2016 Designated International Year of Pulses

Pulses (edible grain legumes) such as beans, lentils, cowpeas, and chickpeas have attracted international attention! The United Nations General Assembly voted on December 21, 2013, to declare 2016 the International Year of Pulses (IYOP).

The idea of a year dedicated to recognizing the role of pulse crops in sustainable agriculture and healthy diets was conceived by Hakan Bahceci, president of the International Pulse Trade and Industries Confederation (CICILS). The idea was supported by many pulse-growing countries, and the UN General Assembly voted in its favor.

"This is the greatest opportunity in a century to give pulses the attention they deserve," said Bahceci. "The International Year of Pulses will give pulses additional research attention and nutritional programming, which will lead to dietary uptake. Increased pulse consumption will grow both healthy people and a healthy planet."

“Pulses have been a nutritious part of the international diet for centuries,” declared Tim McGreevy, CEO of the American Pulse Association. “These are exciting times for the pulse crop industry, both nationally and internationally.”

Dr. Irvin Widders, professor at Michigan State University and director of USAID’s Legume Innovation Lab, stated, "This UN designation provides those involved with pulse research and public policy an opportunity to explain why pulses are so important. In the developing world, pulses are not only an affordable, nutrient-dense staple that can improve food and nutritional security, but they also promote gut health, which is critical for the effective absorption of nutrients from all dietary foods. Other strategic roles for pulses include improving the livelihoods of women, generating needed income for smallholder farmers, and contributing to the sustainability of agricultural systems.”
Managed at Michigan State University, the Legume Innovation Lab is a 4.5-year, USAID-supported collaborative research and institutional capacity building program between U.S. universities and developing country institutions to achieve USAID Feed the Future strategic objectives of increased agriculture productivity and improved nutritional quality of diets of the poor through the production and consumption of dry grain legumes.

The UN and CICILS are planning a broad agenda of activities jointly with governments, farmer organizations, NGOs, food industry groups, international pulse research institutions, and nutrition and health organizations to bring global attention to pulses during 2016.

The Legume Innovation Lab will be working with its institutional partners in Africa, Latin American and the United States, including the American Pulse Association and the US Dry Bean Council, to plan a series of thematic international events to focus on the important functions of pulses in nutrition and health, sustainability of cropping systems, and improving the livelihoods of the rural poor, especially women. Information on 2016 International Year of Pulses events will be available on the Legume Innovation Lab website (www.legumelab.msu.edu) as they unfold.