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## AKSTing for trouble?

*A 2500-page assessment of the future of agriculture is missing one vital component: research*



The draft report from the first **International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD)** was released last month after the group's final plenary session in Johannesburg. Patterned after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (whose insightful analysis took global warming out of the realm of fuzzy speculation and linked it squarely to human activities), the IAASTD report hopes to do something similar for agriculture: Get the whole world talking about better ways to safely raise and distribute food for a population that's on track to increase to 9 billion in the next 50 years.

AVRDC staff could recite the report's key findings without ever having read them. The report recommends creating opportunities for poor farmers; integrating

indigenous varieties and traditional knowledge; including social scientists in the development of agricultural policy; strengthening the role of women in agricultural communities; promoting nutrition and health; and protecting the environment through smart, safe production technologies.



IAASTD's emphasis on the needs of smallholders and the landless, food security, trade, the environment, and human health represents a significant and welcome departure from the usual approach of one-size-fits-all scientific solutions to complex agricultural problems.

More than 400 authors wrestled with a mandate to "reduce hunger and poverty, improve rural

livelihoods, and facilitate equitable, environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development through the generation, access to and use of agricultural knowledge, science and technology (AKST)." In the process, they also tangled with each other. Participants were drawn from industry, government, NGOs, and consumer groups, and many found themselves ideologically at odds with their fellow drafters.

Some just couldn't play well with others. Representatives from Monsanto and Syngenta quit the assessment because they felt it had been hijacked by opponents of genetically modified crops; detractors accused them of abandoning the process in hopes of discrediting it. The report's somewhat dim view of agricultural research in general prompted the Alliance Executive of the CGIAR to submit a letter of concern to the IAASTD bureau. CGIAR, however, elected to remain a part of the assessment, and welcomed the report's emphasis on involving farmers in research.

Oddly, a chapter on how to help developing countries conduct their own agricultural research was dropped from the report. *Science* magazine quoted a World Bank representative who served as an IAASTD administrator as saying

*(Continued on page 2)*

**IAASTD cont'd**

no one on the drafting team had the proper expertise to craft appropriate recommendations for research. One wonders where future AKST will come from, if not from research?

Despite the bumps on the road to consensus, IAASTD chair Robert

Watson believes the assessment will bring much-needed attention to the rural poor and to the “multifunctionality” of agriculture – an activity that not only produces food, fuel, medicinal products, and ornamentals, but is also an integral part of landscapes and cultures. As projects like the Vegetable Breeding and Seed Systems for Poverty

Reduction in Africa (vBSS) show, AVRDC is well positioned to lead as agriculture evolves.

Read more:

IAASTD – [www.agassessment.org](http://www.agassessment.org)

Dueling visions for a hungry world. *Science* 319: 1474-76

## The LIBRARY

### New publications

#### ...from Center staff

Juroszek, P., Ledesma, D., Ma, C.H., Yang, R.Y., Lumpkin, H.M., Lin, C.C., Tsai, H.H., Wu, D.L., Hanson, P.M., Palada, M.C. (2008). Plant vigor and yields of organically and conventionally grown tomato crops in Taiwan. *ACTA HORTICULTURAE*. no.767:257-265.

Juroszek, P., Lumpkin, T.A., Palada, M.C. (2008). Sustainable vegetable production systems. *ACTA HORTICULTURAE*. no.767:133-149.

Palada, M.C., Wu, D.L. (2008). Evaluation of chili rootstocks for grafted sweet pepper production during the hot-wet and hot-dry seasons in Taiwan. *ACTA HORTICULTURAE*. no.767:151-157.

Chadha, M.L. (2007). Background and future research and development directions in South Asia. In: *Vegetable research and development strategies for alleviating, hunger, malnutrition and poverty in South Asia*; Proceedings. Patancheru, Hyderabad : AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center, Regional Center for South Asia. p.2-6.

Engle, L.M. (2007). Procedure for prioritization of indigenous vegetables germplasm for conservation. In: *Vegetable research and development strategies for alleviating, hunger, malnutrition and poverty in South Asia*; Proceedings. Patancheru, Hyderabad : AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center, Regional Center for South Asia. p.95-99.

Palada, M.C., Ma, C.H., Juroszek, P., Luther, G.C. (2007). Research and development activities in the crop and ecosystem management unit at AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center: relevance to RCSA. In: *Vegetable research and development strategies for alleviating, hunger, malnutrition and poverty in South Asia*; Proceedings. Patancheru, Hyderabad : AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center, Regional Center for South Asia. p.100-125.

Sun, Z.Y. (2007). Future direction of cucurbit unit at AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center. In: *Vegetable research and development strategies for alleviating, hunger, malnutrition and poverty in South Asia*; Proceedings. Patancheru, Hyderabad : AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center, Regional Center

for South Asia. p.131-138.

Yang, R.Y. (2007). Nutrition research focus at AVRDC. In: *Vegetable research and development strategies for alleviating, hunger, malnutrition and poverty in South Asia*; Proceedings. Patancheru, Hyderabad : AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center, Regional Center for South Asia. p.126-130.

#### Web Link of the Week

**OISAT – Online Information Service Non-Chemical Pest Management in the Tropics**

“OISAT Info” is a web-based information tool offering trainers, extension workers and farmers quick access to up-to-date information for their work. It’s useful for organizing agricultural learning processes to minimize pest damage in a safe, effective and ecologically sound way. The “OISAT PartnerNetwork” is a platform for information sharing that integrates online information into training and extension services.

