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An Inventory of Agricultural Biotechnology for the Eastern and Central Africa Region

Prepared for ASARECA & the Africa Bureau of the United States Agency for International Development

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Introduction

Objective

The objective of this report is to examine the current status of agricultural biotechnology for priority crops in the Eastern and Central Africa region. It should be noted that this report is in no way exhaustive. Progress in the field of agricultural biotechnology is very rapid, and there may be work in both the public and private sector that is unpublished and/or unreported. However, it is hoped that the major areas of progress in the major crops have been covered to give an idea of the scope of current work, and more importantly, the future potential of the tools of biotechnology for the improvement of crops that are of importance to Africa.

This report follows on from an earlier document, *Considering Biosafety and Biotechnology from an ASARECA Perspective: Assessing the Feasibility of a Regional Initiative on Biotechnology for Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa*, a study by The International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR), commissioned by ASARECA and funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development's Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project (ABSP) at Michigan State University.

Organization of the report

First we will discuss the scope of this report, then give a brief background to the techniques of agricultural biotechnology and their potential with particular reference to African agricultural systems. The bulk of the report will focus on the current developments in biotechnology for specific priority crops in the ASARECA region, a list of currently available transgenic varieties of each crop, and a brief discussion of the potential of biotechnology for addressing the specific production constraints of that crop.

Scope of the report

In many ways agricultural biotechnology is still in its infancy, but from some of the achievements that have already been made, it is possible to envisage the possible future advances that can be when the currently available technology is applied to crop varieties of importance to Africa. Much of the preparatory work has already been done in the developed world by the public and private sector, and now the benefits of this basic work can be adapted and applied to crops that are a priority in African agricultural systems.

It is important to note that this report does not analyze the availability of any one technology *vis a vis* intellectual property rights (IPR). Any use of a particular technology will always require an analysis of its IPR status and potential negotiations with the owners of the technology. Additionally, this report does not discuss regulatory issues surrounding the implementation of biotechnology-derived products (e.g. 'biosafety').

As is clearly stated by Ives & Wambugu (1999), African policy makers and scientists will need to understand the IPR issues in reference to proprietary technologies in order to access technologies both from private and public intuitions. As with collaborations with industry, any collaboration with advanced laboratories in the public sector in biotechnology will also require negotiation. This does not mean that technology cannot be accessed, but that arrangements will be more formalized with legal agreements developed to oversee the transfer of research tools, collaborations and materials.

In both developing and developed countries the safe application of biotechnology to problems of agricultural productivity requires an appropriate system ('biosafety') that encompasses both policy and regulations. Companies or collaborative research programs seeking to produce genetically engineered crops for developing country needs are reluctant to operate in the absence of a regulatory structure. A well-designed biosafety policy will ensure the safety of human health and the environment without restricting innovation or product development. Biosafety policy should address national policies in agriculture, food safety and environmental protection, and establish the scope of guidelines or regulations. The regulations should address the scientific and technical issues and describe procedures for safe handling of genetically engineered material in the laboratory, greenhouse and field. Some kind of regional approach to a biosafety regulatory system, with individual countries retaining the right to make the final decision, has been proposed for Africa.

As can be seen from the lists of transgenic crops in this report, products produced using the tools of modern biotechnology are now commercially available in a number of countries around the world. Because of the nature of the industry thus far, many of the commercially available transgenic crops listed are of direct applicability for the countries for which they were developed i.e. primarily the temperate climates of Northern Europe and North America. Many will not be appropriate for Africa, but some may be (e.g. some of the insect resistant maize and cottons). Others will have traits that may be of applicability in Africa, but in a genetic background that is not adapted to local growing conditions, or in a variety that would not suit local taste preferences. In such cases adaptive research is needed to insert the desired trait into local adapted and improved varieties, or indeed into other crops where the trait might be of value. However, some of the commercially available traits may not be seen to be a priority in the developing world (e.g. the development of potatoes with different starches that absorb less fat in frying may not be as high a priority in Africa as in the developed world).

In this report we have focused primarily on the ASARECA priority crops, but related advances in some other regionally important crops are also included.

Background

World wide the beneficial economic impact of plant biotechnology has so far been almost exclusively on crops of high economic importance in developed countries such as maize, canola, soybean, and potato. Other species, important to the developing countries of Africa, have not attracted the interest of the multinational seed and biotechnology companies primarily for financial reasons. Commercialized world crops are not as important in Africa, since most imported lines or cultivars are inappropriate for local conditions. These crops varieties may be expensive and need high inputs, and be susceptible to local pests and diseases. The result is that genetic and biotechnological improvement of these 'neglected' food species is confined to local and specialized research at specific crop centers within those countries at the International Agricultural Research Centers, and/or in specific collaborations with Agricultural Research Institutes (ARI's) in the developed world. However, there is a growing emergence of African biotechnological expertise that has been nurtured by several recent international initiatives (see list in Brink *et. al*., 1998)

The potential of agricultural biotechnology

Between 1996 and 1998, eight countries, five industrial and three developing, have contributed to more than a fifteen-fold increase in the global area of transgenic crops (James, 1999). In 1998 the global area of transgenic crops increased to 27.8 million hectares from 11.0 million hectares in 1997. Only five major crops planted in just eight countries make up most of this area. The five principal transgenic crops are (in decreasing order of area) soybean, maize, cotton, canola/rapeseed, and potato. Transgenic soybean alone makes up over 50% of this acreage. The most common transgenic trait is herbicide resistance (71%), followed by insect resistance (28%). In 1998 the United States had the greatest percentage of the global area of transgenic crops (74%), followed by Canada (19%), Argentina (15%), Australia (1%), Mexico (<1%), Spain (<1%) and France (<1%).

The goals of agricultural biotechnology are essentially the same as those of conventional plant breeding, with one or two exceptions. In general terms these goals fall into two major categories: improving crop performance in the field (so-called input traits), and developing new products with enhanced quality or value (output traits). So far most commercially grown transgenic crops are those with input traits, but in the next few years the commercial release of many more crops with output traits are anticipated. These goals include:

- ***Increased resistance to pests and diseases – insects, viruses, fungi, nematodes etc.***
- ***Increased tolerance of environmental stresses -- drought, flooding, soil acidity and alkalinity, heavy metals and extreme temperatures.***
- ***Increased yield.***
- ***Reduced post-harvest losses.***
- ***Improved nutritional content of foods and feedstuffs.***

A combination of conventional breeding and biotechnology mean that genes introduced into one variety by genetic modification can often be moved into 'elite varieties' (highly productive, and commercially successful varieties), or locally adapted varieties within economically viable timeframes.

One of the major advantages of plant biotechnology is that it can generate strategies for crop improvement that can be applied across many different crops. In this sense, genetically engineered virus resistance, insect resistance, and delayed ripening are good examples – transgenic plants of over 20 plant species that are resistant to more than 30 different viral diseases have already been produced by using different variations of the pathogen-derived resistance strategy. Insect-resistant plant varieties, using the δ-endotoxin of *Bacillus thuringiensis*, have been produced for several important plant species including tobacco, tomato, potato, cotton, walnut, maize, sugarcane, and rice. Of these, maize, potato, and cotton are already under commercial production. It is envisaged that these strategies can be used for many other crops important for developing countries. Genetically engineered delayed ripening, although tested so far only on a commercial scale for tomato, may also have an enormous potential application for tropical fruit crops, which suffer severe losses because they ripen rapidly, and in many developing countries there are neither appropriate storage conditions nor adequate transportation systems to allow their efficient commercialization.

In a recent study commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation (*Biotechnology for African Crops,* 1999) the authors noted that crop production in African countries is usually constrained by incidence of pest and disease, poor soil conditions, and abiotic stress factors such as drought and heat. These constraints were grouped into the following major categories:

- Propagation – lack of clean planting material
- General - technology development or germplasm conservation
- Disease - viral, fungal, bacterial
- Insect pests
- Weeds
- Abiotic stress - drought, heat, nitrogen deficiency
- Quality - yield or nutritional content

The Tools of Biotechnology

Biotechnology is the name that has been given to a very wide range of agricultural, industrial and medical technologies that make use of living organisms (e.g. microbes, plants or animals) or parts of living organisms (e.g. isolated cells or proteins) to provide new products and services. Although the term biotechnology refers to a much older and broader technology than genetic engineering, the techniques of genetic engineering are of such importance that the two terms have become virtually synonymous.

Biotechnology can be defined as 'making use of the natural processes or products of living things'. Some uses of biotechnology, such as wine, bread and cheese making, have gone on for thousands of years. Biotechnology is used in many different ways, from sewage treatment, to food and drink and pharmaceutical manufacturing. These applications of biotechnology include:

- **medical biotechnology** e.g. using microorganisms such as bacteria or fungi to make antibiotics or vaccines.

- **industrial biotechnology** e.g. using microorganisms to make enzymes to add to biological washing powders, or to produce beer or cheese or bread, to make vitamins or calorie-free sweeteners.

- **environmental biotechnology** e.g. using microorganisms or plants to clean up land or water polluted with sewage or toxic industrial waste (bioremediation).

Biotechnology does not necessarily involve transgenic technologies, or genetic engineering *per se*, but these techniques can be used to make entirely new or improved products -– this is often referred to as so-called '*modern biotechnology*'. Most of the current public concern is addressed towards 'modern biotechnology', because the use of genetic engineering allows the movement of genes in ways that could not have been easily accomplished previously (e.g. across species barriers). Less controversial biotechnology techniques commonly used in agriculture include tissue culture, genetic markers, and DNA-based diagnostics.

This report will focus primarily on transgenic technologies, although where these are less developed for a particular crop we will refer to other applications of molecular biology that are currently being applied. A brief explanation of these techniques follows:

Tissue culture

Plant tissue culture is the cultivation of plant cells or tissues on specially formulated nutrient media. Under appropriate conditions, a whole plant can be regenerated from a single cell, permitting the rapid production of many uniform plants. Tissue culture is now recognized as an essential tool in modern plant breeding and since it was first developed the early 1960s, plant tissue culture has become the basis of a major industry, providing high-value plants for nurseries. It is also an effective method for producing plants that are free from many diseases, particularly viruses.

Molecular markers

Although genetic engineering receives much attention, of as much significance is the application of molecular markers and genetic mapping to plant breeding. Molecular markers are identifiable DNA sequences, found at specific locations of the genome. They may differ between individuals of the same population. Different classes of markers exist, such as Restriction Fragment Length Polymorphisms (RFLPs), Amplified Fragment Length Polymorphisms (AFLPs), Randomly Amplified Polymorphic DNA markers (RAPDs) or microsatellites. By determining the location and likely action of many plant genes, conventional plant breeding can be conducted with greater precision, as it becomes possible to detect quickly and accurately those plants which carry desirable characteristics.

Molecular markers can be used in plant breeding in several ways:

> *Marker-assisted selection* is the use of markers to increase the response to selection. A quantitative trait (i.e. one such as fruit yield that shows continuous variation and cannot be classified into a few discrete classes) is usually controlled by many genes, called quantitative trait loci (QTL). By using molecular

markers closely linked to, or even located within, one or more QTL, information at the DNA-level is used directly and selection response can be increased.

Marker-assisted introgression, where markers are used to increase the speed or efficiency of introgression (i.e. the introduction of new gene(s) from a population A to a population B by crossing A and B and then repeatedly backcrossing to B). Introgression may be of interest, for example, when wishing to introduce genes from wild relatives into modern plant varieties.

Studies of genetic diversity and of taxonomic/phylogenetic relationships between plant species or between populations (or varieties) within species.

Studies of biological processes, such as mating systems, pollen movement or seed dispersal, and of the genetic mechanisms behind physiological traits.

Diagnostics

The first step towards controlling a plant disease is to be able to detect it, and also to identify the disease-causing organism as early as possible so that appropriate treatment can be used. However, many diseases are easily identifiable by eye only when it is already too late to prevent major damage to the crop. The development of diagnostic methods and easy-to-use kits for plant diseases has been a major breakthrough in limiting crop damage. Such kits have been developed for use both in the laboratory and in the field. Diseases that are caused by microorganisms can be diagnosed by identifying a unique feature of the organism, such as its genetic material (DNA) or a specific protein.

Genetic engineering

Genetic engineering, ‘genetic transformation’ or ‘genetic modification’ is the modification of genetic material (DNA) by artificial means. It relies upon the ability to isolate specific stretches of DNA using enzymes that cut DNA at precise locations. Selected DNA fragments can then be transferred into the cells of the organism. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are those that have been modified by the application of recombinant DNA technology (where DNA from one organism is transferred to another organism). The term "transgenic crops" is also used for genetically modified crops, where a foreign gene (a transgene) is incorporated into the plant genome.

This process can be achieved in several ways, the most common of which is to use the soil bacterium *Agrobacterium*, as a go-between. This bacterium has a natural ability to alter the genetic material of plant cells so that outgrowths (or galls) are formed on the plant. This mechanism has been adapted so that instead of the genes for producing galls, desirable genetic information can be transferred into plants. The *Agrobacterium* method has been used successfully with a wide variety of plants, with the exception of the most important cereal crops.

Ballistic or biolistic impregnation is the method used for cereals and some other crops. It involves attaching the DNA to be introduced into the plant onto minute gold or tungsten particles, then firing these (like bullets) into the plant tissue. A proportion of the plant cells treated in this way take up the DNA from the metal pellets, and whole transgenic plants can then be re-grown from these cells by tissue culture.

Biotechnology for Africa

The countries of sub-Saharan Africa still depend largely on agriculture for their economic prosperity and the welfare of the people. According to Ndiritu & Wafula (1998) current agricultural production efforts and strategies are unable to cope with the demands for food and rising population in the region. They state that research and development incorporating innovative technologies, such as biotechnology is urgently needed if the decline in agricultural production is to be reversed. Today over 180 million people in sub-Saharan Africa live below the poverty line and the number is expected to exceed 300 million by 2020. Food insecurity in Sub Saharan Africa affects health and nutrition, resulting in poor maternal health, high malnutrition in children and poor productivity.

While world food production has continued to increase over recent years, per capita production in sub-Saharan Africa declined by 20% from 1961-1986 and this trend appears to be continuing. There are two principal ways of increasing agricultural output – to expand the land under cultivation, or to intensify production on land already under cultivation. The first is not desirable in terms of conserving land and natural resources; therefore increase of yield per unit area is the only practical solution to increasing food production. Ndiritu and Wafula (1998) assert that this can only be achieved through 'science-based' rather than 'traditional' agriculture, and that biotechnology when applied appropriately offers this possibility without some of the adverse effects that can be associated with intensified agriculture.

Ives and Wambugu (1999) agree with this conclusion, stating that Africa largely missed the Green Revolution that helped Asia and Latin America to achieve self-sufficiency in food production, but it cannot afford to miss another global technological revolution such as agricultural biotechnology. Africa's crop production per unit area of land is currently the lowest in the world (e.g. the production of sweet potato is 6 tons/ha in Africa as compared to the global average of 12 tons/ha, and the average yield of maize in Africa is 1.7 tons/ha) as compared to a global average of 4 tons/ha, forcing the continent to import 25% of its grain needs.

Crops produced using the tools of modern biotechnology are now commercially available in a number of countries around the world. There are already products in commercial production that could be easily adapted for use in Africa (e.g. insect resistant maize) with the potential to increase yields significantly. In other cases, traits that have already been developed to address production constraints would need to be adapted to be appropriate to the different conditions in Africa (e.g. genes for insect resistance would need to be inserted into improved locally adapted African maize germplasm, or virus resistance adapted to include locally present strains). In addition to the adaptation of important input traits, Africa could benefit greatly from output traits (e.g. nutritionally improved staples such as rice and sweet potato). Certainly within the commercial agricultural biotechnology sector the value-added or output traits are now receiving more research attention – traits such as vegetable oils with less saturated fat, and enriched with beta-carotene (a precursor of vitamin A.). The commercial agricultural biotech industry appears now to be in the process of moving away from input traits such as virus and insect resistance in the direction of these types of output traits.

