

Global Crop Diversity Trust enters into long-term grant agreement with Secretariat of the Pacific Community to safeguard collections of yam and edible aroids.

The agreement comes into effect as the Secretariat signs International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources and places collection into the Treaty's multilateral system.

ROME, ITALY (June 4, 2009) - The Global Crop Diversity Trust recently entered into a grant agreement with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to provide USD 50,000 annually, in perpetuity, towards the long-term conservation of the important collections of yam and edible aroids (taro) held in-trust by the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT) on behalf of the Pacific region. This is the first long-term grant provided by the Trust to a collection outside the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). The Trust and SPC are very enthusiastic about this partnership and what it means for the sustainable conservation and utilisation of the region's important crop diversity, and therefore food and nutritional security and economic growth in the Pacific region. The importance of crop diversity to sustainable development in the Pacific region is becoming more and more apparent, especially as farmers try to maintain and improve food production in the face of a changing climate.

SPC is highly committed to the long-term conservation of its region's crop diversity. A significant amount of funding has been made available for the construction of a new storage centre, which will provide excellent facilities for long-term conservation of plant genetic resources. The centre will open in September 2009.

The grant agreement with the Trust came into effect when SPC member countries signed the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in April 2009, an event manifested by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Samoa who symbolically placed the Pacific collections (held in-trust by SPC) into the multilateral system of the Treaty in Tunis on June 1.

“The signing of these agreements by SPC has been fully endorsed by the Pacific region, recognizing we live in one world, despite the miles that often exist between us all, and to survive the many challenges of this century we need to work together, sharing our resources and importantly further recognizing that the genetic diversity found in genebanks today may become the most important resource we have in shaping an effective response to climate change“, says Minister Afioga-Taua Tavaga Kitona Seuala in his address to the governing body of the Treaty.

The germplasm will thus now be made available by SPC to the international community in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Treaty.