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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ICRISAT adds *finger millet* as its 6th mandate crop

Hyderabad, India (02 October 2015) — Finger millet [*Eleusine coracana* (L.) Gaertn.], which figured among the six small millets in research portfolio of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), has now been formally made its mandate crop. This is an important recognition for a crop which has been an integral part of ICRISAT's research portfolio.

“Finger millet has always been within our mandate crops but we want to provide greater visibility to this nutri-cereal that offers so much to both smallholders in the form of economic opportunity and to consumers (including farm families) in the form of improved nutrition”, said ICRISAT Director General Dr David Bergvinson.

The ICRISAT genebank holds nearly 6,000 finger millet germplasm accessions from 24 countries, conserved for use in research and development.

Among the ICRISAT projects that focus on finger millet, the Harnessing Opportunities for Productivity Enhancement of Sorghum and Millets in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (HOPE) project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is showing encouraging results in improving productivity of finger millet and household incomes in East Africa. This was achieved by enabling farmers to adopt improved varieties and associated agronomic practices and linking producers to both input and product markets.

In Malawi, the introduction of three finger millet varieties highly valued by farmers is expected to resurrect a crop that had ‘disappeared’ from the southern region of the country. Farmers wanted access to seeds of Gulu E, ACC 32 and KNE 1124 varieties, so that they can start growing the crop again.

At a recent field day in Kenya, the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization and ICRISAT displayed six elite varieties of finger millet for participatory varietal selection by farmers. Finger millet variety U15 was the most preferred for its early maturity and grain color, while IE 3779 was preferred for its resistance to blast disease and tolerance to lodging. Through a multi-institutional collaboration, ICRISAT scientists in East and Southern African region have generated a whole genome sequence of finger millet. This opens a new chapter in future breeding of this nutritious crop.

In the Indian state of Karnataka, finger millet is among the ‘climate smart’ crops that figures high on the agenda of the government.

Along with its partners, ICRISAT is targeting commercial production of finger millet, diversification of household-level diets, value addition and processing for food, feed and industry. Efforts are being made to pilot and incubate small and medium entrepreneurs from among the farmer groups and individuals to develop products for the market.

The other mandate crops of ICRISAT are sorghum, pearl millet, chickpea, pigeonpea and groundnut.

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Read more on finger millet: http://exploreit.icrisat.org/page/small_millets/875

About ICRISAT

The **International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid-Tropics** (ICRISAT) is a non-profit, non-political organization that conducts agricultural research for development in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa with a wide array of partners throughout the world. Covering 6.5 million square kilometers of land in 55 countries, the semi-arid tropics have over 2 billion people, and 644 million of these are the poorest of the poor. ICRISAT innovations help the dryland poor move from poverty to prosperity by harnessing markets while managing risks – a strategy called Inclusive Market- Oriented development (IMOD). ICRISAT is headquartered in Patancheru, Hyderabad, Telangana, India, with two regional hubs and six country offices in sub-Saharan Africa. It is a member of the CGIAR Consortium.

About ICRISAT: www.icrisat.org; For ICRISAT's scientific information see: <http://EXPLOREit.icrisat.org>

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