

**Press release**

May 6, 2018

**World's Legume Experts Gather  
to Share Research and Development Progress**

Palais des Congrès, Marrakech – Over 300 food legume scientists and big data experts gathered for the 7th International Food Legumes Research Conference. Held every four years, the conference brings together scientific communities associated with food legumes research, as well as policy makers, traders and entrepreneurs to discuss the research needs and disseminate knowledge and achievements. The conference is a global effort to strengthen food and nutritional security, climate resilience, and scientific approaches and partnerships in food legumes.

Organized jointly by ICARDA and Morocco's Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique – known as INRA – this year's conference builds on past success to promote international collaboration on applied and strategic research on food legumes. Specifically, the participants will discuss the status of the global food legumes, including production, consumption, and trade; genomic and genetic resources; productivity management; and nutritional quality.

“Food legumes have low carbon and water footprints and provide high-quality food, feed, fodder, and raw materials for industries. And they are highly nutritious with protein, fiber, micronutrients, and vitamins,” said Aly Abousabaa, director general of ICARDA. “My hope is that we'll be able to come together to maximize the economic, environmental, and nutritional benefits of food legume crops for smallholder farmers.”

ICARDA, ICRISAT, CIAT and IITA – four members of the CGIAR agricultural research network – have been working closely to improve food legumes for four decades. The goal is to increase food legumes productivity and consumption as a means to enhance food and nutritional security, while fighting poverty and environmental degradation. The centers work closely with national agricultural research systems of South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, West Asia and North Africa, and with advanced research institutes globally.

“Good partnerships is key to success,” said Peter Carberry, director of Global Grain Legumes and Dryland Cereals, a CGIAR research program which launched in February. “Our material has to feed into the national programs, so that they can lead to on-farm trials of new varieties and technology. At ICRISAT, we have been connecting key players to deliver innovations to farmers, scaling up proven technologies. It's about working together to give access to more people.”

Food legumes are protein-rich crops that improve soil fertility and enhance agricultural diversity. Naturally, they are the perfect group of crops to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. Much progress has been made since the last conference IFLRC-VI, held in Canada in 2014. The UN designated 2016 as the International Year of Pulses, highlighting the legumes' benefits for health, nutrition, livelihoods, and sustainability. The participants of 2016 International Conferences on

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Pulses endorsed the need for better policies and greater investment in food legumes research to boost its production.

Yet, there are long-term, systemic issues that hinders the productivity of food legumes to help enhance agricultural sustainability and climate change adaptation. Some of the challenges are related to government policies, such as the unavailability of improved varieties and input-linked subsidies. Low investment in research also hinders the expansion of these crops.

“The conference provides an opportunity to promote enabling policies and investment in science and technology,” said Mohammed Badraoui, director general of INRA in Morocco. “The researchers and policy makers need to build relationships and find a systematic way to implement research findings.”

The conference takes place between May 6 and 8. It comprises plenary sessions, presentations, and panel discussions. It also features side events on big data management, crop-specific workshops, and exhibits on grain legumes.

For more information visit <http://www.iflrc.org/> or contact:

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