The Birth of CIMMYT: Pioneering the Idea and Ideals of International Agricultural Research

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Why Revisit CIMMYT's Birth?

- 1. Understand better the long and complex process of creating CIMMYT**
 - Rockefeller Foundation program in Mexico but much more
- 2. CIMMYT's gestation provided the foundations for the idea of international research and its ideals**
 - Closely related to the birth of IRRI and CIAT (and later the CGIAR)
- 3. Many lessons still relevant today**
 - e.g., the first CRPs in maize and wheat pre-date CIMMYT!



Pre-WWII—All Research Stands on the Shoulders of Predecessors

Wheat

- Successful programs in India, Kenya, Argentina
- Informal exchanges

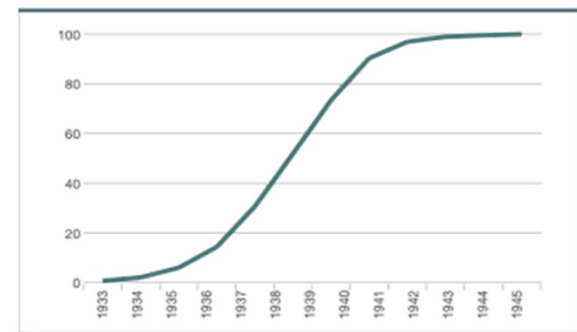


Maize

- Hybrid maize in US in 1930s
- Subtropical/tropical programs in Brazil, Cuba, Zimb from 1930s

But few developing countries had effective food crop research pre-WW1

Figure 3. Adoption of hybrid maize, Iowa, United States (percent area).



Post-WWII Focus on Food and Hunger Issues

The “population monster”

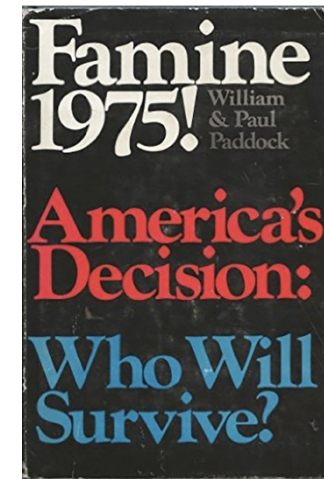
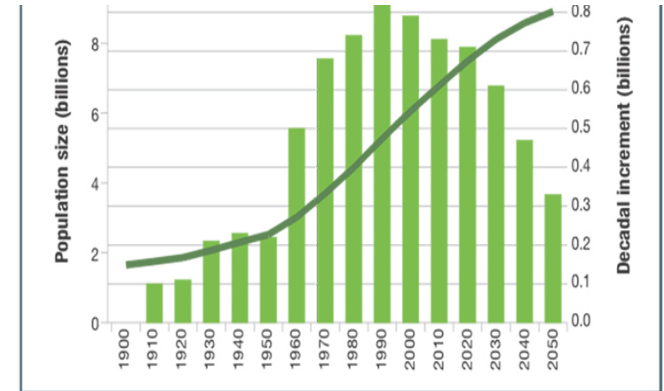
- Added 22 M/yr in 1940s to 50 M/yr in 1960s

Declining per capita food prod. in Asia

- Dire predictions of famine in Asia

Mobilization to eliminate global hunger

- 1943 1st world food congress call for zero hunger
- 1959 FAO Freedom from Hunger Campaign,
- 1963 Rockefeller F—Conquest of Hunger,
- 1966 USA—War on Hunger



Mexican Agricultural Program

1940 – Visit of USA VP Henry Wallace

1941 – Survey Commission

- Bradfield, Stakman and Mangelsdorf

1943 – Office of Special Studies (OEE)

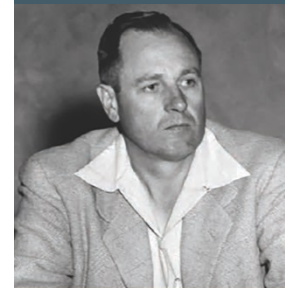
- Wheat and maize research initiated

1940s & 1950s - Addition of other crops, livestock, soils, etc.

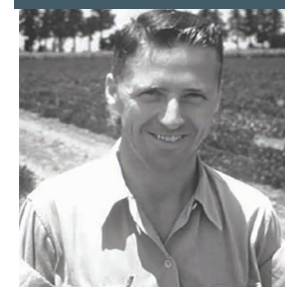
- Up to 18 RF staff and 100 Mexican staff



George Harrar (1906-1982)



Edwin Wellhausen (1907-2001)



Norman Borlaug (1914-2009)



Dorothy Parker



Eva Villegas



Other Rockefeller and Ford F. Country Programs

- **1950 – Colombian Agricultural Program**
 - Maize, Wheat (moved to Ecuador in 1965)
- **1955 – Chile Agricultural Program (wheat)**
- **1957 – India Agricultural Program**
 - Maize 1957, Wheat 1964
 - Key input into CIMMYT leadership and fame
- **Late 1950s – Support to Kenya maize and wheat**
- **1965 – Pakistan Wheat Program of Ford Foundation**
- **1965 – Egypt Maize Program with Ford Foundation**



Legacy of the Country Programs – Ideals of International Research

1. Clearly focused with a strong results orientation
2. Integration of disciplines into single crop programs (except social science)
3. National coordination of separate programs to enhance efficiency
4. Integration of research and capacity development
5. International exchange of germplasm, knowledge and people
6. Global public goods—maize germplasm bank from 1940s
7. Independence of scientists from bureaucracy and politics

Initiation of Regional Networks, 1950s

1952 -- USDA Int. Wheat Rust Nursery

- 40 countries in 1963 (35 yrs)