Priority crops and constraints

In the recent survey commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation (1999) it was reported that applications of agricultural biotechnology are already being used to address some of the major crop constraints in Africa. The Rockefeller Foundation chose six target crops for their study: maize, sorghum, cassava, yams, bananas, and cowpea – all staple crops. In the study, however, fifty national research institutes from nine different countries (only three of which were in the ASARECA network) were asked to focus on their six target crops, and their responses included a total of 45. These included export crops such as fruits and vegetables, coffee and other cash crops (cocoa, tea and cotton), root crops (potato and sweet potato), cereals (teff, millet, and barley), and legumes (groundnut and soybean). The report did not focus on research crops or targets of interest specifically to ASARECA, nor did it examine crops or technologies in advanced laboratories that may be suitable for adaptation for countries within the ASARECA network. This inventory specifically addresses interests of ASARECA members, using its priorities linked to ongoing research and/or available products in other parts of the world.

The ASARECA commodity research priorities as set in 1995 are given in the table below.

Table 1. ASARECA Research Priorities. Source: ASARECA, 1995.

1	**Maize**
2	**Beans**
3	**Sorghum**
4	**Banana**
5	**Soil and water**
6	**Soil Fertility**
7	**Dairy**
8	**Wheat**
9	**Beef**
10	**Potatoes**
11	**Coffee**
12	**Sheep & goats**
13	**Cotton**
14	**Rice**
15	**Forestry**
16	**Cassava**
17	**Socio-economics**
18	**Groundnuts**
19	**Citrus**

N.B. In this list, maize, sorghum and banana are the only commodities that overlap with the priority list produced by the Rockefeller Foundation.

The Rockefeller study found that a limited number of viruses, diseases and pests figure prominently in the research activities identified. Biotechnology and in particular tissue culture techniques are already providing opportunities in the propagation of disease-free planting material in the region. A wide range of biotechnology tools is already available for application in crop improvement programs especially those related to tissue culture, micropropagation, and molecular markers. Currently however, genetic engineering is being much less widely applied and is primarily in the experimental stages with many of the priority crops. In many cases national capacities and resources are severely limited and spread over perhaps too wide range of crops. One recommendation of the Rockefeller Foundation study was therefore to focus any future support in the area of agricultural biotechnology towards *"a limited number of priority crops, clear objectives, and institutes with the capacity to undertake advanced research.*"

African agricultural production is constrained by a number of biotic and abiotic factors that include shortage of arable land, poor availability of water, declining soil fertility, limited access to costly farm inputs, limited technological base as well as agricultural pests and diseases. While increases in agricultural productivity in the past have relied on expansion of land under cultivation, such land is no longer available in most regions, and techniques to improve yields are considered to provide the best hope for the principle food crops. Studies of African rainfall have shown a progressive dry trend, and although the causes of frequent droughts across Africa are largely unknown, the fact that agricultural growth is severely constrained by extensive and severe rainfall shortages cannot be overlooked. The problem of drought in many parts of Africa is often compounded by low soil fertility, particularly in semi-arid zones where soils tend to be sandy and prone to erosion and degradation. Such soils lack important nutrients like sulfur and phosphorus and have low organic matter content. Agricultural production in most parts of Africa thus requires capital-intensive chemical fertilizer inputs. Most farmers cannot afford these inputs and apply sub-optimal amounts that lead to further problems.

The devastating effect of pests and diseases in African agriculture is reflected in the amount of resources spent by farmers on their control. In Kenya in 1995 farmers spent approximately US $4.5 million on insecticides, US $10.5 million on fungicides, US $0.3 million on plant hormones and US $33 million to control livestock pests and diseases (Ndiritu, 1999). Many studies have shown the enormous crop and livestock losses that are a result of pre and post-harvest pest and disease. The issue of pest and disease resistance is therefore of crucial importance to Africa.

Any debate on biotechnology for Africa must therefore be considered in the context of the continent's need for more food and the survival of its people. Biotechnology-derived solutions for the biotic and abiotic stresses mentioned above, if built into the genotypes of plants and animals could reduce the need for, and the high costs of agrochemicals and water as well as the negative effects of diseases and weeds thus promoting sustainable agricultural production.

In this report we will focus on the ASARECA priority crops, mentioning others where they are of particular importance or where there has been particularly rapid progress in biotechnology research. We will not address issues of livestock except to mention briefly animal health issues as they relate to the production of transgenic vaccines.

Many of the ASARECA networks are already involved in aspects of biotechnology ranging from the production of tissue culture planting materials, the use of molecular markers and DNA-based diagnostic tools to more advanced transformation research in collaboration with the CGIAR centers and other ARI's. These various activities are reported in the document *Assessing the Feasibility of a Regional Initiative on Biotechnology for Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa* (ISNAR/UNDP/USAID), and will not be described here in any detail.

Biotechnology inventory of ASARECA Priority Crops

Maize *(Zea mays L.)*

Background

The ASARECA network responsible for both maize and wheat is **ECAMAW** (Eastern and Central Africa Maize and Wheat Research Network). Worldwide, maize is grown at latitudes varying from the equator to slightly above 50 degrees north and south, from sea level to over 3000 meters elevation, in cool and hot climates, and with growing cycles ranging from 3 to 13 months. It is grown in more countries than any other cereal and it is the third most important cereal crop in the world, after wheat and rice. Developing countries account for sixty-four percent of the world's maize area and 43 percent of global maize production.

Maize is the principle food staple in the ASARECA region, dominating the diets of rural and urban poor. *Per capita* maize consumption ranges from 28 kg/year in Uganda to over 120 kg/year in Tanzania. It often provides well over 50% of staple calories. Maize is grown on more than 7.0 million ha annually in the region. Yields are low, fluctuating around 1.5 t/ha. Maize ranks first in Ethiopia in total production and first in Kenya for yield per hectare. It is the most important food crop grown and consumed in Tanzania and Kenya. It is grown almost exclusively under rainfed conditions from sea level to 2,400 meters, and although production technology varies greatly, it is largely traditional, resulting in low productivity in most zones except the transitional highlands. There is little evidence of sustained growth in yields. The area planted to improved varieties as a percentage of total maize area in 1996 varied from 2% in Tanzania to 56% in Kenya. Of this only 1% was hybrid in Tanzania and up to 52% of hybrid use in Kenya. Improved varieties were grown on 8% of maize area in Ethiopia and 70% in Uganda.

Maize dominates smallholder-farming systems within the region, largely because of high intra-regional transport costs and a strong preference for white-grained maize. Some improved varieties are available for most production zones, but the gap between their genetic potential and the yields obtained can be as much as 8 t/ha. Given the large area planted to maize and the number of farmers involved in maize production, the development and adoption of improved technology has significant potential to elevate income and help the region become sufficient in basic grains. It is estimated that 40% of all maize produced in the region is sold by the farmer. Given the importance of maize as a food and cash crop in the region, maize was identified as the number one priority for regional research by ASARECA.

Two of the CGIAR research centers have responsibility for maize -- the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) in Mexico and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria. Their research priorities are:

- Developing drought-resistant maize varieties (In 1991-92, drought destroyed two thirds of southern Africa's maize harvest).

- o Improving and disseminating maize varieties which they have developed with resistance to maize streak virus and downy mildew, major diseases of the crop in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, respectively.
- o Finding ways to control *Striga,* a parasitic plant causing US $7 billion of losses to global agriculture and a major crop pest in sub-Saharan Africa.

CIMMYT considers drought, low soil fertility, insect pests, *Striga* and maize streak virus to be the major constraints to maize production in Africa, but their relative importance varies between regions and agroecologies. Drought has its most severe effect on maize production in East and Southern Africa, and in addition the adverse effects of Striga are exacerbated by drought. Insect pests such as stem borers are more of a threat to production in the humid regions.

ECAMAW research priorities for maize are:

- o low yield potential
- o foliar diseases
- o drought-tolerance
- o stalk- borers
- o maize streak virus
- o poor soil fertility (low Nitrogen)
- o storage pests
- o weeds (particularly *Striga*)
- o termites

Current biotechnology products and projects

- ♦ **Insect resistant maize (*CIMMYT and the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, Kenya*).** A project is underway to develop enhanced insect resistant maize varieties by combining host plant and biotech-produced mechanisms. Expected to have materials with Bt resistance to stem borer to be tested in the field within the next couple of years.
- ♦ **Striga resistance (*CIMMYT and the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, Kenya*)**. A project focused on developing effective strategies to reduce *Striga* infestations on maize. A number of approaches are being followed, one of which currently involves using low-dose herbicide seed treatments of herbicide-resistant maize. So far, this has been non-transgenic, but they are looking at the possibilities of developing herbicide-resistant varieties via genetic engineering. Expected to have materials that could be tested in the field within the next couple of years.
- ♦ **Insect resistant maize (*Agricultural Genetic Engineering Research Institute, Egypt & Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc, USA).*** Corn Borers (*Sesamia cretica, Ostrinia nubilalis, Chilo agamemnon)* are serious insect pests in much of the corn growing area of Egypt and are responsible for significant loss of yield. This project is introducing Bt gene(s) which are known to code for proteins that are lethal to lepidopteran species into Egyptian commercial .maize varieties.
- ♦ **Apomixis (*CIMMYT, ORSTOM*)**. Research is underway to develop plants with apomixes – asexual reproduction through seed. This results in plants identical to the parent, which would mean that would mean that farmers could replant seed from their own harvests of high-yielding varieties and hybrids each year instead of having to purchase new seed.

- **Resistance to maize cob rot (*Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research – Foodtek, South Africa*).** Maize genetically transformed for resistance to maize cob rot (*Stenocarpella maydis*), a serious fungal pathogen.
- **Transformation of local maize varieties. (Department of Microbiology, University of Cape Town, South Africa).** Development of techniques for reliable regeneration and transformation of local maize varieties from embryogenic callus.
- **Herbicide resistance (Department of Microbiology, University of Cape Town, South Africa).** Development of transgenic maize transformed with bar gene for bialaphos (herbicide) resistance.
- **Resistance to Maize Streak Virus (*Department of Microbiology, University of Cape Town, South Africa*).** Development of transgenic maize with resistance to maize streak virus (in progress).
- **Rust resistance (*Dr Scot Hulbert, Kansas State University, USA*).** The gene for rust resistance caused by *Puccinia sorghi* has been cloned from maize and engineered back into maize. It also gives some resistance to Southern rust (*P. polysora*). Greenhouse trials and underway and field trials planned in 2001.
- **IMI-CORN®** (***American Cyanamid***) Introduced in 1992, imidazolinone-tolerant and -resistant corn allows growers to apply the flexible and environmentally friendly imidazolinone herbicides to corn. Registration of LIGHTNINGTM herbicide, a new imidazolinone specifically for use on IMI-CORN®, was approved by the EPA on March 31, 1997. One postemergence application of LIGHTNINGTM herbicide provides both contact and residual control of broadleaf and grassy weeds resulting in maximum yield potential.
- **LibertyLink® Corn** (***AgrEvo)*** Introduced in 1997 in the United States and 1998 in Canada, LibertyLink® Corn allows growers to apply Liberty® herbicide over the top during the growing season. Liberty herbicide kills over 100 grass and breadleaf weeds with no crop injury. LibertyLink® Corn hybrids are offered by seed company partners like Pioneer, Novartis, Cargill, Garst and over 100 other seed companies. Liberty® herbicide is offered by AgrEvo.
- **DeKalBtTM Insect-Protected Hybrid Corn** (***DeKalb Genetics***) - Approved in 1997, select DeKalb leader hybrids are now available with built-in protection against the European corn borer.
- **DeKalb Brand Roundup Ready® Corn** (***DeKalb Genetics***). Approved in 1998, DeKalb offers several elite hybrids with resistance to Roundup UltraTM herbicide.
- **DeKalb GR Hybrid Corn** (***DeKalb Genetics***). Approved in 1996, DeKalb GR hybrids provide growers the added weed control benefits of over-the-top glufosinate herbicide application during the growing season.
- **High pH Tolerant Corn Hybrids** (***Garst Seed Company***). These corn hybrids are capable of growing successfully on the severely alkaline soils that characterize the western U.S. corn belt.
- **Gray Leaf Spot Resistant Corn Hybrids** (***Garst Seed Company***). Corn hybrids tolerant to the disease Cercospora spp., which attacks corn hybrids in the Central and Southeastern corn belts.
- **G-StacTM Corn Hybrids** (***Garst Seed Company***). Corn hybrids featuring "stacked" genes providing multitask capability. For example, hybrids that contain genes for the control of European corn borer (B.t.), genes for resistance to Liberty® herbicide and genes for resistance to imidazolinone herbicide all in the same corn hybrid.

- **Roundup Ready® Corn (*Monsanto*).** Approved in 1997 Roundup® Ready Corn allows over-the-top applications of Roundup® herbicide during the growing season for superior weed control.
- **YieldGard™ Insect-Protected Corn (*Monsanto*).** The YieldGard gene provides control of the European corn borer throughout the corn plant during the season.
- **NatureGard® Hybrid Seed Corn (*Mycogen*).** These corn plants express a Bt protein toxic to European corn borer that reduces or eliminates the need for insecticides.
- **IMI-Corn (*Mycogen*).** Corn hybrid that can tolerate application of imidazolinone herbicides.
- **NK Knockout™ Corn, NK YieldGard™ Hybrid Corn, Attribute™ B.t. Sweetcorn (*Novartis Seeds*).** Novartis seeds has produced several corn varieties that have been modified to provide natural protection against certain pests.
- **SeedLink Corn (AgrEvo).** These plants provide a more reliable pollination control system for corn seed production. The use of the SeedLink System eliminates the need for hand or mechanical detasseling. Availability expected within 6 years.

Prospects

Maize has been one of the most intensely studied crops at the genomic level largely because of the heavy involvement of private sector companies and the enormous market potential of maize in the developed world. Molecular techniques are now routine in maize breeding or are on the verge of soon being utilized in the public sector. Maize stands out as the crop that is most often subject to advanced biotechnology applications such as genetic markers and genetic engineering. From the list above it is obvious that there are numerous efforts underway in maize biotechnology that are of direct interest to ASARECA; i.e. soil fertility, virus resistance, weeds, and borers. If appropriate partnerships can be generated, adaptive research could be conducted to develop African maize varieties with biotic and abiotic improvements. This would likely require partnerships with private sector companies or advanced research institutions that currently hold much of the transgenic technology for maize.

Bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*)

Background

The ASARECA Network responsible for bean is **ECABREN** (Eastern and Central Africa Bean Research Network). Bean is a major staple food, being the second most important source of human dietary protein and third most important source of calories in the region. Over three million hectares of beans are grown annually in the ASARECA region. The principal producing countries are: Burundi, Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Madagascar. Bean provides 60% of dietary protein in Rwanda and in much of the region is the principal source of dietary protein for the urban poor. In the widespread maize-based cropping systems of mid-altitude areas of eastern and southern Africa, beans contribute up to 30% of dietary energy.

Bean consumption in the ASARECA region exceeds 50 kg per person per year in some places and as high as 66kg in rural districts of Kenya.

Worldwide phaseolus bean, or common bean, is the world's most important food legume. Farmers grow common beans in two forms, as dry beans and snap beans (the green pods are consumed as a vegetable). Latin America produces nearly half of the world's supply of dry beans. Brazil, Mexico, and Central America are the major producers in this continent. Africa is considered to be a secondary center for bean genetic diversity, where women on small farms are the primary bean growers. Farmers plant about 3 million hectares of beans annually in eastern, central and southern Africa, usually as a mixture of varieties. Estimated global production of dry beans is approximately 18 million metric tons annually, with a market value of US $10.7 billion. Dry beans account for 57 percent of the world's food legume production, having twice the production and market value of chickpeas, the next leading food pulse. Another 3 million metric tons of snap beans are also produced annually. Nearly 80 percent of dry bean production occurs in the developing countries on small-scale farms.

