**press release**

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*10th World Potato Congress*

**CIP contributes to food security through conservation of Peruvian potato biodiversity**

**Cusco, 29 May 2018** – One of the main issues addressed on the first day of the 10th World Potato Congress, was the important role potato biodiversity plays in safeguarding global food security. Peru is one of the countries with the greatest potato and sweet potato diversity in the world, and the International Potato Center (CIP) is working hard to preserve that biodiversity, identifying the attributes of each variety so that they are available for crop improvement, both in terms of nutrition and resistance.

CIP conserves genetic diversity in their genebank with a collection of more than 22,000 accessions of potato, sweetpotato and Andean roots and tubers, that contain invaluable genetic, physiological and biochemical attributes. The genebank uses the collection to support the timely use of various genetic materials for the development of varieties that can guarantee healthy, abundant and safe global food productivity.

*"The genebank is a living collection that will remain with its attributes intact 100 years from now. At CIP we store seeds, in-vitro cultures, and other materials under cryopreservation. So if in the future there is a plague or a drastic change in the world’s climate, scientists will be able to access this 'living ark' and look for a solution that will help humanity,"* said David Ellis, Head of the CIP Genebank.

Decades ago, the main focus of CIP’s research was on increased potato production. But challenges have evolved. Currently, the main use of germplasm for food security is in breeding varieties that are more tolerant to drought and frost, with higher nutrient content (iron and zinc), and that are well conserved through genetic improvement.

"*Another type of conservation is what we call in-situ, carried out together with farmers in their production areas. An example of this is the work that is happening in the Potato Park near Pisac, where the communities have been growing potatoes for thousands of years. This is a complementary effort ensuring that the biodiversity of native potatoes is sustained for many years to support food security*,”said André Devaux, CIP’s Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Miguel Ordinola, CIP Latin America Projects Coordinator added: "*We must also develop alternative commercial uses to take advantage of the high potential of this biodiversity, reaching internal and external markets where it realizes high value. CIP is working on this with native potatoes, marketing them in both their fresh and processed forms. A good example is potato chips, which are now exported to Europe with fair trade and organic certification. The two key future challenges are generating added value via processing, and accessing high-value global markets. "*

The Government of Peru, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MINAGRI), is promoting the organization of the 10th World Potato Congress and XXVIII Congress of the Latin American Potato Association - ALAP 2018, held in the city of Cusco from May 27 to 31.

**About CIP**

The International Potato Center (CIP), with headquarters in Lima, was founded in 1971 as a root and tuber research-for-development institution delivering sustainable solutions to the pressing world problems of hunger, poverty and the degradation of natural resources. CIP is custodian to a collection of potato, sweetpotato and Andean roots and tubers including the world’s largest collection of potato diversity. CIP has regional offices in Peru, Ecuador, Kenia, India and China and works all over the world with projects in 20 developing countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America.

CIP is part of the CGIAR, a global research partnership for a food-secure future. CGIAR science is dedicated to reducing poverty, enhancing food security, improving human health and nutrition, and ensuring a more sustainable management of natural resources. Its research is carried out by 15 CGIAR Centers, in close collaboration with hundreds of partners, including national and regional research institutes, civil society organizations, academia, development organizations and the private sector. [www.cgiar.org](http://www.cgiar.org)

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