

HARVEST CHOICE

Better Choices, Better Lives



The poor and hungry in developing countries rely heavily on agriculture as both a livelihood and as a means of meeting basic food needs. In many countries, growth in farm productivity has raised the incomes of rural households and helped fuel broader economic growth which in turn, has further reduced poverty and hunger. But this important pathway of economic growth has eluded substantial parts of the developing world—sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia in particular. Research shows that insufficient and erratic investment in developing and commercializing relevant public and private technologies, as well as in improving rural infrastructure and human capacity are key causes of stagnation in agriculture. But, even as the commitment to confront these difficult issues grows, there remain a multitude of questions concerning how much to invest, where, and in what.

In its new Global Development Program, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has recognized the vital role and potential of agriculture by making Agricultural

Development a primary investment target. The Foundation is establishing new partnerships and initiating grants as part of its own learning about a number of investment areas including; crop improvement, greater smallholder access to inputs and markets, and advocacy for improved policies that focus on

agriculture. In part, this learning seeks to identify best-bet investments that will improve crop productivity and commercialization so as to reduce poverty and hunger. To this end, the Foundation has made a \$3.7M grant, managed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), for a 39 month project

HarvestChoice undertakes broad-ranging evaluations of technologies and rural strategies to inform policy and investment choices designed to raise the productivity of the agricultural systems most beneficial to the poor

jointly implemented by the Global Food Systems research program of IFPRI and the Center for International Science and Technology Practice and Policy (InSTePP) at the University of Minnesota. Echoing its central theme the project was launched as the HarvestChoice initiative in October 2006.

Over the coming three years, HarvestChoice and its growing number of partners will deliver a series of databases, tools, analyses, findings, and syntheses designed to improve strategic investment and policy decisions. The

overriding objective is to accelerate and enhance the performance of those crops and cropping systems most likely to bring significant benefits to the world's poor and undernourished. To achieve this goal HarvestChoice will generate new information on:

- the **location** of the poor and undernourished in relation to major crop production systems
- the **dependence** of both urban and rural poor on specific crops and crop products
- the **incidence and severity** of major production constraints such as drought and disease in focus crops and locations
- the potential **benefits** to the poor from alleviating such constraints
- an **inventory** and characterization of existing and prospective technologies that might help address prioritized constraints
- an **economic evaluation** of the potential crop production, consumption, price, and trade, as well as the likely hunger and income consequences of a range of technology scenarios, and
- the potential **commercialization** challenges that promising technology options might face.





The core geographic focus of HarvestChoice is sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, but analyses and outputs will be undertaken at a broader scale where, for example trade and technology spillovers are of relevance. More in-depth, sub-national assessments will also be carried out as required to refine our understanding of the potential poverty and nutrition outcomes of alternative technical or policy options. The initiative will make extensive use of literature reviews, household surveys, geographical information systems (GIS) based data sets and analytical tools, crop growth simulation methods, and a suite of spatially disaggregated multi-market and economy-wide models.

HarvestChoice is establishing an independent advisory panel to provide counsel and guidance on implementation and outreach, and is currently engaging with a range of relevant partners. The Statistics Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is one such partner, with interests in strengthening the quality of and linkages among international, national and sub-national crop-related statistics. Discussions are also well advanced with numerous research scientists and development undertakings, including; the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and sub-regional science and research organizations, the Gates and Rockefeller Foundations' joint initiative on the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), and the African Union's agricultural development plan (CAADP) within the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

ADVISORY PANEL

This group of eminent individuals provides counsel and guidance to the initiative.

Richard Jones

Deputy Director, ICRISAT

Andrzej Kilian

Director, Diversity Arrays Technology (DArT)

John Lynam

Chairman, Kilimo Trust

Edie Paul

Principal, GENEFLOW

Emmy Simmons

former Assistant Administrator, USAID



HARVESTCHOICE

**Philip Pardey, InSTePP,
University of Minnesota**
ppardey@umn.edu

Stanley Wood, IFPRI
s.wood@cgiar.org

www.harvestchoice.org (web site coming soon)