Beans are nutritionally rich, especially in protein and iron, along with being a good source of dietary fiber and complex carbohydrates. Given their nutritional quality and high consumption levels, beans make an important contribution to human nutrition, especially for poor consumers. In addition to high quality protein, a single serving (1 cup) of beans provides at least half the USDA-recommended daily allowance of folic acid and 25-30 percent of the daily-recommended iron levels, 25 percent of the daily requirements of magnesium and copper, and 15 percent of potassium and zinc.

In Africa bean production is divided between two major agroecological zones: highlands above 1500 masl (meters above sea level), and mid-elevation (1000-1500 masl). A further 3% of the bean area is in the lowland zone. Both principal production areas have high population densities. Women are primarily responsible for smallholder bean production. Part of the intercropped bean harvest may also be exchanged by poorer rural families to make up for insufficiency in production of the maize staple. Bean is important for small farmers for cash generation, both for total farm income as well as for providing a marketable product at critical times when farmers have nothing else to sell. The importance of bean as a marketed crop ranges from less than 20% marketed in some densely populated areas to more than 90% marketed by small scale producers in the Rift Valley of Ethiopia. Recent surveys in Uganda show that many households sell beans after harvest to meet household needs, and later repurchase beans for food. Increased production accompanied by improved storage would raise both income and food security. Although the major bean market flows are within countries, there is also considerable cross-border trade to satisfy urban demands. Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda and Sudan are net importers, whereas Tanzania and Uganda are major exporters to these regional markets.

In the past decade bean research in Africa has emphasized variety development and soil improvement for overcoming production constraints at small-scale farmer level in highland production areas. Although yields in Africa have increased modestly during recent years, the rate of increase in bean production still lags behind population growth. Full realization of the crop's potential to combat hunger and poverty in this region requires a major research effort aimed at overcoming the constraints of low soil fertility, drought, and major diseases and insect pests. Bean is well adapted to intensification of land use through doubling cropping. It is quick growing and shade tolerant and is often used in intercropping systems. Two or three crops can be grown annually in many areas. Another opportunity for intensification is through increased cultivation of climbing beans in the East African highlands. Current efforts to breed climbing bean lines with tolerance to warm temperatures may broaden their range of adaptation.

Beans are an attractive crop for farmers, because of its adaptability to different cropping systems and short growing cycle. The disadvantage, however, to the bean plant is its susceptibility to many diseases and climatic stresses. Some diseases affecting bean production are angular leaf spot, rust, common bacterial blight, bean stem maggot, bean common mosaic virus and bean golden mosaic virus. Moreover, about 60 percent of bean production in developing countries suffers from low soil phosphorus availability.

Average bean yields in Africa are low, with low levels of external inputs. Experimental yields commonly exceed farmer production by more than 100% (i.e. by one tonne per hectare).

The major biotic and abiotic constraints to bean production in the region are:

- *Diseases*
  - Angular leaf spot
  - Anthracnose
  - Root rots
  - Common bacterial blight
- *Insect pests*
  - Bean stem maggot
  - Bruchid
- Nitrogen & Phosphorus Deficiency
- Drought

Low soil N and P availability can potentially be managed with inorganic and organic fertilizer use, accompanied by varieties efficient in nutrient use. While local varieties tend to be susceptible to many of the biotic constraints, increasing availability of multiple resistant or tolerant varieties to the biotic stresses is expected to increase the use of inputs in favorable environments and lead to substantial rises in productivity.

A contrasting situation is presented by snapbean production where input use (pesticides) is currently excessive and threatens exports. These producers urgently need genetic resistance to rust and pest management techniques for stem maggot and thrips. Developing new varieties resistant to major diseases namely rusts and common blight will be necessary to reduce chemical use and increase sales. In recent years root rot diseases initially observed in the Great Lakes region have spread to high potential areas of bean production in Central and Eastern Africa, particularly Western Kenya and SW Uganda.

CGIAR's Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT) holds the global mandate for bean research. In partnership with national agricultural research systems and regional networks, CIAT works on increasing bean productivity in several regions through cultivar development and management practices. In addition, CIAT maintains the largest global collection of bean germplasm and related species.

ECABREN is currently collaborating with ARI's on projects using molecular markers to characterize bean germplasm, and also diagnosis and characterization of bean pathogens.

Biotechnology products and projects

- **Drought resistance (*Centre for Tropical Agriculture, CIAT, Colombia*).** Transfer of drought tolerance from tepary to Phaseolus bean (genetic exchange between different species) assisted by molecular markers is part of the bean improvement program.
- **Resistance to bean golden mosaic geminivirus (*Dr Doug Maxwell, University of Wisconsin, USA & Dr Josias de Faria, EMBRAPA, Brazil*).** Transgenic Phaseolus beans have been developed to express viral antisense RNAs and show delayed and attenuated symptoms to bean golden mosaic geminivirus. This virus causes serious losses particularly in Latin America and is transmitted by whitefly vectors.

Prospects

Biotechnology has not yet had much success with *Phaseolus* bean. Beans have proved to be notoriously difficult to transform and consequently there has been little progress with transformation strategies. The first report of successful transformation of bean was in 1993, but since then remarkably little seems to have been achieved with this crop. Some transformation work has been carried out for virus resistance, but not necessarily on viruses of importance in Africa.

Therefore, while an important priority crop for Africa, bean biotechnology is still in the early stages and is unlikely to produce results within a 5-year time frame. The most promising target for transformation would be the use of previously isolated Bt genes against insect pests. However, reliable transformation and regeneration systems for bean need to be further developed before such techniques can be effectively applied. Research into drought resistance is still in the very early stages, and although an important goal, is also unlikely to be achieved in the near term.

Sorghum

Background

The ASARECA network responsible for sorghum and millet is **ECARSAM** (the Eastern and Central Africa Regional Sorghum and Millet Network). Sorghum and millet form basic staple food in the east and Central African region and are mainly cultivated by small farmers. Sorghum and millet are consumed in many forms of which the most common are leavened bread, porridge, and both non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages. ASARECA has ranked sorghum third in a list of regional agricultural research priorities after maize and beans. Sorghum is the fifth major cereal crop in the world after wheat, rice, maize and barley. It is also grown in the United States, Australia, and other developed nations for animal feed. Sorghum is an annual grass that is particularly adapted to drought prone areas, is a crop of hot, semi-arid tropical environments with 400 - 600 mm rainfall-areas that are too dry for maize. Sorghum is also found in temperate regions and at altitudes of up to 2300 meters in the tropics. In 1996, the global area harvested to sorghum was about 47 million hectares (24 million of which were in Africa). Total sorghum production for the same period was 69 million metric tons. Sorghum originated in North East Africa where a large variability in wild and cultivated species is still found today.

In Eastern and Central Africa, sorghum is grown on approximately 10 million ha and millet on over 3 million ha. Yields are generally very low and the bulk of production is used for food, forming the staple cereal in Sudan, and an important component of the diet in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda. Small quantities are used for animal feed and industrial production. Approximately 60% is consumed at farm level and 40% is sold in local markets. Only Sudan exports sorghum (<5% production), whereas Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya are also importers. The whole region is a net importer of sorghum to the extent of 350,000 tons annually.

The major constraints to increased production and utilization of these cereals are generally common to all countries of the region. Both national and international programs have been involved in breeding work to produce improved sorghum and millet cultivars, crop production research to identify improved agronomic and crop protection practices, and research on processing and utilization of grain. Substantial numbers of improved cultivars have been developed, however there has been so far little impact on farmers fields. **ECARSAM** aims to encourage the adoption of new technologies (improved cultivars, crop protection and fertilizer use), and to stimulate the use of grain in small-scale processing. The network also aims to support ongoing research work to develop new technology, particularly in the area of integrated management of *Striga*, pests and diseases.

ECARSAM research priorities include:

- management of *Striga*
- variety development
- pest resistance -- stem borer, shoot fly, midge
- disease resistance -- charcoal rot, kernel smut, rusts, ergot
- acid soil tolerance

Next to marginal agricultural land and drought, insect pests are a primary constraint in sorghum production and are associated with the crop from planting through storage. The majority are insect species of worldwide economic importance. Approximately 150 species are reported to infest sorghum, but the most serious are shootfly (*Atherigona soccata*), stem borers (*Chilo partellus*, *Busseola fusca*, *Diatrea ssaccharalis*, *Sessamia calamistis*, and *Eldana saccharina*), and the sorghum midge (*Contarinia angustatus*), in addition to armyworms, and several caterpillars, grasshoppers and storage insects. Actual data on yield loss is sketchy, but estimates suggest that losses in sorghum caused by the major species of insects is over 20% in Africa and 32% in Asia. In Africa and Asia alone these losses are estimated to result in an annual loss of 8.9 million tones of food grain (ICRISAT, 1992). The use of chemical insecticides is impractical in most African farming systems, and management through host plant resistance is considered the only viable long-term control strategy. Apart from sorghum midge where there has been success in India, Australia, and the USA, and two varieties that have tolerance to stem borer, sorghum pests have not yielded to conventional breeding approaches. It has proved difficult to breed good yields and resistance into the same cultivars. Resistance traits are quantitatively inherited and have proved difficult to manipulate.

The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in India, serves as a world center for improving grain yield and quality of sorghum. ICRISAT holds 36,729 accessions of sorghum.

Sorghum has received relatively little attention in terms of molecular technologies, but the first genetic maps of sorghum were published in the early 1990s, and the first successful transformation of sorghum was achieved and published in 1993. These two major advances should have allowed improvement of sorghum by greatly enhanced traditional breeding, and by genetic engineering; however, although genetic mapping work continues, to date no transgenic products are near field-testing (Richard Frederickson, personal communication). According to Bennetzen (1995) the chief limitations in improving sorghum are not technical, but are due to the lack of detailed genetic mapping information for important sorghum traits, and a general lack of resources allocated to the study. Although a large number of useful DNA markers have been identified and mapped, there are still too few fingerprinted lines, mapped traits and mapped populations, and populations that have been mapped have often been too small to provide precise mapping information. Important single genes and quantitative traits need to be placed on the sorghum genetic map, and to be screened under a variety of environmental circumstances and from a number of parental sources. Such comprehensive studies will be needed to identify regions of the sorghum genome that enhance productivity and to identify lines with superior alleles within these regions. This important gene identification and mapping process can be greatly assisted by the use of information and markers from other grass species, as research has shown that the grasses have very similar gene content and regions of conserved gene order. Therefore, theoretically it should be possible to transfer the cold tolerance of barley or the seedling vigor of maize to sorghum once these have been identified and cloned.

Biotechnology products and projects

- **Genetic map of sorghum (*Texas A&M University, USA*)**. The Sorghum Biotechnology Program at Texas A&M aims to i) develop a high resolution molecular map of sorghum; ii) facilitate the application of molecular markers to sorghum improvement; iii) to develop new methods for gene identification, gene cloning and germplasm screening for important traits; iv) to improve and apply gene transformation to sorghum; v) to develop and manage a sorghum genome database and DNA clone repository. Important genes mapped so far include: resistance to head smut, downy mildew, anthracnose and head blight.
- **Stem borer resistance (*ICRISAT*).** ICRISAT is currently carrying out research to introduce Bt genes into sorghum for stem borer resistance.
- **Transformation of sorghum (*CSIR, Bio/Chemtek, South Africa*).** CSIR began tissue culture of African sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor* L. Moench) lines for regenerability potential, screening various media combinations and genotypes in 1996. In 1998 CSIR reported on a single chimeric transgenic sorghum plant. CSIR is currently in the process of optimizing sorghum transformation systems to obtain stably transformed African grain sorghum. CSIR is also beginning a project on the genetic enhancement of nutritional quality of grain sorghum with a focus on a transformable Ethiopian line and three Ghanaian lines.
- **Molecular Markers of Sorghum (*CSIR, South Africa*).** CSIR is also involved in the molecular markers and diagnostics of sorghum. The molecular marker work includes the development of markers linked to traits of interest and are mainly used in marker assisted selection (MAS).

- **High lysine sorghum (*Pioneer Hi-Bred, USA*).** Pioneer have successfully transformed sorghum with a high lysine gene to evaluate the transformation system, but currently have no plans to commercialize this trait. Any future commercial product they produce will be in a hybrid sorghum variety.
- **Quality traits in sorghum (*Aventis, USA*).** Aventis has an interest in introducing quality traits into sorghum using constructs from maize, however there are currently no plans for developing a commercial product.

Prospects

Since *Striga* is such a major pest of sorghum, it is worth considering whether control strategies involving herbicide resistance genes would be effective. Herbicide resistances could relatively easily be engineered into sorghum, but it is unclear whether this would be of use in sorghum cropping systems in Africa where most farmers may not have the access to, or the money to buy herbicides. Field screening for Striga resistant cultivars is often unreliable and slow because of the inconsistent nature of Striga infestations both within the same field and among different fields across years. Some resistant cultivars have been identified where resistance is recessive and controlled by one or two genes, and in some varieties this may be linked to the low production of stimulants that cause the Striga seed to germinate. This stimulant production might be a useful target for genetic engineering.

Insect resistance strategies involving Bt might be a useful approach in areas where stem borer and other insect pests are particularly damaging. The Bt genes would first need to be inserted into locally adapted sorghum germplasm. ICRISAT is currently working with a number of other institutions to introduce Bt genes into sorghum varieties.

In terms of output traits, engineering higher levels of expression of amylase genes in the endosperm could be relatively easily accomplished and could improve sorghum's malting properties. Other conventional breeding aims include improving the nutritional balance of sorghum seed proteins and altering the levels and types of starches and oils, improving the forage quality of the leaf and stalk. Most of these goals could also be addressed using genetic engineering using experience gained from other crops.

The lack of significant impact on sorghum drought resistance by traditional breeding has also raised high expectations from biotechnology. However, although this approach may be promising, so far the greatest difficulty in the application of biotechnology to improve stress resistance in plants is the inadequate understanding of plant responses to drought.

Millet

Background

The ASARECA network responsible for sorghum and millet is **ECARSAM** (the Eastern and Central Africa Regional Sorghum and Millet Network). See previous section on Sorghum for further information.

Millet is a collective term for the grain of a large number of small-seeded grasses that are grown as cereal crops. Millets grow well in arid and semi-arid environments, requiring less water than any other grain. While developing countries in Asia still produce the majority of the world's millets, Africa is becoming a major area of production, which has risen 25% since the early 1970s, and its place in domestic diets there is growing steadily. All other regions of the world, however, have registered declines in total output and in Africa per capita production has dropped notably. The CGIAR focuses on two types of millet: finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*) and pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum*).

Pearl millet is a robust annual, can grow up to 4 meters in height. It is usually grown as a dryland dual-purpose grain and fodder crop in semi-arid regions of Africa and India. It is also grown in the Americas as a hot season forage crop throughout the tropical and subtropical lowlands, and as a mulch component in no-till soybeans production in Latin America. Finger millet is a smaller grass, adapted to more humid growing conditions, and is grown for its straw as well as its grain. Because it is often grown in more favorable production environments than pearl millet, its grain yields can be competitive with those of rice and other improved cereals. Both pearl millet and finger millet are natives of Africa.

