TEN GREAT IDEAS TO PROMOTE PULSES IN THE RUN UP TO UNITED NATIONS DECLARED INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PULSES 2016

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From Pulse Canada

CAPE TOWN CONVENTION 2014 HIGHLIGHTS
Dear Colleague,

Greetings

After the resounding success of CICILS annual convention in Cape Town in early May, I find a renewed sense of optimism among our industry and trade fraternity as well as a huge commitment to make the UN International Year of Pulses 2016 (IYOP) the most significant milestone in the history of CICILS.

As I mentioned in my welcome speech in Cape Town, the so-called green revolution boosted production and consumption of cereals like rice and wheat, whereas pulse yields lagged somewhat behind. The world is still home to well over 800 million hungry people most of whom suffer under-nutrition. At the same time, the triple scourges of obesity, diabetes and heart disease – now commonly referred to as “diabesity” – that rage across the developed world are also beginning to spread into many of these less privileged areas.

IYOP 2016 brings our industry extraordinary new opportunities for pulses, as tools to effectively fight hunger and malnutrition on the one hand, and counter the “diabesity” epidemic on the other.

These are exciting times for all stakeholders in the pulses value chain. I earnestly ask each of our members to actively engage in the ongoing discussion, and contribute to strategies for making IYOP 2016 a truly ground-breaking event that will set the tone for sustained growth of the global pulse industry over the coming decades.

I should also let you know that after much discussion within the executive committee, and following the member survey conducted late last year, we have decided to change the PULSE POD to become a quarterly publication from this issue forward. I invite readers to provide comments, feedback and suggestions regarding this new format.

Best wishes
Hakan Bahcecii
President
To reverse this dangerous trend of a narrow and over-processed diet it is necessary to promote diet diversity and change the image of lesser known crops. Legumes are commonly seen as the poor person’s protein. A recent survey undertaken in Malawi, by the International Potato Centre, identified that a third of the respondents would eat less sweet potato if they became richer. This indicated that sweet potato was associated with being poor and changing perceptions was an important part of crop development.2

On my recent trip to Mali and Niger, very strong traditional millet eating countries, I was surprised that millet was never on the menu or served. Each person I asked, independently answered, “Oh that's what they eat in the villages.” An international NGO I met there was providing mid-day meals for children at school and wanted to use millet because of its high nutritional value and is a traditional crop that grows well in the area. But the children and parents argued against millet being served as they related it to eating in the ‘villages.’ An international agency was providing advice on how to harvest pigeonpeas to a farmer in Malawi. Pigeonpeas are high in protein so when combined with cereals like millet, provide a balanced mix of nutrients.3

Quinoa has made the leap from a village crop to the latest ‘must have’ food due to a new wave of global attention to its nutritional value making it modern and trendy. This raises the danger that the traditional farmers in poor countries are selling quinoa that they once ate and using the extra income for less healthy foods. Rising prices has also meant higher quinoa prices making it unaffordable for the poor.4

An FAO reports points out that small-scale farmers produce over 70% of the world’s food.5 We will not have enough food to feed the projected world population if we do not care about these smallholder farmers - their wellbeing, health, fair share in the value chain developments and sustainable livelihoods.

For sustainable solutions we need to:
• Build awareness of the value of eating more diverse and nutritious foods;
• Change the image of highly nutritious traditional foods to being a more modern food;
• Revive and invest more in the research and development of nutri-cereals, legumes and root crops, that in comparison to other major crops, have been left behind;
• Channel more efforts and support into developing the whole value chain from farming to new products and market development of these ‘revived’ crops;
• Ensure that smallholder farmers in developing countries are partners and benefit from these efforts; and
• Understand more about the nutritional aspects including bioavailability of the nutrients of these crops, and factors affecting this.

The necessary shift to a more diversified diet and agricultural system will not happen through niche marketing. Niche marketing will only continue the trend of more diversity within countries but will not change the stronger dominance of the major crops globally. It will only happen by changing mindsets of consumers as well as the industry. For the sake of the health of our future children and the planet, we need a revolutionary change in our diets – a switch to ‘Smart Foods’ that are good for you and for the planet.


The Pulse Pod: ICICILS IPTIC emagazine

Dr Said Salim, former ICRIAS Regional Director for East and Southern Africa providing advice on how to harvest pigeonpeas to a farmer in Malawi. Legumes like pigeonpeas are high in protein so when combined with cereals like millet, provide a balanced mix of nutrients.