

ProMusa: New partnerships for *Musa* improvement

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The establishment of a Global Programme for *Musa* Improvement was first proposed in 1996, as a result of a number of consultations between INIBAP, the World Bank and many partners. The aim was to initiate a programme which would bring together, at the global level, all the major efforts in the area of banana and plantain improvement.

The idea of such a global programme was presented to the INIBAP Support Group (ISG) at its meeting in Jakarta, May 1996 and was further discussed at the next ISG meeting in Washington, October 1996.

It was agreed that the concept of a Global Programme for *Musa* Improvement be developed further, taking into consideration experience gained from on-going activities such as the INIBAP Breeders' Network initiative and the WB/CFC/FAO Banana Improvement Project. INIBAP was requested to coordinate with its partners to develop the initiative further.

As a result, a draft proposal for the programme was prepared which was widely circulated as a means to stimulate discussion and to elicit further input into the proposal. This proved to be an extremely fruitful exercise and numerous positive and constructive comments were received. These comments were used to prepare a second draft of the document, which was again distributed to a wide audience. During this period of consultation, the document was distributed to over 70 individuals and institutes, the majority of whom provided feedback for incor-

poration into the document.

This participative approach enabled the production of a final draft proposal which represented the consensus views of the different partners. This proposal was presented for discussion at a joint BIP/INIBAP meeting which was held in Guadeloupe in March 1997.

The Guadeloupe meeting brought together some 70 of the most prominent researchers involved in *Musa* improvement world-wide. Discussions of the proposed global programme took place in both plenary and working group meetings. Five Working Groups were formed to address the major research areas, while one group discussed the structure and *modus operandi* of the programme. At the end of the meeting the creation of a Global Programme for *Musa* Improvement was strongly endorsed by the participants and a programme structure, *modus operandi* and medium-term plan were agreed upon.

ProMusa

The Global Programme for *Musa* Improvement (ProMusa), is a broad based programme which aims at involving all the major players. It was developed as a means to link the work carried out towards addressing the problems of export banana producers, including that of the BIP, with those initiatives directed towards improving banana and plantain production at the subsistence and smallholder level. The global programme builds upon existing achievements and is based upon ongoing research initiatives. ProMusa is therefore a mechanism to further maximise the outputs and accelerate

the impact of the overall *Musa* improvement effort. The programme is an innovative mechanism to bring together research carried out both within and outside the CGIAR, creating new partnerships between NARS and research institutes in both developing and developed countries. The formation of such partnerships will also contribute to strengthening the capacity of NARS to conduct *Musa*-related research. Participation in ProMusa will be based on the capacity to contribute through a high scientific capability in *Musa* research and on comparative advantage and will be on a voluntary basis. ProMusa operates as a consortium and relies on a range of funding mechanisms. Partners in the programme are expected to contribute in-kind their own research and, in addition, the programme seeks further resources in order to address priority research needs, as identified by the programme partners

Programme Objectives

- To increase the productivity of bananas and plantains produced for home consumption as well as for local and export markets in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- To foster the development of improved *Musa* varieties with a wide genetic base and consumer acceptability and to disseminate these varieties to farmers by NARS and others.
- To increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of global *Musa* improvement efforts by facilitating and stimulating partnerships between NARS, ARIs and IARCs

Benefits

Partners in ProMusa will benefit from:

- global prioritisation of research needs;
- improved possibilities for funding for programme participants due to recognition of the programme by donor agencies;
- close interactions with other research teams within their area of specialisation;
- opportunities for interdependent research projects (i.e. projects requiring interdisciplinary and complementary partnerships);
- improved access to information and resources;



The participants at the meeting visit the *Musa* germplasm collection of CIRAD-FLHOR in Guadeloupe.

- participation in programme meetings and conferences.