Pearl millet is very hardy. It produces grain and fodder under very hot and dry conditions, and on soils too poor for sorghum and maize. Its combination of rapid growth rate when conditions are favorable, high temperature tolerance, and ability to extract mineral nutrition and water from even the poorest soils make it impossible to beat in the world's harshest agricultural production environments. Pearl millet can withstand drought, heat, insects, poor soils, and flash floods. It is however very susceptible to downy mildew which can be devastating, particularly in India where plant breeders have introduced genetically uniform single-cross hybrids that make the crop especially vulnerable to epidemics.

Finger millet too has outstanding properties as a subsistence food crop. Its small seeds can be stored safely for many years without insect damage, which makes it a traditional component of farmers' risk avoidance strategies in drought-prone regions of Eastern Africa and South Asia. Further, its grain tastes very good and is an excellent dietary source of methionine -- an amino acid lacking in the diets of hundred of millions of the poor who live on starchy foods such as cassava, plantain, polished rice, and maize meal -- calcium, iron, and manganese. Finally, it is productive in a wide range of environments and growing conditions. However, finger millet is extremely susceptible to *Pyricularia* blight, a close relative of rice blast.

During 1992-94, the average global area from which millet grain was harvested was about 38 million hectares (19 million hectares in Africa and 17 million in Asia, with much smaller areas in the Americas, Oceania, and the former USSR). Yields averaged about 750 kg per hectare. Annual global production for this period was about 28 million tons, of which about 22 million tons was used each year for direct human consumption. Production statistics for the various millets are often lumped together (sometimes with sorghum) so it is difficult to obtain reliable estimates of the areas sown to individual species, but the most recent estimate suggests that about 50% of global millet grain production is pearl millet, with about 10% for finger millet.

Millet grain is the basic diet for farm households in the world's poorest countries and among the poorest people. In the Sahelian zone of Africa, pearl millet is the staple cereal. Millet straw is a valuable livestock feed, building material, and fuel in those farming systems. Exports and imports of millet grain are negligible suggesting low demand, and/or unreliable availability of marketable surpluses, for this commodity in world markets.

The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), has the CGIAR global research mandate for pearl millet. Research priorities are downy mildew (the most important disease of pearl millet worldwide), the parasitic witchweed (*Striga*), and several insect pests; and improved tolerance to drought and low soil fertility. Very little progress has been made with biotechnology applications for millet. No transgenic products are yet near field-testing, but some molecular work is being carried out and current projects are listed below.

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **Molecular map of pearl millet (*ICRISAT*).** ICRISAT along with UK and Indian collaborators have developed a molecular map of pearl millet and applied molecular techniques to distinguish different races of the pathogen causing downy mildew.
- **Identification of race-specific quantitative trait loci (QTLs)**. Multiple genes are required for resistance that is effective against the different pathogen races of downy mildew. ICRISAT and its collaborators have identified race-specific quantitative trait loci (QTLs) conferring resistance against several such pathotypes. The first pearl millet marker-assisted backcrossing program, transferring these resistances into agronomically elite hybrid parental lines, is nearing completion. This work should lead to more durable resistance to downy mildew.
- **Transformation protocols for pearl millet. (*Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research, Foodtek, South Africa*).** Development of transformation protocols for pearl millet to develop resistance to downy mildew. This work is still in the early stages.

Prospects

As with sorghum, the technology for transformation and regeneration of millet is still in its early stages, and there are unlikely to be any transgenic products available in the near term. Work in South Africa is, however, encouraging, and once reliable protocols are developed, then insect resistance (using Bt genes) and herbicide resistance strategies could be readily applied to millet.

Banana and plantain (*Musaceae*)

Background

The ASARECA network responsible for banana is **BARNESA** (Banana Research Network for Eastern and Southern Africa). Banana and plantains, which are derived from the wild species *Musa acuminata* (AA) and *Musa balbisiana* (BB), are staple food crops for millions of people in developing countries. In terms of gross value of production, bananas and plantains are the developing world's fourth most important crop after rice, wheat and maize. They reach their greatest importance as a staple food crop in parts of East Africa where annual consumption is over 200 kg/capita. Today, about 90 percent of production takes place on small farms and the fruit is consumed locally. Only 10 percent, mainly from commercial plantations in Latin America and the Caribbean, enters world trade. While Latin America is the world leader in banana production for export, the African region is the world's largest non-export producer and has a strong lead in output for domestic consumption. Banana is one of the world's top five internationally traded tropical commodities, with an annual export value of about US$ 5.3 billion. Total world export of banana in 1995 was approximately 11.3 million tons from 32 countries.

Approximately one third of global banana production is in sub-Saharan Africa, where it provides more than 25% of food and energy requirements for around 70 million people. East Africa alone produces nearly 20 million tons of bananas annually, and the East African Highland bananas, which are unique to this region, provide a staple food crop for about 20 million people. Bananas are grown predominantly by small-scale farmers and as they produce fruit all year round, they play an important role in bridging the 'hunger gap' between crop harvests. In addition to being a staple food crop for rural and urban consumers in the region, the crop is also an important source of rural income through sale in local markets and has great potential for development as an export commodity. On steep highland slopes banana is important in combating soil erosion and improving long-term fertility of the soil, and its canopy provides protection for other crops such as bean, groundnuts, cucurbits and coffee.

Bananas and plantains are best known as a food crop, although almost every part of the plant can be used in one way or another. Leaves are used in a variety of ways: for thatching, wrapping food during cooking, as bowl covers and as covers for earth ovens to hold in the heat. A high quality fiber can be extracted from the leaves and pseudostem and is used in textile manufacture for making ropes and strings and for the production of various handicrafts. The fruits are also sold in pulp form, chips, dried and in confectionery, and are used in some countries to produce alcohol. In mixed farming systems, farmers use bananas as a ground shade and nurse-crop for shade-loving crops, such as cocoa, coffee, black pepper and nutmeg. Rich in carbohydrates, bananas and plantains are of great nutritional significance. Bananas and plantains are also high in some minerals, notably phosphorus, needed for bone development, calcium, and potassium. They are particularly rich in vitamin C and contain significant amounts of several other vitamins such as vitamin A.

Rising population pressure in the East African highlands has led to an intensification of production and declining soil fertility in banana growing areas. Pest and disease pressures have also increased, leading to a situation where a well-managed banana garden in East Africa, previously expected to last up to 50 years, is deteriorating after only 4 years. The most serious constraint to banana production in sub-Saharan Africa is black Sigatoka, a leaf spot disease caused by the fungus *Mycosphaerella fijiensis*. This disease, introduced into Africa in the 1970s, has spread rapidly. It causes severe leaf necrosis and can reduce yields by 30-50%. All the traditional plantain cultivars in West and Central Africa are susceptible to the disease, as are most of the widely grown cultivars in East Africa. Considerable losses are also caused by Fusarium wilt, caused by the soil-borne fungus *Fusarium oxysporum* fsp *cubense*. The banana weevil (*Cosmopilities sordidus*) and a complex of nematodes (*Pratylenchus* sp and *Helicotylenchus*) cause severe losses by interfering with nutrient uptake by the roots.

Research priorities set by **BARNESA** are:

- broadening the genetic base of *Musa* in East Africa
- addressing the major pest and disease problems
  - Sigatoka
  - Fusarium

  - Banana Streak Virus
  - Banana Bunchy Top Virus
  - weevils & nematodes
- post-harvest technology and processing
- conservation of the natural resource base
- understanding the socio-economic factors in banana based systems

BARNESA has no biotechnology projects at present, but considers biotechnology to be of potential use in the production of clean planting material (molecular diagnostics, tissue culture etc.), and in producing transgenic plants with increased disease resistance. Un particular the production of disease-free planting material is seen as a major constraint to production.

Two CGIAR centers conduct research on bananas and plantains: The International Network for the Improvement of Banana and Plantain (INIBAP) in Montpellier, France, which is a program of the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan, Nigeria and Kampala, Uganda.

With few exceptions the bananas grown today are little different from those grown a thousand years ago. This is largely because improvement by conventional breeding has been extremely difficult and the resources for such efforts limited. However, this may change (Dale, 1999). For at least the past decade biotechnology has been predicted to have a major impact on banana improvement, but progress so far has been slow. There are now however very active research programs centered in Australia, Africa, USA and Europe directed towards either direct insertion of useful genes by genetic engineering, or through marker-assisted conventional breeding. Micropropagation of banana has been used extensively over the past 20 years, but transformation methods for banana were not published until the mid 1990s. Now these techniques are a reality and it is possible to insert genes into banana the next important research step is to express those genes at the desired level at the desired time in the desired tissue.

The ‘easiest’ targets of research for transformation of banana are virus resistance and improved post harvest qualities, specifically shelf-life. Unfortunately the traits in greatest demand from growers are fungal disease resistance and nematode resistance, traits for which the technology is either not yet available or still unproven. In terms of fungal resistance three basic approaches are being followed: two involve non-specific genes not from banana, such as those encoding anti microbial proteins (AMPs), and systemic acquired résistance, and those involving specific resistance genes isolated from resistant banana. The availability of a high-density map of the *Musa* genome along with molecular markers would greatly assist this process.

Possibly the traits most amenable to manipulation in transgenic bananas are control of ripening and discoloration. Technology for both these characteristics is well advanced in other crops e.g. tomatoes, and bananas are a good target for this approach as they are ‘climacteric’, meaning that their ripening can be induced by ethylene -- thus by controlling ethylene, ripening can be controlled. Field trials of transgenic bananas with altered ethylene metabolism are ongoing.

The concept of edible vaccines has proven to be a very popular one, and there is already some evidence that an immune response can be elicited in laboratory animals by feeding on plant material expressing an antigen. Bananas are considered by some to be a prime vehicle for expressing such vaccines. Whether it turns out to be practical to deliver vaccines in an edible banana fruit or not, bananas would still be an excellent candidate as a bioreactor to produce valuable proteins that could then be extracted from the fruit.

There are already at least two large-scale field trials and a number of glasshouse trials of transgenic banana with useful traits, namely virus resistance, fungal resistance and improved fruit quality.

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **Modified ripening banana and black Sigatoka resistance (*Zeneca Plant Sciences*)**. Zeneca is developing bananas with resistance to Black Sigatoka, and also modifying ripening characteristics in bananas. This will reduce the need for chemical fungicides, as well as improve the agronomics of production and the post harvest quality to the consumer. Field tests are ongoing.
- **Sigatoka resistance (*Dr Rony Swennen, KUL, Belgium*).** Bananas have been transformed with genes coding for antifungal proteins and these plants have performed well in contained trials. Approval is still awaited for field trials in Nigeria in collaboration with IITA. A recently emerging proposition was to test these plants (in parallel or as an alternative) in Kenya where biosafety procedures are in place.
- **Nematode resistance (*Prof Howard Atkinson, University of Leeds UK, Dr D Harris, University of Wales, UK*).** A gene coding for the production of cysteine protease inhibitor was linked to a root-specific promoter and used to transform rice cultivars to be resistant to nematodes. Optimized versions of this construct are being used to transform banana cultivars for testing in the Windward Islands (DFID funding).
- **Resistance to banana viruses – Banana Bunchy Top Virus, Banana bract mosaic potyvirus *(Dr J. Dale, Queensland University of Technology, Australia*)**. A large number of lines of transformed Bluggoe and Cavendish transformed with BBrMV derived resistances designed to trigger RNA mediated resistance are currently in screening trials.
- **Bananas containing edible vaccines (*Dr. Charles Arntzen, president, Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research, USA*).** Researchers are investigating the genetic incorporation of vaccines into food plants. BTI are developing a hepatitis vaccine in bananas. Bananas were selected because they are one of the infant's first foods, can be eaten raw and are widely available throughout the world. It is estimated that this system could deliver the vaccine at 2 cents a dose versus $125 for a vaccine injection.

Prospects

Transformation of bananas with useful characters is now a real possibility and one that could be exploited with relatively immediate benefit to Africa. Perhaps the highest priority is that of resistance to black Sigatoka, and several approaches to this are already in fairly advanced stages of development by different public and private sector groups. Some of the varieties already transformed are applicable to Africa, but once the techniques are routine, transferring the traits to other local varieties (such as the East African Highland types) should be fairly straightforward. Collaborations to encourage this should be pursued. This is also the case with virus resistance, which is of high priority in the region. One of the factors that have delayed progress in this area is the lack of the appropriate biosafety structures in countries in the region. Consequently it has not so far been possible field-test any of the transgenic germplasm. Every effort should be made to put biosafety regulations in place.

The Cavendish banana variety, which is the common dessert banana in international trade, is obviously the most researched variety, and much of the work on ripening and post harvest characteristics has been done on this variety. Although it is grown in Africa, it is not of major importance, but again, the principles used could be transferred to locally popular varieties if post harvest quality was seen as an important priority for research. Although some research is promising, transgenic resistance to nematodes and weevils is still in the very early stages.

Wheat (*Triticum* spp.)

Background

The ASARECA network responsible for both maize and wheat is **ECAMAW** (Eastern and Central Africa Maize and Wheat Research Network). Wheat, a cereal grass of the *Gramineae* (Poaceae) family and of the genus *Triticum* and its edible grain, is the world's largest cereal-grass crop. It has been cultivated for at least 6,000 years and its status as a staple is second only to rice. Unlike other cereals, wheat contains a high amount of gluten, the protein that provides the elasticity necessary for excellent bread making. Over 30,000 varieties of wheat exist between the two major species, bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) and durum wheat (*Triticum durum*). Hard wheat is high in protein (10 to 17 percent) and yields flour rich in gluten, making it particularly suitable for yeast breads. The low-protein (6 to 10 percent) softer type yields flour lower in gluten and, therefore, better suited for tender baked goods, such as biscuits, pastries, and cakes. *T. durum* wheat, although high in protein, is not good for baking. Instead, it is often ground into semolina, the basis for excellent pasta, such as spaghetti and macaroni. Wheat grain, a major source of energy in human diet, is higher in protein content than almost all other cereals. On an average the kernel contains 12 percent water, 70 percent carbohydrates, 12 percent protein, 2 percent fat, 1.8 percent minerals, and 2.2 percent crude fibers. Thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, and small amounts of vitamin A are also present. A pound of wheat contains about 1,500 calories. In West Asia/North Africa, as well as Central Asia, it contributes more calories to diets than all other cereals combined.

Global production of wheat is now approaching 600 million tons, with international trade approximately 100 million tons annually. In 1992-94, Asia accounted for 67 percent of the developing world's production of wheat (39 percent in China), 19 percent West Asia-North Africa, 7 percent in Latin American and the Caribbean, and less than 2 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa. Wheat now provides 20% (1992) of total developing country food supply, as compared to 15 percent in the early 1970s. In 1992-94, developing countries accounted for 45 percent of world wheat production (551 million tons) and 46 percent of world wheat area (219 million ha). For the developing regions as a whole, the annual demand for wheat is projected to grow at 3 percent over the coming decade. Demand for wheat is expected to rise particularly rapidly in Sub-Saharan Africa, at 5.1 percent per annum due to increasing urban demand.

Wheat is grown on about 2.0 million ha in Eastern and Central Africa, mostly in Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan. Wheat yields are low, fluctuating around 1.5 t/ha. Per capita consumption ranges from around 2.5 kg/year in Uganda to over 30 kg/year in Ethiopia where it is a traditional crop, and over 40 kg/year in The Sudan. Annual imports of wheat are high and growing in many ASARECA countries, regionally often surpassing one million tons each year, representing a cost of over $185 million to the region in foreign exchange. Most of these countries produce barely 50% of their domestic demand. Wheat imports are dominated by food aid e.g. between 1992-1995 wheat accounted for approximately 80% of the total volume of cereal aid supplied to Ethiopia. Wheat is identified as the eighth priority for regional research by ASARECA.

