

## Plant Genetic Resources International Society (PGRIS)

In a survey conducted last August at the Cambridge conference "Plant Genetic Resources in Agricultural and Environmental Sustainability" 85% of respondents were in favour of the establishment of a new society aimed at the needs of the international genetic resources community. Of these 76% supported the suggestion that this society should concentrate primarily on plant genetic resources. With the launch of **Plant Genetic Resources: Characterization and Utilization** the time is appropriate to revisit this proposal. The major elements of what is proposed are as follows:

### Why do we need a society for plant genetic resources?

Conserving and using plant genetic diversity is vital to meeting the needs of the world's present and future generations for food supply and development. Scientists, development workers and farmers are conserving and using plant genetic resources across the world, often with little or no formal contacts outside of their countries or regions. A society would bring together this global community involved in *PGR* to share experiences, focus efforts and build partnerships to address the formidable task to sustainably use and conserve the world's plant genetic resources.

### What would the objectives be?

This proposed society would provide an international technical platform dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources throughout the world to:

- Promote joint research and technical co-operation for plant genetic resources
- Provide a forum to exchange knowledge, material, information, experience and ideas
- Raise public awareness for support to the conservation and use of plant genetic resources

### What types of activity would this society do?

A society dedicated to plant genetic resources should provide an opportunity for sharing information and experiences and for public awareness to increase the visibility of global efforts. Indicative activities could include:

Knowledge activities

*web site, journal, newsletter*

Technical activities

*conferences, workshops and thematic networks*

Public awareness activities

*media presentations and education groups*

### Who would be members?

Membership of such a society could be broad and include institutional, corporate, individual and student members from a wide section of the community, public and private sectors, national conservation and farmers groups.

### What to do now?

We are at an early stage in the development of our ideas at present and welcome input from all sectors. If you are interested in participating in any way please get in touch with me (contact details below) and if you have ideas on how you would like to see things progress and suggestions for activities, please don't hesitate to contribute. This is an exciting development and there is a great opportunity to have an influence. Please pass this on to friends and colleagues who might be interested.

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