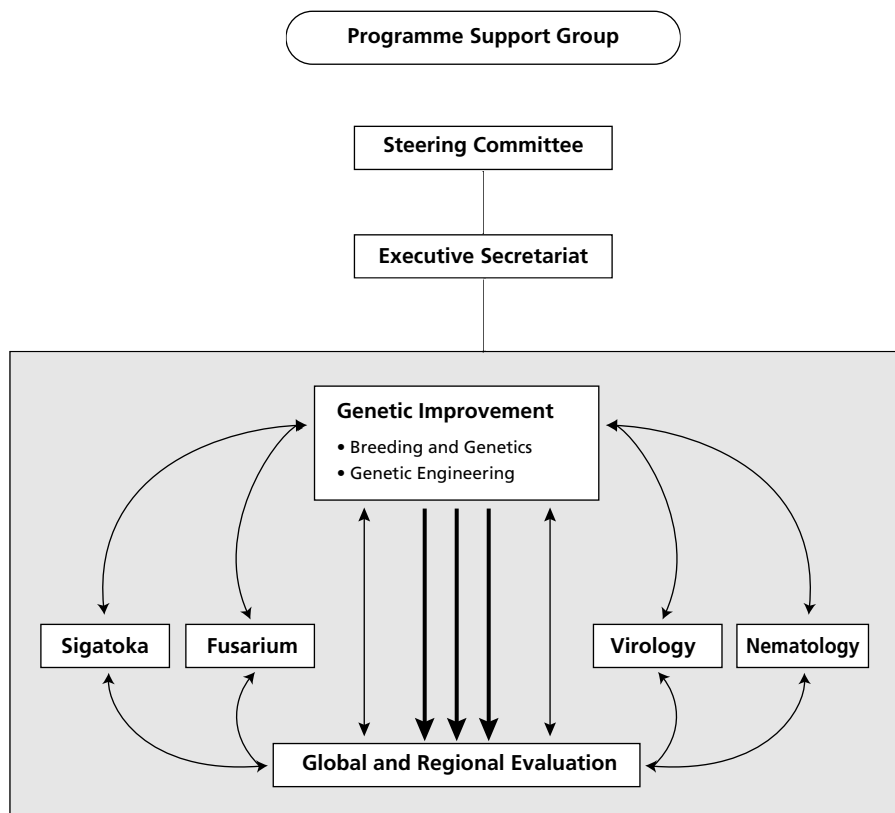
Programme Structure

The programme operates as a series of interlinked thematic working groups co-ordinated by an Executive Secretariat. The programme is directed by a Steering Committee and operates under a Programme Support Group. Further details of the programme structure are given below.

Programme Support Group: This is composed of major donors and stakeholders and is thus comprised of representatives from donor agencies (e.g. countries, IFAD, CFC, UNDP, World Bank, Foundations, private sector); other relevant organisations (e.g. FAO and the Inter-governmental Group on Bananas); representatives of ARIs, IARCS and NARS. Membership is also open to other interested parties. The PSG provides visibility, guidance and support to the programme. It endorses the overall direction and strategy of the programme and contributes to identifying and providing additional funding and other resources as necessary.

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee comprises representatives from NARS, ARIs and IARCs. In addition, the Chair of the PSG attends committee meetings as an observer. This committee is responsible for proposing direction and providing oversight to the programme. It sets priorities based on technical advice from the working groups compiled by the Executive Secretariat and advises donors on the allocation of resources to the programme. The Steering Committee also approves the programme strategy, medium term plan and annual work-plan. It commissions reviews of the programme, advocates on behalf of the programme and seeks external technical advice as appropriate.

Executive Secretariat: The Executive Secretariat is provided by INIBAP. It serves as the programme co-ordinator and is responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the programme as well as providing a programme secretariat. It also facilitates the organisation of technical meetings, both thematic and interdisciplinary, and disseminates information to programme partners. It prepares reports and compiles lists of priorities, based on technical advice provided by the thematic working groups. Internal communication is a particularly important aspect of the programme, and the Executive Secretariat plays a critical role in stimulating contacts between groups.



Regular inter-group information exchange is ensured through a programme newsletter, which is either published separately or included as a "ProMusa" section in an existing newsletter. The Executive Secretariat also has an important role to play in providing feedback to the programme and ensuring a link with the end-users.

Thematic working groups: The working groups are the heart of the programme. The members of these groups implement the programme work-plan through a project portfolio which includes projects carried out by individual participants as well as collaborative projects involving a number of participants funded through various mechanisms. Working groups cover the major research needs, which at this stage include Genetic improvement, Fusarium, Sigatoka, Nematodes and Viruses. This complement of working groups is however dynamic in nature and new groups may evolve during the lifetime of the programme.

A global and regional evaluation programme operates in parallel to the improvement research activities allowing NARS, and subsequently farmers, early access to improved material as it is produced. The evaluation programme not only provides a mechanism for the rapid dissemination of research results to farmers, but is also a channel through which information from farmers is fed back into the programme.

Activities since Guadeloupe

In the weeks following the Guadeloupe meeting, the working group participants have been finalising the medium term plans and other working group documents drafted during the meeting. This has included circulating the relevant documents to interested scientists not present in Guadeloupe in order to ensure their involvement in the development of the working group work-plans.

ProMusa has been presented to the FAO Inter-Governmental Group on Bananas who strongly endorsed the initiative at their meeting in Rome in May 1997. Members of the Group were particularly positive about the *modus operandi* of the programme and recommended ProMusa for funding to the Common Fund for Commodities. The INIBAP Support Group, at its meeting in Cairo in May 1997, also endorsed ProMusa and this group will now broaden its membership to also become the Programme Support Group for ProMusa.

Efforts are already underway to mobilise new resources for the programme. Project proposals are being developed to cover research activities which will be conducted within the framework of the programme. In addition, the World Bank has established contacts with the private sector and will be further pursuing these contacts with a view to the possibility of securing funding from this sector for certain programme activities. ■