Two CGIAR centers, CIMMYT (Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maiz y Trigo or the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center) and ICARDA, have contributed to developing and distributing improved varieties of wheat in collaboration with national research institutions. CIMMYT serves as the world center for the improvement of bread wheat, durum wheat, and triticale and is also a repository for a significant proportion of the world's publicly available genetic resources of bread wheat. CIMMYT's semi-dwarf wheats have been bred to yield well under a range of cropping conditions, both favorable and unfavorable, and yield at least as well as locally adapted wheats when climatic conditions are unfavorable, yet yield much more when conditions improve. A collaborative program between CIMMYT and ICARDA is responsible for the improvement of wheat in West Asia and North Africa.

The following list of priority researchable constraints for wheat was developed by **ECAMAW** in 1996.

- Low yield, germplasm
- Resistance to yellow, leaf and stem rust
- Other foliar diseases
- Soil fertility and conservation
- Weeds
- Drought
- Tillage

Progress, although slow, is being made in genetic engineering to improve wheat by developing such characteristics as drought tolerance and disease resistance. Most biotechnology research on wheat is located in public sector advanced universities and research institutes, and is directed towards first understanding the complexities of the wheat plant with the goal of eventually using biotechnology to develop transgenic wheat with unique desirable traits.

One reason that transgenic research on wheat has progressed so slowly is that the private sector considers wheat to be a low-value crop compared to other major crops such as cotton, rice, and soybeans. This is partly due to the fact that wheat is self-pollinated crop and farmers can therefore re-plant their own seed. An additional technical reason is that the genome of wheat is 10 to 20 times larger than crops like cotton or rice. Improving wheat by biotechnology is therefore a far more complex and time-consuming challenge. Among universities, Kansas State, Cornell, Oklahoma State, and Texas A&M universities are working on wheat at the molecular level. Some of the main targets for genetic engineering research in wheat are: control of pre-harvest sprouting; enhanced processing and nutritional quality; reduced mycotoxin contamination; heat and cold tolerance; salinity tolerance; aluminum tolerance; drought tolerance and resistance to insects and fungal diseases.

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **CLEARFIELD™ Wheat *(American Cyanamid*).** American Cyanamid is cooperating with universities, public and private laboratories and seed companies to develop wheat varieties tolerant to imidazolinone herbicides. Imidazolinone herbicides are flexible, environmentally friendly and provide contact and residual control of weeds common to wheat production, including ones not controlled by currently registered wheat herbicides.
- **Insect resistance (*Mycogen Corp.)*** This wheat expresses a Bt toxin providing resistance to various caterpillar and beetle pests.
- **Genetic markers for insect resistance (Texas A&M University, USA).** Tagging and mapping DNA markers on the wheat chromosome to locate the genetic basis of traits that are of particular interest to Texas wheat growers. This work has identified DNA markers on the wheat chromosome for Russian wheat aphid (RWA) resistance and for greenbug resistance. This knowledge could eventually lead the way to RWA and greenbug resistant wheat varieties. Work has also begun on tolerance to wheat leaf rust.
- **Resistance to major fungal pathogens (*CIMMYT*).** Anti-fungal proteins from barley are currently being inserted into wheat to investigate resistance to some of the major fungal pathogens.
- **Wheat Genomics (*Consortium of US Universities*).** The long-term goal of this project is to decipher the chromosomal location and biological function of all genes in the wheat (*Triticum* spp.) genomes. This knowledge will greatly enhance our understanding of the biology of the wheat plant and create a new paradigm for the improvement of this exceedingly important crop.

Prospects

Transformation of wheat with useful traits for Africa is still probably several years away due to the difficulties of the system. However, important progress is being made using genetic markers for traits such as disease and drought resistance. This, and the recent publishing of the rice genome, should greatly speed up conventional breeding of wheat for the region.

Potato (*Solanum tuberosum*)

Background

The ASARECA network responsible for potato and sweet potato is **PRAPACE** (the Potato and Sweetpotato Collaborative Research in Eastern and Central Africa). There is little data on the production of potato and sweet potato in **PRAPACE** member countries. Both crops are grown on a small scale by millions of small farmers, and are either consumed in the household or sold through informal, unregulated markets. For potato the total area reported is 308,000 ha, and the total production is estimated at 1.7 million tons. This represents approximately 40% of the potato production in sub-Saharan Africa. In Africa as a whole the most important producing countries are South Africa, Malawi, Cameroon and Nigeria. Within **PRAPACE** countries the production is concentrated in densely populated highland areas, over 2,000 meters above sea level. The largest area is planted in Kenya where the reported average yields of 2.7 t/ha are far below normal farm level yields of between 7 and 15 t/ha. Potatoes are consumed in the area of production and in cities and towns that provide a growing market. Average per capita consumption varies; over large areas of lowland areas potatoes are rarely consumed, whereas in some highland areas consumption can be as high as 80 – 90 kilos per person per year, and three times this amount this in urban areas.

Potato has become a major cash crop in the highlands above 1,800 m and is a highly preferred food in urban areas. High yields in a short growing season and high energy and protein production make potato an attractive source of food and improved nutrition. The nutrient value of potatoes, including Vitamin C, is high, and they are particularly useful as a source of energy and protein. Potatoes are increasingly consumed in the form of processed foods such as frozen French fries and potato chips. Important industrial uses include processing and manufacturing of starch and alcohol.

Potatoes also provide important on-farm and off-farm employment and critical income to poor households. Although there are some large scale farmers, the bulk of potato marketing are sold in domestic markets by private traders, and a few hundred tons are marketed across the borders of Kenya and Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

Worldwide, potato is the fourth most important crop in developing countries after rice, wheat, and maize. The main climatic constraint limiting area expansion for the potato is temperature -- potatoes responding positively to cooler temperatures. The main biotic constraints for potato are late blight, bacterial wilt disease, viruses, and potato tuber moth. Researchers estimate that developing country farmers spend $700 million annually to control such pests. Potato's susceptibility to these pests and diseases makes the crop the number two user of agricultural pesticides worldwide, following cotton. In the case of late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) alone, the International Potato Centre (CIP) has estimated the cost of crop losses and chemical applied, combined, exceed $3.0 billion per annum. Potato production in the developed countries remains fairly static with supply matching demand whereas during the last 30 years an increasing proportion of the global crop has been produced in developing countries, rising from approximately 11 per cent in the 1960s to more than 30 per cent in the 1990s.

Constraints to potato production, and research priorities of **PRAPACE** include:

- late blight (*Phytopthora infestans*)
- bacterial wilt (*Ralstonia solanacearum*)
- viruses
- potato tuber moth (*Phthorimaea operculella*)
- soil fertility
- storage

For both potato and sweet potato, the lack of clean (virus-free) good quality seed/planting material from improved varieties is also a major problem.

The International Potato Center (CIP) has the global mandate for research into potato and sweetpotato. Over the past 20 years it has led a global effort to develop pest control practices. The potato has responded relatively well to research, and plant breeding continues to result in significant improvements in the crop, especially for developing countries. Virology research in the potato has advanced greatly, and the safe movement of germplasm is now practical. However, the adoption of improved potato varieties can often be delayed by the absence of local seed or multiplication systems.

The European or Irish potato has a relatively narrow genetic base and the system of clonal reproduction by tubers renders potato extremely susceptible to diseases and pests as is evidenced by the Irish Potato Famine. Serious problems have also been caused for the potato industry by potato cyst nematodes -- although breeders have now incorporated some resistance to some types of the nematode into some modern cultivars, this pest remains effectively controlled only by routine application of highly toxic nematicides.

Conventional breeding of potato takes much time and effort. Hybridization of cultivated potato with even its closest relatives usually requires several generations of backcrossing and selection to restore the yield and quality of a modern cultivar, and more importantly it risks the introgression of undesirable traits, particularly high levels of toxic glycoalkaloid compounds in the tubers. Because the European potato is a tetraploid and suffers from marked inbreeding depression it is unlikely that classical breeding will be able to combine all desirable traits into a single clone. The use of molecular markers is now enabling the construction of genetic linkage maps and the means to locate genes and quantitative trait loci (QTL), which is a useful contribution to potato breeding efforts. A major advantage of genetic modification of potato is that it can allow the transfer of specific genes that confer resistance, as opposed to the entire genomes, of these wild varieties that have otherwise undesirable qualities.

Potato was the first food crop to be genetically engineered, and since the first introduction of this technology at CIP in 1985, thousands of transgenic potato clones have been produced. For example, more than 10 developing-country potato varieties have been engineered with resistance to the potato tuber moth, an extremely serious pest both pre- and post-harvest in many developing countries. This research has been highly successful in generating a technology that promises to reduce or eliminate crop losses caused by this pest -- CIP estimates that roughly $500 million in annual losses can be attributed to the potato tuber moth alone.

Substantial commercial acreages of transgenic potatoes are already being grown in North America. The first of these, "Russet Burbank New Leaf", is a genetically modified form of an old, very disease-susceptible, but popular cultivar. The New Leaf transgenic variant has been transformed with a Bt toxin gene that renders it resistant to Colorado Beetle. A strategy now being pursued for this and other insect pests, is to ‘pyramid’ several different Bt toxin genes into the potato to reduce the selection pressure for resistance in the pest population.

In addition to insect resistance using the Bt toxin approach, it has also been possible to genetically modify potatoes with resistance to several of the common viruses. This is based on transforming the plant with the coat protein or other genes of those viruses. Some potatoes also already possess major dominant genes conferring extreme resistance to the common viruses, Potato Virus X (PVX) and Potato Virus Y (PVY). These genes have been introgressed by classical breeding from wild species and primitive forms, but very few cultivars possess them and their impact has been small. However, these genes have now either been mapped or are close to being mapped, and the possibility of transforming susceptible cultivars with these genes in the future seems very attractive. PVY is a particularly serious virus that can only be currently controlled by frequent, routine application of insecticides to kill its vector (aphids), and this is not always successful. This would therefore be a good target for genetic transformation.

Although most progress in protecting potatoes by genetic modification so far has been made against insects and viruses, advances are being made in closely related species (e.g. tomato) against fungi, bacteria and nematodes. In addition, attention is now being focused on quality traits, such as starch composition, which affects fat absorption on frying. Whether these characteristics would be given as high a level of importance in the developing world is uncertain.

PRAPACE has links with CIP and other ARI's which are actively using molecular tools for germplasm characterization and pathogen detection and characterization.

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **Resistance to potato tuber moth (Dr David Douches, Michigan State University, USA).** The potato tuber moth (*Phthorimaea operculella*) is a potato pest in several countries in Africa. In some cases, it is the single most significant constraint to potato production. The lack of adequate cold storage facilities makes this technology very relevant to a number of African countries as damage can result in total loss of stored potatoes. Field tests of several transgenic lines are ongoing in Egypt (four years) and planned shortly for South Africa and Indonesia.
- **Resistance to Potato tuber moth (*Aziz Lagnaoui, International Potato Center, Peru*).** CIP has developed transgenic potato plants that are resistant to the potato tuber moth and that express the Bt crystal protein (Cry IA), but other Cry genes may be added in the near future. The transgenic potatoes are currently being tested in Peru and plans are underway for testing next season in Egypt. The material is available for testing in countries with appropriate biosafety regulations.
- **Biological control of bacterial wilt disease of potato (*Dr Julian Smith, CABI Bioscience, UK*).** CABI Biosciences have developed a genetically modified non-pathogenic strain of the bacterium *Pseudomonas* that can be soil applied for control of bacterial wilt of potato. Field trials are currently ongoing in South Africa and planned in Kenya.
- **Resistance to nematodes and insects (*Prof H Atkinson, University of Leeds, UK*).** An effective transgenic defense system against the plant pathogenic nematodes *Naccobus aberrans* and *Globodera* spp is being adapted for Bolivia and other Andean regions. Nematode control will benefit agricultural development by reducing yield loss and traditional dependence on control procedures such as fallowing. Further plant transformation will be directed at native cultivars, particularly those that already possess partial resistance against nematodes. Contained trials are anticipated shortly. (DFID funding.)

- **Resistance to PVX, PVY and PLRV (*ARC-Roodeplaat, South Africa*).** Efforts are underway to transform potatoes with coat protein-mediated resistance. Several transgenic lines resistant to for PLRV have been regenerated. *In vitro* infection of the plants made the testing of the transgenic lines for resistance to viral diseases possible in the glasshouse. The first field trail of transgenic potatoes in Africa is currently underway at Roodeplaat. Work on the PVY and PVX transgenic lines is still continuing.
- **Reduced alkaloid potatoes (Dr *William R. Belknap, USDA ARS, USA*).** Genes that block the bitter compounds (glycoalkaloids) that are naturally present in potatoes have been inserted into potato and have reduced levels by 40-60%. This is useful in itself, but may also enable potato breeders to use insect- or disease-resistant traits from native tubers that would otherwise be removed from breeding programs because of their high glycoalkaloid levels. The Agricultural Research Service, the USDA's chief research agency, has a patent for the anti-glycoalkaloid techniques and has licensed the technology to Small Potatoes, Inc., who have agreed to provide the technology to developing countries in the Andean region. Field-testing is planned at CIP, Peru.
- **NewLeaf® Insect-Protected Potato (*Monsanto*).** Introduced in 1995, the NewLeaf® Potato was the first commercial crop to be protected against insect pest through biotechnology. The NewLeaf® Potato carries a Bt gene that confers resistance to the Colorado potato beetle.
- **High-Solids Potato (*Monsanto*)**. Monsanto has developed a higher-solids (starch content) potato by introducing a starch- producing gene from a soil bacterium into a potato plant. With the reduction in the percentage of water in the genetically improved potato, less oil is absorbed during processing, resulting in a reduction of cooking time and costs, better-tasting french fries and an economic benefit to the processor. This product is currently in the developmental stage.
- **NewLeaf® Plus (*Monsanto*).** Potatoes with resistance to both insects and viruses – specifically Colorado potato beetle and potato leaf roll virus. This product is currently under development.
- **New-Leaf® Y Insect-and Virus-Protected Potatoes (*Monsanto*).** Potatoes with combined resistance to Colorado potato beetle and potato virus Y. This product is currently under development.

Prospects

Potato transformation is now developing very rapidly and there are already many varieties that might be applicable for the ASARECA region. Potato tuber moth resistance and virus resistance are the two most obvious traits of importance. Work on transgenic resistance to fungal diseases (in particular late blight) is also ongoing in many regions, and due to the high variability of this pathogen, it would be useful for ASARECA to be involved in such work in these early stages to ensure that any resistance developed includes isolates that are prevalent in the region. Overall it is obvious that there are numerous groups working on constraints of importance to PRAPACE. Collaborations with these ARI's should be explored should ASARECA determine potato biotechnology to be a priority research area.

Sweetpotato (*Ipomoea batatas LAM.*)

Background

The ASARECA network responsible for sweet potato is also **PRAPACE** (the Potato and Sweetpotato Collaborative Research in Eastern and Central Africa). There is little data on the production of sweet potato in **PRAPACE** member countries. Sweetpotato is grown on a small scale by millions of small farmers, and is either consumed in the household or sold through informal, unregulated markets.

Worldwide sweetpotato is considered to be one of the most important, versatile, and under exploited food crops, currently ranking as the fifth most important food crop on a fresh-weight basis in developing countries after rice, wheat, maize, and cassava with more than 133 million tons in annual production. Sweetpotato is cultivated in over 100 developing countries and ranks among the five most important food crops in over 50. Average yields in several countries are well below the average (15 t/ha) for developing countries as a whole, and these in turn are well below the current yield potential. Rapid improvements in productivity of the crop are considered readily feasible with relatively less investment in research and extension than some other crops.

Sweetpotato is a food security crop, grown mostly on small plots of land. The total worldwide area of production reported is 1.3 million ha, and total production is 5.7 million tons. The crop is important in the densely populated, mid-elevation regions in the countries surrounding Lake Victoria, i.e. in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Eastern DR Congo, NW Tanzania and western Kenya. It is also grown on a smaller scale in South Africa. Sweetpotato has received increased attention in recent years because it can be grown on soils of limited fertility, is relatively drought-tolerant, provides good ground cover, and is usually cultivated without pesticide or fertilizer. Planting and harvest periods are more flexible than those of maize and other grains, and it has become even more important in areas where African Cassava Mosaic virus (ACMV) and black Sigatoka of banana have devastated the production of these food crops.

