

SUSTAIN GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION - ECONOMY

NEWS: The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) is currently facing a severe funding crisis and is turning to India for financial support to sustain its global agricultural research efforts.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

USAID's Withdrawal and Funding Crisis for CIMMYT

- **Major Financial Contributor:**
 - In 2024, the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** contributed approximately **\$83 million**, which accounted for nearly **40%** of CIMMYT's **\$211 million annual budget**.
- **Crisis Triggered by USAID's Exit:**
 - USAID's **cessation of operations** has created a substantial funding gap, threatening the continuity of global agricultural R&D, particularly in the Global South.
 - CIMMYT warns that the impact of this withdrawal will be **felt acutely after 2026**, potentially slowing innovation in climate-resilient crop research.
- **Call for Global Contributions:**
 - CIMMYT is now looking to **nations like India**, which have **directly benefited** from its research outputs, to **step up their financial contributions**.

About CIMMYT – Its History and Global Legacy

- **Foundation and Evolution:**
 - Established in **1966**, headquartered in **Mexico**, CIMMYT (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center) evolved from a **Rockefeller Foundation–Mexican government collaboration** dating back to the 1940s.
- **Leadership in the Green Revolution:**
 - Under the leadership of **Dr. Norman Borlaug**, CIMMYT spearheaded the **Green Revolution**, introducing **semi-dwarf, high-yielding wheat varieties** like Lerma Rojo 64A, Sonora 64, and Mayo 64.
 - These innovations led to a dramatic rise in food grain production across Asia and helped avert famine.

CIMMYT's Contributions to Indian Agriculture

- **Collaborative Breakthroughs:**

- CIMMYT worked with Indian scientists to develop landmark wheat varieties:
 - **Kalyan Sona (1967) and Sonalika (1968):** Widely adopted during India's Green Revolution.
 - **PBW 343 (1995):** Became the most widely grown wheat variety in north India for over a decade.

- **Current Relevance:**

- As of 2024, around **50% of wheat cultivated in India** is based on **varieties released post-2019** through **CIMMYT–ICAR collaborations**.
- CIMMYT-developed varieties are grown on over **60 million hectares globally**.

Borlaug Institute for South Asia (BISA)

- **Institutional Partnership:**

- **Established in 2011**, BISA is a joint initiative between **CIMMYT and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**.

- **Research Centres Across India:**

- Located in **Ludhiana (Punjab), Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh), and Samastipur (Bihar)**.

- **Research Focus:**

- Specialises in **climate-resilient agriculture, heat tolerance, nitrogen-use efficiency, disease resistance, and sustainable farming systems** tailored for South Asian contexts.

Strategic Implications for Agricultural Research Post-USAID

- **Loss of Stable Donor Support:**

- With USAID funding gone, **global agricultural innovation pipelines** are vulnerable, particularly in developing countries.

- **Threat to Food Security Innovations:**

- A potential **slowdown in breeding programs and field trials** could affect efforts to address food insecurity, climate change adaptation, and disease resistance.

- **Global South Vulnerability:**

- Countries in **Africa and Asia**, which rely heavily on CIMMYT's non-commercial, science-backed innovations, face the greatest risk of setbacks.

Why Should India Increase Its Support?

a) Strategic Food Security Interests:

- India cultivated wheat on **32 million hectares** in 2024.
- Of the **top 10 wheat varieties grown in India**, **6 are CIMMYT-derived**, covering over **15.3 million hectares**.
- With **rising March temperatures** in north India, heat-tolerant wheat varieties are essential.
 - For example, a **1°C increase in night temperature** can lead to **6% yield loss**.

b) Role in Global South:

- India has **benefited historically** from CIMMYT's research.
- By increasing funding, India can project itself as a **leader in South-South cooperation**, setting the agenda for **inclusive, climate-resilient agricultural innovation**.

c) National and Global Reputation:

- Supporting CIMMYT enhances India's **diplomatic standing** and commitment to **global food security and sustainable development goals (SDGs)**.
- India can emerge as a **standard-setter for agricultural R&D** in developing nations.

d) Human Resource Linkages:

- Around **10% of CIMMYT's global workforce** comprises **Indian scientists**, reinforcing India's deep institutional and technical connection with the organization.

Proposed Path Forward for India

a) Increase Public Funding:

- India should provide **stable and substantial financial support** to ensure CIMMYT's uninterrupted research operations and secure **decision-making roles** in the organisation's governance.

b) Promote Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs):

- **Indian seed companies, agribusiness firms, and CSR arms of major corporations** can co-finance CIMMYT-linked R&D.
- This model can bring **sustainable commercialisation** and expand technology adoption.

c) Lead in Regional Agri-Innovation:

- India can initiate and host a **Global South Agricultural Innovation Forum** with CIMMYT.
- This platform can:
 - Promote **technology transfer to Africa and Asia**.
 - Enable **joint breeding programs** for climate-resilient crops.
 - Foster **sustainable practices and conservation agriculture**.

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