1952 – FAO Near East Wheat & Barley Improvement Program

- Libya to Pakistan (30 yrs)
- RF Wheat partnership from 1961

1954 – RF Central American Cooperative Maize Improvement Project

- PCCMCA now in 62nd year

1963 – RF Inter-Asian Corn Program

1963 – USAID/USDA African Major Cereals Program (maize)

Ideals Developed

- Free sharing of germplasm and knowledge
- Systematic testing across diverse sites
- Creation of ‘social capital’ among scientists
- Value of central hubs for economies of size



The Idea of International Research, 1950s

George Harrar, RF

- “Mexico should ...eventually result in an international integrated program of free exchange of materials, information and personnel... toward the goals of greater food production”. (1951)
- “If agriculture is to be improved throughout the world, then agricultural science will have to be placed on a truly international basis.” (1953)

1955—Proposal for IRRI considered

- 1960—Agreement on a ‘greenfield’ center

1959—Inter-American Maize Improvement Program

- Informal links to Asia and Africa

1960—Inter-American Wheat Improvement Program

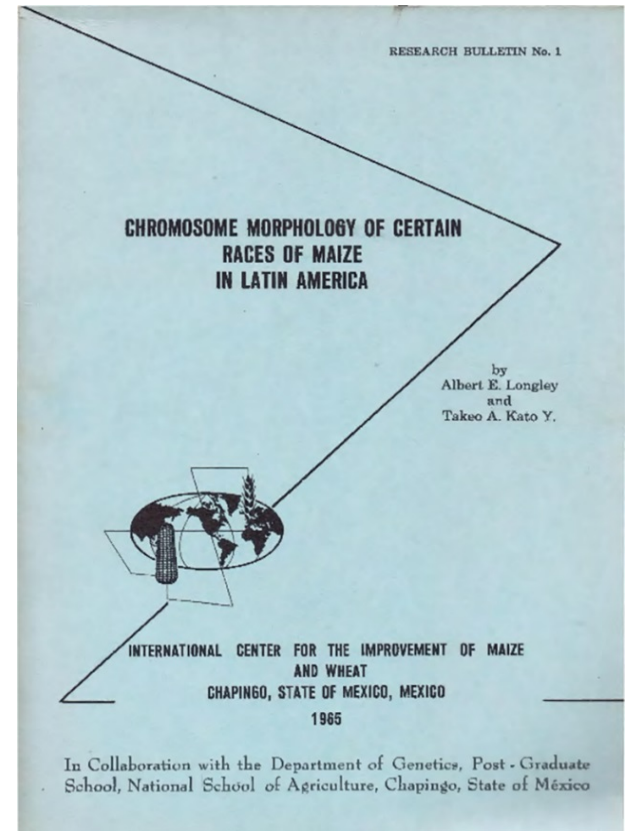
- International thru FAO partnership

1961—INIA Mexico (now INIFAP)



From RF Country and Regional Programs to CIMMYT

- **1963 - CIMMYT Version 1**
 - Cooperative program of RF and Chapingo institutions
 - No legal status--even name varies (IMWIC)
- **1966 – CIMMYT Version 2**
 - Legal non-profit organization
 - Ford Found. as a donor
 - Board presided by SAG and RF President
- **1971 – CIMMYT Vers 2.1**
 - Board chair elected
- **1988 – CIMMYT Int**



CIMMYT 1966 as a Merger of Many Programs

Wheat

- 2 regional programs
- 4 country programs
- Partnerships with FAO, USDA and Ford

Maize

- 4 regional programs
- 2 country programs
- Partnerships USAID/USDA and Ford

Table 2. Regional and country programs inherited by CIMMYT, 1966-67.

	Maize	Wheat
Regional programs	Central American (Chapingo, Mexico) Andean Zone (Bogota, Colombia) Southeast Asia (Bangkok, Thailand) East Africa (with USDA) (Kitale, Kenya) West Africa (with USDA) (Ibadan, Nigeria)	Near East (FAO lead) (Cairo, Egypt) Andean Zone (Quito, Ecuador)
Country programs	Mexico (Puebla Project) Egypt (Ford Foundation)	Chile India Pakistan (Ford Foundation)



Debates on The Role of the Smallholders

Big question -- Would smallholders adopt the new technologies?

- Mexico—failed to reach the 2 M rainfed smallholders
- Myrdal, 1966, *Asian Drama* -- "cultivators are so many and so tradition bound"
- India 1969—concerns of benefits to large farmers (David Hopper)

Irrigated South Asia

- "Finally, the fears voiced by many critics on the non-receptivity of the traditional farmer to new technology....have been quietly laid to rest in the ashes of the flaming success of the two past harvests." CIMMYT 1968/69

Rainfed maize successes – Kenya, Thailand.

El Salvador--Jesús Merino Argueta

- No degree but defied convention on hybrids for smallholders
- Strategic partnerships with private seed, extension & Catholic Church



Reflections on Relevance for Today's CGIAR Challenges

- **Founders poorly articulated impact pathways to solving hunger**
 - Have we got the right balance between focus on marginal farmers vs market-oriented farmers for urban poor in different contexts?
- **CIMMYT 1966 maize and wheat programs were very much like today's CRPs**
 - Global integration of programs requires strong leadership and long-term core funding
- **Partnership with national systems a balance between complementary capacity, building capacity and substituting for weak capacity**
 - Are we creating again the Oficinas de Estudios Especiales?
 - How to build more demand-driven programs with more co-financing by NARS (as envisaged in 1955!)



Core Lessons of International Research Developed Over 50 Years Ago Were Remarkably Sustainable

- High returns to investing in International Public Goods
- Huge benefits of international collaboration in science and free exchange of materials, knowledge and people
- Key role for global and regional hubs
- Need for strong results orientation focused on improving welfare of humankind
- Importance of long-term stable funding for high quality science





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**Thank you
for your
interest!**

