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Swiss research helping farmers to keep their harvest

SFIAR Award recognises contribution of ETH research team to food security in developing countries

In 2009 the Swiss Forum for International Agricultural Research (SFIAR) gives its annual award to a research project entitled: "Preventing post-harvest losses by a combination of a parasitoid and host plant resistance in dry beans". The project has found an effective solution to reduce the big losses farmers incurred while storing their harvests of dry beans. It therefore contributes to the availability of this important staple crop in developing countries. The project has been a successful collaboration between a team at ETH Zurich and an international research centre in Colombia. The Award Ceremony will be held at a Symposium on the occasion of World Food Day 2009 in Bern on 15 October 2009.

The context

The on-going global food crisis is increasing poverty in developing countries. Research can contribute to improving the situation: scientists can propose to small farmers how they can produce food sustainably and also increase their income. In Switzerland many institutions are involved in agricultural research for development. To honour the valuable contribution of Swiss scientists to international development priorities the Swiss Forum for International Agricultural Research (SFIAR) has launched in 2008 an annual award. In today's economic climate it is particularly recognised that the development of sustainable and productive agriculture is essential to address poverty alleviation and economic development in developing countries.

The SFIAR Award 2009

With the aim to support agricultural research for development, every year SFIAR honours an innovative Swiss project with an award (worth SFr 10,000 to a team). Having considered a number of proposals, the SFIAR meeting of 2 October 2009 approved the recommendation of the award committee. Prof. Silvia Dorn (ETH) working with Dr. Cesar Cardona of the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in Colombia and Drs. Ine Schmale, Guido Velten and Anja Rott at ETH Zürich, have won the 2009 prize for their project "Preventing post-harvest losses by a combination of a parasitoid and host plant resistance in dry beans".

The 2009 Winning Project

90 % of dry beans – an important staple crop – are produced in low-income countries, mainly by small farmers. These farmers invest all their resources in planting, growing and harvesting the crop. However, the largest losses occur after harvest: Beetles destroy the beans during storage.



The researchers of ETH and CIAT examined the problems caused by beetle pests in stored beans and developed a double strategy: On the one hand they were able to grow a new bean variety that is more resistant against the destructive beetles. On the other hand, they found a small parasitic wasp that attacks the beetles in the stored beans. By combining these two components, post harvest losses can be substantially reduced. These findings are accessible worldwide through the publications in reputable international journals. Thanks to CIAT's good links with national development programmes, the results can immediately be used for implementation with farmers.

Award ceremony

The SFIAR Award 2009 is formally presented at a Symposium on the occasion of World Food Day 2009 in Bern on 15 October 2009. The Symposium is organized by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG). The award ceremony will be chaired by SFIAR president Padruot Fried. Prof. Silvia Dorn will present the awarded project.

More information:

Swiss Forum for International Agricultural Research (SFIAR): <http://www.sfiar.ch>

SFIAR Award: <http://www.sfiar.ch/award.htm>

Symposium on the occasion of World Food Day: <http://www.world-food-dialogue.ch>

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