

MAIZE AND WHEAT CENTER LAUNCHED AS NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

With the signing on April 12 of an agreement between the Mexican Government and the Rockefeller Foundation, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center has been established as a non-profit corporation under Mexican Law. The official title will be Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maíz y Trigo (CIMMYT).

The ceremony took place in the National Palace at the office of President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. The agreement was signed by Dr. J. George Harrar and Dr. E.J. Wellhausen for the Rockefeller Foundation and by Secretary Juan Gil Preciado and Dr. Nicolás Sánchez Durón for the Ministry of Agriculture.

Secretary Gil Preciado and Dr. Harrar indicated that the Maize and Wheat Center is in reality a culmination of the coordinated research efforts of the Ministry and the Rockefeller Foundation during the past 23 years. It was in 1943 that the Foundation's interest in agriculture had grown to the point where a permanent staff member was employed to initiate a research program in cooperation with the Mexican Government. During the intervening years the joint efforts of the Ministry and the RF resulted first in the establishment of an Office of Special Studies and later in the founding of a National Institute for Agricultural Research and a Graduate College. Both the national network of experiment stations and the Graduate College are staffed in large part by Mexican agronomists who received

training in the joint program and of whom 150 obtained Rockefeller scholarships for master level studies and 70 for studies at the doctorate level. As a culmination of these efforts on a national scale the Rockefeller Foundation in cooperation with the Ford Foundation and the Special Fund of the United Nations as well as the BID and the AID have recently cooperated with the Mexican Government in establishing at Chapingo a national center for agricultural instruction, research and extension.

The signers of the CIMMYT agreement pointed out that the end result of this cooperative national effort has been felt in Mexican agriculture where wheat yields have increased 55% and corn yields 31% during just the past decade. It is not surprising then that Mexico should have been chosen as the location for the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center. It is natural too that the headquarters of the CIMMYT will be located adjoining those of the National Center for Agricultural Instruction, Research and Extension at Chapingo, thereby facilitating close administrative cooperation as well as joint work in the laboratories and classrooms.

The signers agreed that the CIMMYT should become a focal point for joining the critical battle now underway to provide enough food for the rapidly increasing population of the world. It was pointed out that during the 15 to 20 years between now and the time that population control programs may become effective, every possible effort must be made to accelerate the present rate of growth in food production. Maize and wheat supply about 70% of the food

for the majority of the people in the under-developed and diet-deficient parts of the globe. The main efforts of the Center will be focused on increasing the quantity and quality of maize and wheat in the parts of the under-developed areas where these crops are adapted and can be efficiently grown for food.

To carry out this objective, the Center is empowered to: 1) Carry out research to develop the new information, materials and practices which may be needed to bring about substantial advances in the yields of maize and wheat; 2) Educate people--scientists, extension workers, administrators, politicians, industrialists, farmers--who can multiply the activities of the Center and move the new materials and improved production practices into general application; 3) Develop cooperative programs with national governments and private institutions to gain the rapid application of research results which will bring about economic increases in maize and wheat yields; and 4) Assist wherever feasible with the development of key agricultural research and educational institutions that may eventually take over the function of the Center.

Because of the urgency of raising production quickly in many areas of the world, as an immediate first step the Center will extend to other countries the information and materials obtained through 23 years of collaboration between the Rockefeller Foundation and the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture. In several cases the application of these materials and information can bring about rapid improvement in maize and wheat yields. However, longer term projects will be undertaken simultaneously to expand basic knowledge and

to develop the higher yielding varieties and more productive practices which may assure continued progress.

The partnership agreement with the Mexican Government defines the purpose of the CIMMYT in the following terms: to promote and carry out, both nationally and internationally, programs to improve corn and wheat production and, if advisable, the production of sorghum, rice and other food crops in order to obtain higher unit yields and greater total production and quality.

This shall be done by 1) carrying out basic and applied research activities, 2) distributing superior genetic material, 3) conducting training programs to give scientists and technicians the necessary experience in research and application of results, 4) promoting and participating in all kinds of scientific and technical meetings as well as other activities directed at obtaining close cooperation among scientists engaged in programs for improving cereal production, and 5) publishing and disseminating the results of research and doing whatever else may be necessary to promote rapid application of these results for promoting more efficient production and better quality of maize, wheat and other important food crops.