Per capita sweetpotato consumption in Rwanda is estimated at 160kg/yr; Burundi, 102 kg/yr; and Uganda 85kg/yr. Sweetpotato consumption also varies *within* countries: by regions, by time of year and by income group. In northeast Uganda, one of the poorest parts of that country, sweetpotato becomes a seasonal staple during the dry season when supplies of most other foodstuffs are exhausted. Even under such circumstances the importance of the crop may be underestimated. Average yields of 5t/ha for sweetpotato in Africa (FAO) are the lowest of any developing country region—and less than a third of yields in Asia—suggesting considerable potential for improvement.

Sweetpotato forms an important source of calories in the diet, and the orange-fleshed varieties also provide a significant portion of the requirement of Vitamin A intake, which is particularly important in areas with endemic malaria. In addition sweet potato provides ascorbic acid and the amino acid lysine, which is absent in common foods such as rice. Sweetpotato is sold mostly by small-scale farmers in small quantities in local markets obtaining a flexible source of cash. The crop is also sold in urban markets but the storage root deteriorates rapidly after harvest and so losses and costs are high. Home or village-level processing of sweet potato is increasing. In many areas serious attacks by weevils limit the length of time the roots can be left in the ground, and farmers harvest, chip and sun-dry the roots to preserve and store the crop. Processed products made from sweetpotato including starch, noodles, candy, desserts, and flour have long been made by farm households to extend the availability, diversify the use, and increase the value-added for the crop. There is significant potential for new uses of sweetpotato flour and/or mashed as an ingredient in the production of a large number of products that are usually made from imported wheat.

Sweetpotato is relatively intractable to conventional breeding and poses many challenges to sexual hybridization. It is a hexaploid and has problems such as pollen sterility, incompatibility and poor seed germination. Biotechnological tools have become especially relevant to sweetpotato as these techniques enable rapid incorporation of specific traits into pre-adapted cultivars and complement conventional approaches to crop improvement.

Regional production constraints for sweetpotato include important virus diseases e.g. sweet potato feathery mottle virus (FMV), stem blight and other diseases that attack the roots. The African sweetpotato weevils, *Cylas puncticollis* and *C. brunneus*, are the most destructive pests of sweetpotato in sub-Saharan Africa. Weevil damage renders them unfit for human and animal consumption and secondary compounds such as terpenoids produced in response to weevil feeding make even slightly damaged roots unpalatable. Crop losses due to weevil damage range from 20 to 100%, and losses are more severe in the dry season and during periods of drought. Little or no resistance to this pest is available in sweet potato germplasm. Several groups are working on the development of transgenic sweetpotato with resistance to weevil using Coleopteran specific Bt genes.

In other regions of the world, where a different weevil occurs (*Cylas formicarius*), control of the pest is based on cultural practices, the use of pheromones and bioinsecticides. In Africa, pheromones have not been effective against the sweetpotato weevil, and bioinsecticides are not generally available, nor affordable. The ideal solution for a pest such as the sweetpotato weevil is to plant resistant varieties. Unfortunately, such resistant varieties have not been developed, despite efforts to select resistant clones in different parts of the world. Even where "less susceptible" varieties exist, they do not perform well under high pest population levels. The most promising direction for research is therefore to develop true resistant varieties through the introduction of exogenous genes, such as the Bt gene, in order to confer resistance in sweetpotato.

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **Resistance to feathery mottle virus (*Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, Kenya; Monsanto, USA; ABSP, Michigan State University, USA*)**. Sweetpotato Feathery Mottle Virus (SPFMV) is a serious constraint to sweetpotato production in Africa. Different sweet potato varieties (an African and a US variety) have been transformed with the Sweet Potato Feather Mottle Virus coat protein and have been shown to be expressing the transgene. They await testing in host countries before confirmation of resistance to SPFMV can be demonstrated. Kenya biosafety approval has recently been granted. Monsanto has donated their virus-resistance technology royalty-free for use in sweetpotato in Africa.
- **Resistance to feathery mottle virus (*C.S. Prakash, Tuskegee University, USA & Dr R. Beachy, Danforth Institute, USA*)**. Coat protein and antisense RNA genes of the SPFMV have been introduced into sweet potato varieties and are being tested for their resistance to the virus.

- **Enhanced Protein Content and Quality (*C.S. Prakash, Tuskegee University, USA*)**. Sweetpotato has been genetically engineered for increased storage protein (asp-1), causing a 3-5 fold increase in total protein content. Tubers also exhibit a proportional increase in levels of essential amino acids such as methionine, threonine, isoleucine and lysine and tryptophan. African varieties will be ready for field-testing in 2000.
- **Resistance to fungal diseases (*C.S. Prakash, Tuskegee University, USA & Dr Jesse Jaynes, Demeter Technologies USA).*** Sweetpotato varieties have been transformed with synthetic lytic peptide genes that code for peptides with antimicrobial activity. These have shown promise against bacterial and fungal diseases in potato and tobacco.
- **Resistance to sweetpotato weevil (*Dr. Dapeng Zhang, International Potato Center, Peru*).** Transgenic plants expressing exotic proteinase inhibitors and Bt-proteins and resistant to sweetpotato weevil (*Cylas* spp.) have been produced. The Bt proteins are still in screening process in collaboration with University of Missouri and Monsanto Co. Transgenic plants with soybean proteinase inhibitors will be field tested within a year at CIP experimental facilities. These plants are highly relevant to Africa, because of the economic importance of sweetpotato weevil in this region.

Prospects

Sweetpotato stands to gain from the same technology that has already proven successful for potato e.g. the same approach used to develop resistance to Colorado potato beetle and potato tuber moth in potato can easily be adapted for African varieties of sweet potato. Viral resistance and improved protein content are also areas where an immediate benefit to small farmers in the region can be envisaged.

Coffee (*Coffea* spp) and Cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*)

Background

The ASARECA network responsible for coffee is **CORNET** (The Coffee Research Network). Coffee is the world's second largest traded commodity and the most important cash crop in the ASARECA region. It is produced and exported from eight member countries, and approximately 10 million rural families (mainly small-holders) in the region are reliant on income from coffee. Coffee exports earn approximately 85% of the foreign exchange for ASARECA countries. **CORNET** is a relatively new ASARECA network, having been proposed in 1998.

Coffee is one of the most important products in international trade, and one on which many countries rely to obtain foreign exchange. From the commercial point of view, only two coffee species are cultivated extensively: *C. arabica* (Arabica) and *C. canephora* (Robusta), although some other species are grown for local consumption. *C. arabica* is native to the highlands of Ethiopia and was brought from tropical Africa to the American continent in the early 18th century. Arabica coffee is grown at altitudes of 1000-2000m and is responsible for about 75% of commercial world coffee, and for all coffee production in Latin America. This species is also produced in Ethiopia and Kenya. *C. canephora* has a very wide geographic distribution, extending from the western to the central tropical and subtropical regions of the African continent, including parts of Uganda and DR Congo. In 1999 total world production of coffee was 6.5 million Mt, 1.2 million Mt of which was produced in Africa. Within Africa, Cote d'Ivoire is the largest producer (365,000 Mt), followed by Ethiopia (232,000 Mt), and Uganda (198,000 Mt). Kenya, Madagascar and Tanzania are also important producers, each producing approximately 50,000 Mt.

Constraints to coffee production in the ASARECA region include low soil fertility, and several important fungal diseases (coffee berry disease caused by *Colletotrichum coffeanum*, rust caused by *Hemilea vastatrix*, and a bark disease caused by *Fusarium* spp.). Insect pests include scale insects, mealybugs, and the coffee berry borer. Nematodes such as *Meloidogyne* and *Pratylenchus* can also be a serious problem.

Coffee breeding by conventional methods is a long process, and traditional methods of improvement are slow, taking more than 30 years to produce a new cultivar. This is partly due to the inherent problems involved in breeding a perennial crop species with a long life cycle. The introduction of *in vitro* propagation techniques has proved to be a great advantage in coffee breeding in recent years and has also allowed manipulation of the coffee plant at the cellular and molecular levels. Such techniques include protoplast culture, culture of zygotic embryos and anther/pollen culture. Genetic transformation of coffee has potential to greatly speed up these processes for coffee (Carneiro, 1999).

Cocoa (*Theobromoa cacao L*) is not an ASARECA priority crop. However, it does have a number of similarities with coffee when considering the use of biotechnology for crop improvement. Cocoa breeding by conventional methods is a long process, and traditional methods of improvement are slow. This is again partly due to the inherent problems involved in breeding a perennial crop species with a long life cycle.

There are a number of groups supporting research on cocoa. They are the International Permanent Working Group for Pests and Diseases of Cocoa (INCOPED), the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO), and the American Cocoa Research Institute (ACRI). INCOPED was formed to meet the specific needs and interests o cocoa entomologists and pathologists, and has had up to 33 members, representing 14 countries, attend their semi-annual meetings. This group has not been involved in biotechnology research in any significant way.

The ICCO comprises 40 countries and one inter-governmental organization, representing over 80% of the world cocoa production and approximately 70% of the world cocoa consumption. No ASARECA countries are members. Amongst other goals of ICCO is the promotion of scientific research and development in cocoa. One of the major research efforts is the conservation and utilization of cocoa germplasm, including the cloning of germplasm associated with performance trials, population breeding programs, and development of improved germplasm.

The ACRI is the research arm of the Chocolate Manufacturers Association of America and is devoted to research in all scientific areas related to cocoa and chocolate. ACRI has a Biotechnology Working Group monitors, generates, and supports research in the biotechnology of cacao to improve its production and quality, particularly through the Biotechnology Program at Pennsylvania State University. Research at Penn State has produced a method of clonal propagation (somatic embryogenesis), and have begun a long-term field test of cloned cocoa plants in St. Lucia in the West Indies. Researchers at Penn State have also begun a genetic engineering research program to develop cocoa with resistance to disease and pests, including the cocoa pod borer, the myrid, witch's broom, pod rot and cocoa swollen shoot virus. This work is preliminary.

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **Tissue culture methodologies *(Agricultural Research Centre, South Africa*).** The Institute of Tropical and Sub-Tropical Crops has developed a system for the rapid multiplication of coffee. The improvement with coffee cuttings is dramatic. In *Robusta* coffee selections, rooting was increased by 312 % compared to conventional cuttings. The commercial application of this technique is now being investigated. Potentially this could make a huge difference to coffee production in Africa.
- **Development of decaffeinated coffee (*University of Hawaii*).** Researchers at the University of Hawaii have developed transgenic coffee containing the antisense gene for the enzyme xanthosine-N7-methyl transferase, the first enzyme in the pathway to caffeine synthesis. They cloned the gene encoding this enzyme, and used *Agrobacterium*-mediated transformation to insert an antisense version into *Arabica* coffee cells growing in tissue culture. Transgenic callus was analyzed, and some lines were found to have only 2% of the normal level of caffeine found in regular plants. Thus, expression of the caffeine gene appears to have been silenced by the introduction of the antisense gene. In another approach, transgenic plants are being produced using the gene gun by Dr. Chifumi Nagai at the Hawaii Agricultural Research Center. The new coffee plants have only been grown in the laboratory so it will be years before commercial crops will produce naturally decaffeinated coffee.
- **CENICAFE (*Columbia*).** The Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia through their research branch, CENICAFE, have supported Cornell University (Ithaca, NY) to develop technology for genetic transformation of the coffee plant, cloning of promoters from coffee, cloning of genes for insect-inhibitory proteins, ping of the coffee genome.

Prospects

The first reports of coffee transformation were as long ago as 1991, but since then progress has been slow. Current research goals for groups involved in coffee biotechnology include pest and disease resistance, herbicide resistance, resistance to low temperatures, and plants low in caffeine. No transgenic coffee varieties have so far been released. However, improvements in tissue culture methodology for both coffee and cocoa may be available to farmers in the nearer term.

Cotton (*Gossypium* spp.)

Background

There is no ASARECA network specifically focused on cotton even though it is identified as a priority crop for the region**.** Cotton is mostly grown in tropical and sub-tropical climates and is one of the most ancient crops cultivated by man. The American continents are the largest producers followed by Asia and Africa. The United States is the largest single producer, but cotton is also extremely important in the economies of many developing nations. World production of cotton lint in 1999 was 18.3 million MT, and of this total 1.6 million MT was produced in Africa.

Four species of the genus Gossypium are known as cotton, which is grown primarily for the seed hairs that are made into textiles. The genus Gossypium, a member of the Malvaceae, consists of 39 species, four of which are generally cultivated. The most commonly cultivated species is *G. hirsutum* L., other cultivated species are *G. arboreum* L., *G. barbadense* L., and *G. herbaceum* L.

The major use of cotton lint is for the production of a variety of fabrics and related products. The seeds are used to produce a high quality edible oil. The cotton seed cake or press cake remaining after oil extraction is used as an animal feed as it has a high protein content. Cotton is a small shrub or tree that produces a fruit or *boll* containing seeds bearing the cotton lint. It is grown under a wide range of climatic conditions, both rainfed and with irrigation.

Among the most important diseases of cotton are two fungal wilt diseases (caused by *Verticillium dahliae* and *Fusarium oxysporum* f.sp. *vasinfectum*), leaf rust (*Puccinia cacabata*), a leaf curl disease caused by a whitefly-transmitted virus, and various boll rots caused by many species of fungi but exacerbated by insect attack. The main insect pest of cotton is the larva of *Helicoverpa armigera*. Much of the biotechnology focus in cotton, both in the public and private sector has been on producing herbicide resistant and insect resistant varieties.

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **Bollgard® Insect-Protected Cotton (*Monsanto*)**. Introduced in 1996, cotton with Monsanto's Bollgard BT gene is protected against cotton bollworms, pink bollworms and tobacco budworms.
- **Bollgard with BXN Cotton (*Calgene, LLC, unit of Monsanto*)**. Cotton plants with insect and herbicide resistance that will therefore require less chemical herbicide and insecticide to lower grower input costs and to achieve greater crop yield.
- **Roundup® Ready Cotton (*Monsanto*)**. Approved in 1996, Roundup Ready® cotton tolerates both topical and post-directed applications of Roundup® herbicide.
- **Genetically Engineered Cotton Fiber (*Agracetus, USA)*.** This biotech product is genetically engineered to enhance fiber performance, reduce dye-shop pollution and improve textile-manufacturing efficiency. Available within 6 years.
- **Second-Generation Bollgard® Insect-Protected Cotton (*Monsanto*)**. Cotton similar to the original Bollgard cotton, but using a different Bt gene mode of action to help growers manage insect resistance concerns. Available within 6 years.

Prospects

Small farmers in regions of South Africa are already growing transgenic insect resistant cotton, and field trials have just begun in Zimbabwe. Preliminary results show that farmers quickly and eagerly adopt the technology, and that pesticide applications have been significantly reduced compared with non-transgenic crops. Given the high levels of insecticide application to cotton to control insect pests, the advantages of this technology to the environment are obvious.

Rice (*Oryza sativa, Oryza glaberrima*)

Background

The ASARECA network responsible for rice is **ECSARRN** (The Eastern, Central and Southern Africa Rice Research Network). Rice is grown and consumed in most countries of East, Central and Southern Africa, and despite upward production trends in the region since 1990, national self-sufficiency has rarely been reached and substantial unsatisfied demand for rice still exists. By the mid 1990s, countries in the region (including South Africa) imported over 1 million tons of rice valued at US $400 million. Imports provided over one third of the rice produced.