<http://oisat.org/home.html>

– Fang-chin Chen/Communications

## CORNUCOPIA

### Layers of resilience



*“Vulnerability to Climate Change: Adaptation Strategies and Layers of Resilience” workshop participants, ICRISAT, India*



*Dr. William D. Dar, Director General ICRISAT (left) and Dr. Dyno Keatinge, Director General, AVRDC-The World Vegetable Center*

DG Dyno Keatinge participated in the project inception workshop “Vulnerability to Climate Change: Adaptation Strategies and Layers of Resilience” at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) headquarters from 7-9 May. Sponsored by the Asian Development Bank, the workshop drew participants from India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

(ICIMOD). Resilience involves viewing any enterprise as a dynamic, evolving system closely connected to other social, environmental and economic systems; to survive, a resilient system finds ways to continuously adapt to changing conditions.

– Dr. Dyno Keatinge/Director General

### Mosquito Control

Mosquito insecticide spraying for residential & FDS areas will be conducted next Friday, 16 May. TSO gardeners will begin spraying at 1300 hours. Your attention will be much appreciated.

技術服務科園丁將於下星期五（5月16日）下午一點進行中心住宅及餐宿區蚊蟲噴灑作業。請多加留意！

– Janice Chou/TSO

### Penghu Fireworks Festival



Be dazzled when the 2008 Penghu Fireworks Festival kicks off this Saturday, May 10.

To mark the sixth anniversary of the island festival, the event will open with a special "Martial Divine Palanquin" ceremony to bring good fortune. The festival features two fireworks displays every week (on Wednesdays and Saturdays) from May 10 to June 7. Special evening festivities are scheduled for May 24 and May 31 at the Guanrih Recreation Area in Guoshu Village, Husi Township and the Cross-sea Bridge in Baisha Township. Watch the night light up over the sea and experience Penghu's island charms!

[tour.penghu.gov.tw/2008\\_fire/about.html](http://tour.penghu.gov.tw/2008_fire/about.html)  
[eng.taiwan.net.tw](http://eng.taiwan.net.tw)

「2008 澎湖花火節」將於5月10日正式展開，為期一個月至6月7日，同時為慶祝花火活動六週年，將以澎湖傳統祈福儀式「武轎」為活動展開序幕；花火施放場地由馬公市觀音亭園區（5月10、14、17、21、28日以及6月4、7日）延伸至白沙鄉跨海大橋（5月31日）、湖西鄉果葉村觀日遊憩區海堤（5月24日），共規劃了九場的海上火光；綻放小島熱情，並展現各地鄉土、傳統文化活動。

歡迎熱愛澎湖的朋友，能在徐風搖曳的天人菊下，恣意的徜徉在夏豔陽光的潔白沙灘上，享受今夏海島多采多姿的樂水體驗。

– Communications

## PEOPLE

### Welcome...



**Dr. Jürgen Anthofer** has been appointed as Portfolio Manager of the Global Horticulture Initiative

(GlobalHort) for an initial period of two years, effective 5 June 2008. His appointment was arranged and co-funded with CIM – the Center for International Migration and Development of Germany under their Integrated Experts Program.

His duty station is at the GlobalHort Secretariat in Arusha, Tanzania.

Jürgen received his Ph.D. in Agricultural Sciences from the University of Hohenheim, Germany in 2005. His work experience spans more than ten years in international research and development in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Jürgen will manage and coordinate the core activities of GlobalHort. He will assist and second the Executive Secretary in the management of the Secretariat.

He will also be in charge of the development of the GlobalHort portfolio, securing and increasing its resources and its funding capacity.

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– *Lilia Tan Habacon,*  
*Human Resources Manager*

## SKETCH



**Name:** Franziska “Franzi” Beran

**Home:** Berlin, Germany. Second home: Humboldt Universitaet zu Berlin.

**Position:** Ph.D. candidate working in the Entomology Unit under the supervision of Dr. Srinivasan Ramasamy.

**Why you do what you do:** I became interested in how plants defend themselves from pests, and I wanted to investigate plant-pathogen interactions at the molecular level.

**Why you do it at AVRDC:** AVRDC offers training in a multidisciplinary and multinational tropical environment. My Ph.D. supervisor in Germany worked at AVRDC some years ago and helped set up an internship for me to study basic techniques in chemical ecology. Aside from professional reasons, the opportunity to spend time in a country that differs culturally from Germany challenged me.

**Research:** The role of secondary metabolites in plants, such as glucosinolates and phenolic

compounds, intrigues me. I want to know if they can be used to control pests like the striped flea beetle, which does so much damage to Brassica crops, especially in the tropics and subtropics. I help to develop and evaluate different management techniques based on host plant volatiles and the aggregation pheromone.

**What’s next:** I’ll return to Germany in June to identify and structurally characterize the compounds I’ve researched here. Then I plan to finish the research for my Ph.D. in the next two years, and work on improving my English and Spanish language skills.

**Favorite Taiwan experience:** From my European eyes the food options are sometimes “interesting.” After I saw a mother and her daughter dissecting a snake 11 a.m. at the farmers’ market in Madou, I preferred to just drink water for lunch!