



Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT)

Mexico City, Mexico

www.cimmyt.org

Background Information on CIMMYT Shipment to Svalbard Global Seed Vault

The wheat genebank contains 150,000 unique collections of Triticum seed from more than 100 countries and is the largest unified collection in the world for a single crop. The maize genebank contains 24,000 samples of seed, including the world's largest collection of maize landraces, along with samples of maize's wild relatives, teosinte and Tripsacum, and of improved varieties. The maize collections represent nearly 90 percent of maize diversity in the Americas, the hemisphere of origin for the crop.

CIMMYT is preparing shipments comprised of 48,000 accessions (documented, unique seed samples) of wheat and 7,000 accessions of maize. They will fill 166 of the plastic boxes provided by the Global Crop Diversity Trust for this purpose, and will weigh roughly three tons. In total, this represents about a third of the collections in the CIMMYT genebank. We expect to ship them by courier around the third week of January 2008. The seed is comprised essentially of duplicate samples of collections that have been regenerated over the past few years. CIMMYT will continue to send in annual shipments of samples of regenerations until the entire collection of maize and wheat seed has been backed up at Svalbard.

Most of the seed collections are held "in trust"—that is, under long-term storage for the benefit of humanity and free from any intellectual property restrictions. CIMMYT also observes the terms of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, signed by more than 50 countries in 2004.

The bank collections have been used as a source of genes for resistance to diseases and pests of both crops, and each year the center typically ships samples of seed of more than 5,000 genotypes in response to requests from over 100 researchers in dozens of countries worldwide.

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