Madagascar is the major rice producer in the region, having 1.2 million ha in rice and total rough rice (paddy) production reaching 2.5 million tons per year. Tanzania is the next highest producer (550,000 tons) and Congo (436,000 tons). Other rice producing countries with the potential to significantly increase surface area and/or yield include Mozambique, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, Zambia, and Kenya. Rice production is not keeping up with population growth and increased demand, resulting in increasing imports. Given the recent importation figures in countries such as Kenya and South Africa, as well as the changing consumption patterns of urban populations in Africa, rice has the potential to be an important commercial crop in the region.

Globally, rice is the most important crop in terms of its contribution to human diets and value of production. Rice provides between 35% and 80% of the calories consumed by 3.3 billion people in Asia, and 8% of food energy for 1 billion people in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. However, although rice protein ranks high in nutritional quality among cereals, protein content is modest in rice. Rice also provides minerals, vitamins, and fiber, although all constituents except carbohydrates are reduced by milling.

Cultivated rice belongs to two species, *Oryza sativa* (which is more widely used) and *Oryza glaberrima* -- an African rice. The two main strains of *O. sativa* are japonica and indica. The differences between these two evolved both geographically and culturally over thousands of years. During the 1960s CGIAR scientists improved rice varieties to eventually produce IR8, the first of the modern, high-yielding rice that became known as "miracle rice," for its high yields. IR8, which doubled rice production yields, was the catalyst for the Green Revolution in rice. Today, more than 60 percent of the world's rice fields are planted with varieties whose origins originate from the work of CGIAR scientists and their partners. A later variety, IR36 -- with the ability to withstand a wide range of pests -- has been planted on more than 27.5 million acres, setting a world record for the only single food crop to have been planted so widely.

Rice growing environments in the ASARECA regions are highly diverse. Most rice is grown under rainfed conditions, both lowland and upland ecosystems, making direct transfer of agronomic technology from West Africa, Asia and Latin America difficult, and despite some germplasm transfer, local varieties remain the most widely cultivated. These varieties, though well adapted to their environments and the taste preferences of consumers, are low yielding. Major technical constraints to production in the region are:

- inadequate land preparation
- weed control

- low soil fertility
- poor water management
- insect pests
- disease e.g. Blast, Rice Yellow Mottle Virus (RYMV)
- *Striga*.

All these production constraints are anticipated to increase if regional production intensifies.

Three CGIAR research centers currently focus on rice research: the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines, the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA) in Cote d'Ivoire, and the Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT) in Colombia. The three research centers collaborate to improve yield potential, to develop hybrid rice for the tropics, to improve nitrogen use efficiency in rainfed systems, and to combat pests, diseases, and weeds.

Sources of resistance to some rice diseases (blast and bacterial blight) have been identified within cultivated rice germplasm, and improved germplasm with resistance has been developed. However, sources of resistance to other diseases (such as sheath blight) have not been found, and there is little resistance available to several of the important virus diseases such as tungro.

Molecular biological techniques such as embryo rescue and anther culture have been used for many years in rice breeding efforts, and considerable progress has been made. Embryo rescue enables breeders to attempt wide crosses between varieties that could not be hybridized before; anther culture allows faster stabilization of breeding lines. Molecular techniques have helped to accelerate traditional breeding, to streamline germplasm management and to assess population structures in pests and pathogens through DNA fingerprinting.

Molecular marker analysis is also being used extensively to identify and understand the variability of pathogen populations. This information can then be used in screening programs aimed at developing resistant genotypes. Perhaps the most significant recent advance in rice molecular biology is the publication of the genomic map of rice by Monsanto. Such a genetic map is of great value in understanding genome organization, and in cloning of other agriculturally important genes. Rice also serves as a model for genome research in monocotyledons because of its relatively small genome size, excellent germplasm collection, and relatively well-developed genetic maps. Comparative genome mapping in rice, maize, wheat, barley and sorghum is also now proceeding rapidly.

In recent years, considerable advances have also been made in the production of transgenic rice varieties by the introduction of genes from bacteria, fungi, animals and other plant species. This has allowed plant breeders to accomplish breeding objectives considered impossible a decade ago. Transformation of rice is now possible through several techniques e.g. electroporation, protoplast uptake, and ballistic, and *Agrobacterium*-mediated methods. This has proved effective for japonica as well as indica varieties.

Now that substantial progress has been made on transformation protocols for rice, numerous rice lines with useful foreign genes have been produced. As in other crops, the use of Bt genes is a major strategy for insect resistance, and several insecticidal toxin genes from *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) have been transferred to rice. Plants containing Bt genes have been evaluated in greenhouses and have shown substantial resistance to caterpillar pests such as stem borers and leafhoppers. Genes encoding proteinase inhibitors from cowpea, soybean, and potato have also been transferred to rice, and shown enhanced resistance to stem borers in field tests conducted in China. Rice has also been transformed with a lectin gene from the snowdrop plant, a protein known to be toxic to the brown planthopper and green leafhopper, but as yet no resistant plants have been identified. Further work remains to be done with all these insecticidal genes in order to determine the right doses and combinations of toxins for particular local pests, the stability of toxin production over several generations, and the performance of the plants under field conditions.

In addition to research on insect resistance, various strategies are being investigated for virus resistance e.g. coat protein-mediated resistance is being investigated as a strategy for resistance to rice tungro virus. Herbicide tolerance is another major area of research, because direct seeding of rice can lead to serious competition with weeds. Fungal diseases are possibly the least researched area, but recently, transgenic rice has been obtained conferring resistance to the disease sheath blight, caused by *Rhizoctonia solani.* Plants are currently undergoing testing at IRRI.

For a full list of transgenic rices carrying agronomically important genes for resistance to stem borer, virus tolerance, resistance to fungal pathogens and herbicide tolerance, see Khush & Bhar (1998, Table 9).

In addition to the use of biotechnology to combat biotic constraints, considerable research effort is focused on breeding for abiotic stress tolerance, particularly salt tolerance, and also tolerance of heavy metal ions and oxidative stress. Another research goal in rice and many other crops, is the development of varieties that are able to fix their own nitrogen. Transgenic varieties with these traits are still, however, many years from development. A recent high profile development has been the transformation of rice for nutritional enhancement with genes that enhance beta-carotene and iron production (see below).

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **Liberty-Link® Herbicide Tolerant Rice (*AgrEvo, Inc*.).** Approved for commercial sale by the USDA in 1999, this rice variety is tolerant to Phosphinothricin (PPT) herbicide, specifically glufosinate ammonium. It is expected to be launched commercially in 2000.
- **Metabolically Modified Rice (*Nagoya University, National Institute of Agrobiological Resources, Japan*).** Researchers at these two institutions recently demonstrated that new rice strains could boost photosynthesis and grain yield by up to 35%. These researchers altered the normal C_3 photosynthesis pathway in rice to a C_4 photosynthesis pathway, similar to that in maize and sugarcane. This was done using an *Agrobacterium*-mediated transformation system and independently introducing three maize genes encoding the C_4 photosynthetic pathway enzymes. Preliminary field trials in China and Korea show a 10-30% and 30-35% increase in grain yield for two of the genes transformed in the rice plants, respectively.
- **High vitamin A and iron rice (*Swiss Federal Institute of Technology's Institute for Plant Sciences, Rockefeller Foundation*).** In a major advance in global nutrition, researchers have recently created a strain of genetically altered rice to combat vitamin A deficiency, the world's leading cause of blindness and a malaise that affects as many as 250 million children. The new "golden rice" contains three transplanted genes that allow plants to produce rice kernels

containing beta-carotene, a compound that is converted to vitamin A within the human body. The same research team is also completing work on another genetically modified rice strain with increased iron content. Iron deficiency-anemia, the world's worst nutrition disorder, affects nearly 2 billion people. By March 2000 the first generation of genetically engineered rice plants that contain both the vitamin A and iron modifications will be grown. The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is now working on putting these traits into commercially useful rice strains. Once researchers produce crops of viable seed rice, the institute will offer the new rice free to any nation that wants it.

- **Resistance to stem borers (*IRRI*).** IRRI, as well as researchers from several advanced laboratories in Japan and Europe, have developed rice with resistance to yellow stem borer and striped stem borer via expression of Bt-proteins. While demonstrating promising levels of resistance, extensive field trials in multiple countries have yet to be carried out.
- **Rice Yellow Mottle Virus resistance (*Dr. M Koyama, John Innes Centre, UK*).** Transgenic rice for Africa with resistance to rice yellow mottle virus (RYMV) has been developed using the gene silencing approach. These plants have performed very well under containment testing in growth cabinets. Plans are underway for testing in screenhouses in Africa and eventually to field test them in Africa towards the end of the three years. Collaborating with WARDA. (DFID funding)
- **Nematode resistance in upland and lowland rice (*Prof. H. Atkinson, University of Leeds, UK*).** In collaboration with IRRI and WARDA, this project aims to develop resistance to *Meloidogyne*, *Pratylenchus* and *Hirschmanniella* nematode species on upland and lowland rice. DFID Funded.
- **Resistance to bacterial blight (*Dr. S. Datta, IRRI*).** IRRI have developed transgenic rice resistant to the bacterial blight (BB) pathogen (*Xanthomonas oryzae, pv. oryzae*). Bacterial blight is one of the world's most destructive diseases of rice. A dominant gene for resistance to blight was transferred to the cultivated variety IR24 through conventional breeding from the wild species, *Oryza longistaminata*. The gene was then used to transform elite cultivated varieties. Field tests in China have shown promising levels of resistance to several races of the pathogen.
- **IMI™Rice Seed (*American Cyanamid*)**. American Cyanamid is cooperating with universities and public and private seed companies to develop rice varieties tolerant to imidazolinone herbicides. Imidazolinone herbicides are flexible, environmentally friendly and provide superior contact and residual control of weeds. Availability estimated to be within 6 years**.**

Prospects

Rice biotechnology has benefited from enormous financial investment over recent years, and there are many important transgenic traits now in the testing phase. However, it isn't clear whether many local African rice varieties have been used in much of this work. Given that the rice-growing environment in the ASARECA region is so diverse, it might be difficult to prioritize the major needs for research on this crop. However, once such prioritization is done, it would seem that the possibilities of transferring beneficial traits (e.g. primarily herbicide resistance, virus resistance and fungal disease resistance) to local varieties would require comparatively low investment in order to capitalize on previous work.

Cassava *(Manihot esculenta)*

Background

The ASARECA network responsible for cassava is **EARRNET** (The East Africa Root Crops Research Network). Cassava is a perennial shrub, which produces a high yield of tuberous roots in 6 months to 3 years after planting. Originating in Central and South America, cassava spread rapidly throughout Africa after its arrival on the continent at the end of the sixteenth century. Current sub-regional production in East Africa is estimated to be approximately 28 million metric tons. The relative importance of the crop varies between countries: the main producing countries in the region are DR Congo, Uganda and Madagascar. Production in Kenya, Burundi and Rwanda is lower, but has increased over recent years associated with greater national attention on the crop. Most of the production increases have been due to an increase in the land area under cultivation rather than increase in yield. Cassava is replacing other food crops in the region even though it is generally grown in mixed cropping systems with maize, peas, beans sweetpotato and sorghum/millet. Average yields are 10.5 t/ha. Approximately 80% of cassava is processed into flour or cassava chips, and the remaining 20% consumed in its fresh form. Farmers in Uganda, Tanzania and DR Congo rate cassava as the most important crop, whereas maize is the choice crop in Burundi and Kenya.

Cassava is mainly grown by subsistence farmers, for most of whom it is the primary staple. It is also used as a cash crop, and processed to produce industrial starches, tapioca, and livestock feeds. Cassava adapts to elevations ranging from sea level to 2000 meters. It has the ability to withstand poor environmental conditions, such as low rainfall and infertile soil. World production in 1995 was about 165.3 million tons from about 16.2 million ha. Currently, Nigeria, Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Thailand, and Indonesia are the world's largest producers of cassava. Thailand is the largest exporter -- Africa exports relatively little cassava because production is almost entirely consumed as food.

Cassava provides a major source of calories for poor families, because of its high starch content. With minimum maintenance, farmers can dig up the starchy root and eat it 6 months to 3 years after planting. Thus, people can cultivate cassava during times of war or natural disaster when no other food is available. In Africa, the leaves of the cassava are also eaten as a green vegetable, and provide a cheap and rich source of protein and vitamins A and B. In Southeast Asia and Latin America, cassava has also taken on an economic role. Various industries use it as a binding agent, because it is an inexpensive source of starch. Cassava starch is used in the production of paper and textiles and as monosodium glutamate (MSG), an important flavoring agent in Asian cooking. In Africa, cassava is beginning to be used in partial substitution for wheat flour, thus providing income to resource-poor farmers and saving foreign exchange for national governments.

The CGIAR research centers IITA and CIAT have a mandate for cassava research and have developed many elite varieties of cassava with improved qualities. IITA has discovered spontaneous polyploids in cassava, which are characterized by enormous vigor and variation in form and structure. Selections from triploids "super cassava" have doubled the yields of existing improved varieties with normal chromosome numbers. IITA has also introduced to Africa a wider genetic base for cassava improvement, focusing on materials with resistance to mites, mealybugs, cassava bacterial blight, tolerance to drought, low cyanogen potential, and good cooking quality. IITA has assisted with identifying, evaluating, and shipping natural enemies to control the major insect pests of cassava, the cassava mealybug and cassava green mite.

EARRNET's technology development and transfer efforts fall under five categories: research and technology transfer, training, information exchange and institutional capacity building. Cassava production is dependent on a supply of vegetative planting materials, the multiplication of which is low in comparison with grain crops, which are propagated by true seed. Cassava planting materials are bulky, highly perishable, and hence their production and distribution are expensive. Yield stability is highly dependent on the quality of planting materials, and cuttings with low vigor and infested with pests and/or diseases often limit production. Historically cassava had few serious pests and diseases in Africa; however as production intensified and exotic pests were introduced the situation changed. The major cassava pests are relatively few compared to other crops, but can still reduce yields by over 50%. The most severe pests are the accidentally introduced exotic species that have no natural enemies.

The main biotic constraints to cassava production in the region include:

- cassava mosaic virus (CMV)
- cassava mealybug,
- cassava green mite
- root knot nematodes

EARRNET is currently involved in biotechnology projects in collaboration with the Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria and Uganda, and the Cassava Biotechnology Network (CBN). These include rapid multiplication of disease free cassava planting material, and characterization of germplasm using molecular markers.

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **Starch-modified cassava (*Dr. Richard Visser, Wageningen Agricultural University*).** Genetic modification of cassava for starch modification (content and composition). Increases possibilities for industrial uses of cassava. Field-testing planned by 2000.
- **Cassava with improved post-harvest life (*Dr. Richard Visser, Wageningen Agricultural University*).** Prevention of post-harvest rotting of storage roots. Increases possibilities for industrial uses of cassava. Field-testing planned by 2003.
- **Reduced-cyanide cassava (*Dr Richard Sayre, Ohio State University, USA*).** Transgenic cassava with reduced cyanide toxicity. Reduced cyanogens in processed foods. Anticipate human health benefits due to reduced cyanide in cassava. Ready for field-testing immediately.
- **ACMV resistance (*Dr. Johanna Puonti-Kaerlas, Inst. for Plant Sciences, Switzerland*).** Increasing resistance to African Cassava Mosaic Virus. Field application anticipated within 5-10 years.
- **Prolongation of leaf life (*Dr. Johanna Puonti-Kaerlas, Inst. for Plant Sciences, Switzerland*).** Substantial yield losses are caused by frequent leaf harvesting in regions where leaves are used as vegetable. This project aims to

increase leaf life and thus increase overall yields. Field application anticipated in 2-3 years.

