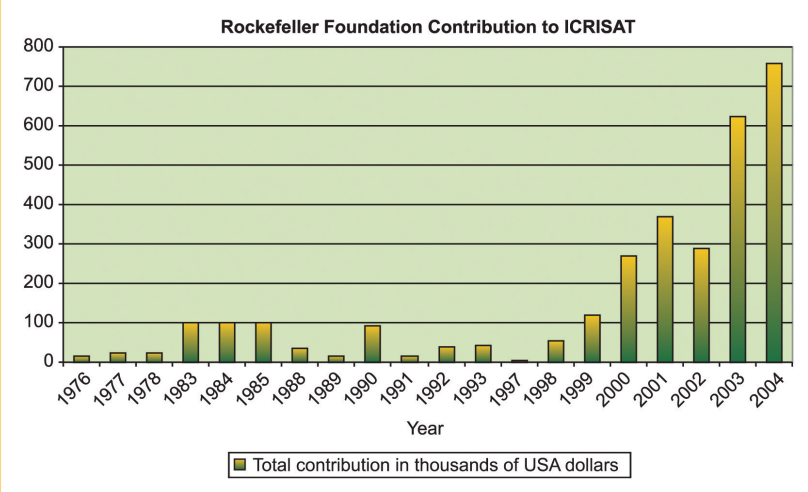
The Rockefeller Foundation and ICRISAT

Introduction

The Rockefeller Foundation has been associated with ICRISAT since its genesis. Early consultations about establishing a center such as ICRISAT were held under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation, and ICRISAT's first 8,961 accessions of crop germplasm in 1974 came from those assembled by the Rockefeller Foundation in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi.

Strong and growing support

ICRISAT's mission to improve the livelihoods of poor farmers in the semi-arid tropics of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa has been fortified through the Foundation's rapidly growing contributions in recent years (see graph).



Special projects

Across the years the Rockefeller Foundation has funded several ICRISAT projects, some of which are described below.

Innovations for improving food security and incomes

The 2002 project on *Market, Technology and Institutional Innovations for Improving Food Security and Incomes of Poor Farmers growing Grain Legumes in Malawi and Mozambique*, established a demand-driven technology transfer system that increases the competitiveness of smallholder farmers in already established local, regional, and international markets for grain legumes.

Guinea Race Sorghum in Burkina Faso and Mali

ICRISAT (along with INERA and IER) implemented the project on *Guinea Sorghum Hybrids: Bringing the Benefits of Hybrid Vigor to a Staple Crop of sub-Saharan Africa* (2001-2004). Outputs included the identification and characterization of promising hybrid parents, the development of a series of male-sterile female parents, the production and evaluation of a large number of Guinea-race hybrids, and the training of students and farmers. The current Phase III of the project targets the Sudanian and Northern Guinea zones of Western and Central Africa.

Heterosis in Pearl Millet – A Preliminary Assessment

Co-funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, this project was undertaken to improve farmers' incomes and food security in West Africa through the development and deployment of pearl millet hybrids, and by facilitating options for pearl millet marketing. It also looked closely at the national research capacity for breeding pearl millet hybrids.

Seed bags ready for market.

Farmers in Dioila cercle, Mali, select panicles of Guinea race dwarf sorghum.

Farmers in Kwakakulu (southeast of Nairobi) gain income from pigeonpea, which offsets the repeated failure of their maize crop.

Woman applying fertilizer micro-dose.

Farmer Field School in Zimbabwe.

Pigeonpea in Eastern and Southern Africa

Implemented by ICRISAT-Nairobi, this project focused on widening the genetic base of pigeonpea, developing improved cultivars adapted to biotic and abiotic stresses, and on providing farmers with improved technologies. These activities enable farmers – particularly women – to produce more pigeonpea for food and for sale. The project has developed a large number of new technologies, acceptable to both farmers and to markets, which are being tested for adaptation to specific agro-ecological zones.

Soil Fertility Management in Zimbabwe

ICRISAT implemented a project (2000-2004) to improve grain production and food security in the drought-prone areas of Zimbabwe through greater adoption of crop and soil fertility technologies; linked smallholder producers to markets, and held Farmer Field Schools (FFS). An FFS workshop held in mid 2005 reviewed the experiences after phasing out of donor support, to identify innovations and investments for scaling out and scaling up.

Field Guide Books in Zimbabwe

Farmer field guides help facilitators who have undergone a season-long training in a practical field situation, and guide productive social interaction and learning, fieldwork design and implementation. The required research, until the final product, was co-funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.

International Biotechnology Colloquium

An international colloquium, *Bridging the Technology Divide: Agri-science Alliances and the New Architecture of innovation,* was held at ICRISAT-Patancheru in March 2003. Jointly organized by a few CGIAR centers, it brought together biotechnology stakeholders, who agreed to take the dialogue process forward so that the gains from biotechnology could be used to eradicate poverty.

Tapping Crop Biodiversity

Tapping Crop Biodiversity for the Resource Poor in East and Central Africa applies genomics to characterize and enhance major food crops, and to generate an active network of molecular breeders. This project also provides a program for trainees under Biosciences Eastern and Central Africa (BECA) and the Generation Challenge Program (GCP).

Joining Hands

ICRISAT's auspicious beginnings with Rockefeller Foundation support has contributed to the institute's burgeoning relevance and excellence. With like-minded partners such as the Foundation, ICRISAT is confident that it will achieve its vision – the continued well-being of the poor through agricultural research for impact.

About ICRISAT

The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) is a non-profit, non-political organization belonging to the Future Harvest Alliance of Centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Established in 1972, ICRISAT generates and shares cutting-edge technologies that support the livelihoods of more than 300 million people – the poorest of the poor in semi-arid areas of the developing world.

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