- **Improvement of root protein content (*Dr. Johanna Puonti-Kaerlas, Inst. for Plant Sciences, Switzerland*).** Aim is to increase nutritional quality of cassava roots by improving overall protein content. Estimates field testing within 2-3 years
- **Insect resistance (*Dr. Johanna Puonti-Kaerlas, Inst. for Plant Sciences, Switzerland)*** To reduce yield loss due to insect pests. Estimates field testing within 2-3 years
- **Insect and disease resistance (*Dr. Martin Fregene, CIAT, Colombia*).** Prospecting for increased productivity: pest/disease resistance, and enhanced root quality genes from cultivated and wild cassava germplasm pools – specifically resistance to white fly, cassava mealybug, cassava green mite, cassava mosaic disease, cassava bacterial blight, cassava brown streak virus. Field testing anticipated within 5 years.
- **Post harvest quality improvement (*Dr. Martin Fregene, CIAT, Colombia*).** Prospecting for increased productivity: pest/disease resistance, and enhanced root quality genes from cultivated and wild cassava germplasm pools – specifically root quality traits such as increased starch quality/quantity, reduced post-harvest deterioration, production of bioplastics (polyhydroxyalkanoates), and increased dry matter content. Field-testing anticipated within 5 years.

Prospects

Several groups worldwide are working on transformation of cassava on traits that are directly applicable to the ASARECA region. Although most of the major goals of genetic transformation in cassava (e.g. resistance to African Cassava Mosaic virus) are still a few years from field application, once achieved will make a significant impact on cassava production in the region.

Groundnut (*Arachis hypogaea Linnaeus*)

Background

There is no ASARECA network specifically focused on groundnut, although this is identified as a priority crop by ASARECA. Groundnut (or peanut) is a legume with yellow sessile flowers and subterranean fruits. Native to South America, it spread throughout the New World as Spanish explorers discovered its versatility. Today, it is grown under a wide range of environmental conditions. The largest producers of groundnut are China and India, followed by Sub-Saharan African countries and Central and South America. Most of the crop is produced where average rainfall is 600 to 1,200 mm and mean daily temperatures are above 20°C. Groundnut is a valuable cash crop for millions of small-scale farmers in the semi-arid tropics. It generates employment on the farm and in marketing, transportation and processing. Throughout the world, farmers cultivate about 22.23 million hectares of groundnut (yielding 29.22 million tonnes of pods), of which 13.69 million hectares are in Asia (India 8 million ha; China 3.84 million ha), 7.39 million hectares in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 0.7 million hectares in Central and South America. Seventy percent of global groundnut production is in the semi-arid tropics.

The main use of groundnut is as a source of edible oil, but the high oil and protein content also make it an important food crop. Groundnut is a valuable source of E, K, and B vitamins (it is the richest plant source of thiamine (B1), and is also rich in niacin, which is low in cereals). Groundnut cakes, formed after the oil is extracted, are a high protein animal feed. The cake is also processed to make products such as biscuits and baby foods. Groundnut is important not only because of the crop's important dietary contribution, but also because of its use as a cash crop and income generator, its potential in meeting part of the global demand for vegetable oils, its secondary value as animal feed and fodder, and its contribution to the sustainability of mixed cropping systems.

The ideal growing conditions for groundnut are well-drained, light colored, loose friable, sandy loam soil, availability of optimum moisture in pod zone, and an optimum mean daily temperature of about 30°C. It can be grown either as a sole crop or in combination with other crops in inter or mixed cropping. Constraints include:

Biotic constraints:

- Fungal diseases -- early leaf spot, late leaf spot, rust, and *Sclerotium rolfsi*
- Viral diseases -- bud necrosis virus, tomato spotted wilt virus, peanut stripe virus, and rosette virus
- Insect pests -- white grub

Abiotic constraints:

- drought,
- low pH
- low temperature

These constraints occur in various combinations in Asia, Africa, and Americas.

There is close research collaboration in Asia and Africa between the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the national programs and advanced research institutions. Development of high-yielding cultivars of desired duration having resistance/tolerance to single or multiple stresses and developing stress management strategies are the main objectives of groundnut improvement programs. At ICRISAT, a genetic resources program maintains 13,460 groundnut accessions including 197 of wild *Arachis* species from 89 countries. The wild *Arachis* species are reservoir of genes for high levels of resistance to various stresses.

Considerable progress has been made in conventional breeding for pest and disease resistance, and management strategies have been developed that include genetic resistance for rust, late and early leaf spots, aflatoxin, rosette, and peanut bud necrosis virus. However the use of molecular markers and genetic transformation have yet to make much of an impact on groundnut research.

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **Resistance to Groundnut Rosette Virus (*Dr Mike Deom, University of Georgia, USA*).** Control Strategies for Peanut Viruses including transgenic resistance, natural resistance, and virus variability. Rosette virus occurs throughout Africa, epidemics occur at about 5-7 year intervals and result in losses of up to 80% in those years.

- **Aflatoxin-free groundnuts (*Dr Nancy Keller, Texas A&M University, USA*).** All existing peanuts can be contaminated by aflatoxin which is a class A carcinogen, an immune system suppressant, and which interacts with hepatitis to increase liver cancer rates of infected people 60 times. Most Africans have an alfatoxin burden. This project is using a genetic aproach to eliminate aflatoxin contamination of groundnut by altering plant genes that effect either *Aspergillus* growth or aflatoxin gene regulation. Field trials are anticipated within 5-8 years.
- **Herbicide-resistance (*Dr Tim Williams, University of Georgia & Monsanto*).** A project is in the planning stages to develop herbicide resistant peanuts as a means of overcoming the labor costs of peanut production. Labor issues are likely to become a major issue given the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the continent.
- **High Oleic Peanut (*Mycogen*).** Peanut plants modified by mutagenesis to produce nuts containing high oleic acid results in longer life for nuts, candy and peanut butter.
- **High Beta-Carotene Peanuts (*Monsanto*).** Monsanto has developed technology to increase beta-carotene production in canola. This technology could be transferred to Africa for application to peanut.
- **Drought tolerance (*ARC-Grain Crops Institute, South Africa*).** Developing plant regeneration systems for groundnut, and systems for transformation of foreign genes into groundnut for drought resistance.

Fruit & vegetables

Background

There is currently no ASARECA network primarily focused on fruit and vegetables. Fruit and vegetables have been a major target of biotechnology efforts over the last 10 years, and the list of products and projects given below is in no way comprehensive. The principle targets for transformation of fruit and vegetables initially have been largely quality traits, such as improved post harvest life. Viral and fungal resistances are also now being incorporated into many commodities, and increasing effort is being put into nutritional traits, such as improved antioxidant and vitamin content. These products are expected to be commercially available within the next 5-10 years.

The first transgenic food product to go on sale (in the USA in 1994) was a genetically modified tomato, the FLAVR SAVR™ tomato produced by the US company Calgene Inc. Genetic modification that slows the genes controlling the ripening processes in fruits and vegetables enable commodities to remain longer on the plant to develop their full flavor (and color), and also to stay firm enough to be transported to the market. In addition to being more appealing to the consumer, the major advantage of the modified tomatoes is reduced losses in the harvest and marketing chain. The advantages of this technology are obvious for developing countries where post harvest losses of fresh produce are often extremely high.

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **Virus resistant papaya (*Cornell University, USA & Pharmacia-UpJohn Co., USA*).** A new Hawaiian papaya, genetically resistant to papaya ringspot virus, is now being widely grown as a result of collaboration between Cornell University, the University of Hawaii, and the Pharmacia-UpJohn Company. This new papaya variety's unique design will protect orchards from the significant yield decline experienced from ringspot infection.
- **FreshWorld Farms® Tomato (*DNAP Holding Corporation*)**. The FreshWorld Farms® tomato is a fresh market tomato developed through somaclonal variation to have superior color, taste and texture and a 10- to 14-day shelf life.
- **FreshWorld Farms Endless Summer® Tomato (*DNAP Holding Corporation*)**. The Endless Summer® tomato is a genetically engineered version of the FreshWorld Farms® tomato on the market since April 1993, and shares its improved colour, taste and texture. It also has an extended shelf life of more than 30 to 40 days after harvest. Transwitch® technology was used to suppress production of ethylene, the hormone that causes fruits to ripen.
- **FreshWorld Farms® Sweet Mini-Peppers (*DNAP Holding Corporation*)**. The FreshWorld Farms® sweet mini-pepper has a novel sweet taste, deep red color and is nearly seedless. It was developed through anther culture, an advanced breeding technique that captures and stabilizes preferred characteristics such as taste, texture and low seed count.
- **FreshWorld Farms® Cherry Tomatoes (*DNAP Holding Corporation*)**. The FreshWorld Farms® cherry tomato is specially bred for superior taste, color and texture. It is sold through distributors and supermarket chains in the Mid-Atlantic, Northwest and Midwest regions.
- **Increased Pectin Tomatoes (*Zeneca Plant Sciences*)**. Tomatoes that have been genetically modified to remain firm longer and retain pectin during processing into tomato paste.
- **Genetically Engineered Fruits and Vegetables with Longer Post-Harvest Shelf Life (*Agritope, Inc*)**. Using ethylene-control technology, Agritope, Inc., has created delayed-ripening, longer-lasting tomatoes, raspberries and strawberries. (within 6 years)
- **Virus Resistance Tomatoes (*Monsanto / Calgene, LLC*)**. These tomato plants will be resistant to infection by certain plant viruses. Expected to become commercially available within 6 years.
- **Ripening-Controlled Cherry Tomatoes (*DNAP Holding Corporation*)**. Using the same technology as in its Endless Summer™ fresh market tomato, the company has developed cherry tomatoes with longer market life, improved flavor and better harvest traits through ripening control.
- **Firmer Peppers (*DNAP Holding Corporation*)**. This sweet pepper has been modified using Transwitch® technology to remain firmer after harvest. Pepper plants are currently in field evaluations.
- **Sweeter Peppers (*DNAP Holding Corporation*).** This pepper has been modified to be sweeter and tastier by overexpressing a gene for sweetness. Pepper plants are in early stages of seed increase and field evaluation.
- **Ripening-Controlled Bananas and Pineapples (*DNAP Holding Corporation*)**. Using the same ripening control technology as in its Endless Summer™ tomato,

the company is developing banana and pineapple varieties with extended market life.

- **Strawberry (*DNAP Holding Corporation*).** Strawberries with improved market life by using Transwitch® technology to keep fruit firmer after harvest and also adding genes to resist disease.
- **Fresh Market Tomato (*Zeneca Plant Sciences*)**. Zeneca is modifying tomatoes for enhanced flavor, color and increased antioxidant vitamin content.
- **Insect Protected Tomatoes (*Calgene*)**. Tomato plants with insect resistance Bt genes. Available within 6 years.

Animal health

Background

There is no ASARECA network specifically for animal health issues, although other networks deal with animal production issues. The major network involving livestock is **A-AARNET** (the ASARECA Animal Agricultural Research Network). Livestock are crucial to most subsistence farmers in Africa, providing milk, eggs and wool, pulling ploughs, fertilizing crops and soils and often constitute the family's primary source of financial security. More productive livestock could provide these farmers with the means to achieve greater economic security. There are several areas in which biotechnology is already benefiting animal production and health in the developed world, but there is so far little evidence of much impact in Africa.

One of the challenges for genetic improvement of livestock is to increase reproduction rates by improvement of reproductive physiology. This can be achieved using several techniques, including artificial insemination and embryo transfer/*in vitro* fertilization methodologies. Although artificial insemination is used widely in developed countries it is used far less in developing countries, with the exception of South Africa, and is generally associated specifically with dairy cattle. The use of embryo technology can greatly increase livestock productivity, but this method is not economically feasible for commercial use on small farms at present. However, the use of genetic markers for important traits is likely to be a very valuable technique in livestock breeding. Researchers have already identified genetic markers for resistance to environmental stress and some parasitic diseases e.g. tolerance to African trypanosomiasis in cattle, and resistance to endoparasites in Red Maasai sheep. Although there has recently been a great deal of publicity given to the cloning of and production of transgenic animals, these advances are more likely to make an impact in the area of basic research on the role of genes in the control of physiological processes, than on animal productivity *per se*.

In sub-Saharan Africa three vector-borne diseases stand out as major barriers to improved livestock productivity: African trypanosomosis, East Coast fever and heartwater. Between them they threaten tens of millions of cattle, sheep and goats and cost over $4 billion annually, approximately a quarter of the total value of livestock production. Because supplies of livestock products in developing countries must increase to meet growing demands from growing populations and rapid urbanization, the necessary growth in livestock output will have to come in large part from improving the efficiency of production systems.

Biotechnology can address these disease problems in several ways, for example by providing methods for accurate diagnosis, and in the production of new more effective vaccines. The high sensitivity and specificity of DNA-based diagnostic tests now allows the accurate diagnosis and detection of many of these livestock diseases, some of which cannot easily be detected using other methods. A detailed review of such diagnostics is given in Bourne and Bostock (1992) and Robinson and McEvoy (1993).

In the field of livestock improvement, recombinant animal vaccines have considerable application in Africa in combating livestock diseases. Not only can such vaccines be produced inexpensively, but they also offer advantages of multiple protections, low costs, and distinction between vaccinated and naturally infected animals. This latter feature is highly desirable in Africa with respect to livestock export and in disease eradication campaigns. Vaccination offers a potentially more effective and sustainable method of disease control than other methods e.g. chemotherapy, and controlling the insect vectors. Research strategies for the development of better, cheaper vaccines are always being sought, and through the use of monoclonal antibodies and recombinant DNA technologies it is now possible to produce immunogenic components much more rapidly. These technologies are increasingly being used to clarify the pathogenic mechanism and immune responses to disease, and this will continue to lead to the production of more effective vaccines. Some of the recombinant vaccines already available are listed below and a full list is given in Rege (1996).

Other advances in biotechnology that may improve productivity of livestock in developing countries include the use of recombinant bovine somatropin (BST) to improve milk production in cattle and the production of transgenic forage and feed crops with improved nutritional quality and digestibility. Disease diagnostics and vaccines are, however the advances most likely to give the greatest impact in the relatively short term.

The CGIAR center responsible for livestock is the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in Kenya.

Current biotechnology products and projects

- **Vaccine for heartwater (cowdriosis) for cattle (*Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute, South Africa***).
- **Recombinant African horsesickness virus subunit vaccine (*Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute, South Africa*).**
- **Recombinant vaccine against bluetongue virus for sheep (*Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute, South Africa).***
- **Rotavirus Vaccine** (***U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) & Wyeth-Lederle***). In collaboration with the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Wyeth-Lederle, USAID provided support for the clinical trials of a new rotavirus vaccine in Venezuela. The NIH and Wyeth-Lederle developed the vaccine and Wyeth provide the vaccine for clinical trials.
- **Rinderpest Vaccine** (***University of California at Davis & Pan African Rinderpest Campaign***). Implemented through the University of California at Davis along with the Pan African Rinderpest Campaign (PARC). This project has

developed a heat-stable recombinant rinderpest vaccine for use on livestock and an inexpensive field rinderpest diagnostic kit.

- **Heartwater Vaccine** (***University of Florida & Veterinary Service of Zimbabwe***). Implemented through the University of Florida in collaboration with the Veterinary Service of Zimbabwe. The project developed a recombinant vaccine against the ruminant disease *Cowdriosis* (Heartwater) and will conduct small-scale field trials of the vaccine to determine efficacy and safety.

Prospects

A-AARNET does not currently have a biotechnology unit, however they utilize tissue culture methodologies to produce plantlets for forage trials, and see potential in the adaptation and use of other molecular tools such as thermostable vaccines, molecular markers for both livestock and forage crops, and artificial insemination methods. **A-AARNET** works closely with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), which has extensive experience in livestock biotechnology.

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