

Global Leaders Launch Effort to Turn Around Africa's Failing Agriculture

The Chairman of the Implementing Committee of the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, has called on African heads of state, ministers, donors, industry leaders, farmers' organizations and others to address the continent's soil health crisis and adopt strategies to revitalize its agriculture – beginning with the first Africa Fertilizer Summit in Abuja, in June of this year.

Increasing Africa's agricultural productivity is critical to feeding a population expected to grow to 1.8 billion by 2050. More than 60 per cent of Africans are

directly engaged in agriculture. However, crop productivity over the past four decades has remained stagnant, and one-third of the people living in Sub-Saharan Africa are currently undernourished. By contrast, cereal yields in Asia have increased threefold during the same period.

A new study on African soil health covering the period 1980 to 2004, which will be released at the Africa Fertilizer Summit, shows that three-quarters of the continent's farmland is severely degraded. Soils, the basis for food production, are rapidly losing the nutrients essential to grow crops

and protect the environment. Every year, Africa's soils are depleted of nutrients valued at more than US\$4 billion.

Soil depletion combined with population growth creates environmental problems. For example, farmers often abandon infertile fields and clear forests to obtain new land. Not only is forestland being destroyed, but so is the wildlife living there.

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Members of the Eminent Persons Advisory Group launched the Africa Fertilizer Summit on 30 March.

Photo: Rockefeller Foundation

IFA Award Recognizes Dry Area Agriculture's "Renaissance Man"

John Ryan, who has been selected to receive the 2006 IFA International Crop Nutrition Award, has worked with a wide variety of techniques and issues in order to improve soil fertility and make agriculture more successful. Sustainable agriculture is only possible using a multidisciplinary approach, given the constraints of a growing and urbanizing population and limited natural resources. Such an approach considers agricultural needs, waste management and competing demands for water, among other factors.

Experimentation with lime, phosphorus, zinc, iron, sulphuric acid, industrial and human waste, micronutrients, irrigation methods – at first glance, Dr Ryan's work might seem to involve a surprisingly wide range of research areas. A closer look, however, reveals a common thread: wherever he has worked, he has applied a rigorous site-specific approach leading to solutions that integrate locally available resources and up-to-date technologies (sometimes in surprising ways) to improve yields. The types of expertise combined have

included the management of soil fertility, irrigation, and industrial and urban waste.

In a field largely dominated by specialists, Dr Ryan is a "Renaissance Man". More-

over, he has often worked under extreme conditions, ranging from harsh climates to civil war.

Dr Ryan, who hails from Ireland, earned a doctorate in soil science from University College Dublin, followed by a Master of Science in agricultural education and extension from the University of Arizona (United States). Early in his career, he came to appreciate the need to communicate effectively about agricultural research with end-users. A flair for innovation revealed itself in Arizona, where he used acid amendments from copper mining to increase native P and micronutrient availability in calcareous soils. This imaginative solution helped to reclaim sodic soils, reduced losses of nitrogen through volatilization and enhanced the efficiency of nitrogen fertigation. It also demonstrated that industrial wastes are not necessarily environmental problems, but can be a valuable agricultural resource.

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Photo: J. Ryan

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IFA participates in the International Agri-Food Network (IAFN)

- www.agrifood.net -

which represents all sectors in the food chain



Advancing Fertilizer Use and Marketing in Africa



Rob Groot, Director of IFDC's Africa Division

IFDC - An International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development



was founded in the United States in 1974. IFDC is a non-profit, public international organization with over 300 staff members in 20,

mostly developing and transitional, countries. It was established to improve the use of fertilizers and related technologies in order to address global food security challenges.

IFDC works with the full spectrum of agricultural stakeholders – including government agencies, domestic trading sectors and farming communities – to build the human and institutional capacity needed to stimulate better use and marketing of inputs that improve farm productivity. IFDC has two primary strategic objectives: 1) increasing agricultural markets and trade for farmers through a proven agribusiness development and policy model; and 2) achieving sustainable agricultural productivity through the continuous development of plant nutrient technologies. IFDC also integrates cross-cutting issues such as gender and HIV/AIDS into its work.

Working with and in Africa

IFDC-Africa's mission is to help Sub-Saharan countries in Africa to enhance agricultural productivity and to increase farmers' knowledge, technologies and policy frameworks necessary for ensuring productive, profitable and sustainable agriculture in the region. For historical reasons, the Africa Division, located in Togo, has concentrated its work in West Africa, while IFDC headquarters manages the organization's activities in eastern and southern Africa. The Africa Division has more than 130 staff members in seven West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Senegal,

Togo and Nigeria) and conducts activities in others.

IFDC-Africa is unique because its holistic approach means mobilizing efforts and resources in both the public and private sectors. IFDC also fosters the emergence of well-informed farmer organizations capable of influencing decisions in the context of a globalizing world market. IFDC-Africa encourages governments to create favourable socioeconomic conditions and enabling policy environments so that all relevant actors can contribute optimally to food security, economic development and social progress.

The organization's expertise is channelled through applied research, training and technical assistance to help increase agricultural productivity and food security. The Africa Division designs and, through its partners, implements a range of science-based agricultural activities. These activities aim to address consistently and holistically the problems and bottlenecks that constrain agricultural productivity and agribusiness development.

The IFDC approach is to form alliances and strengthen human capacity to scale up pilot and demonstration activities to reach a wider audience, in order to achieve demand-driven and market-oriented sustainable progress. IFDC serves as a facilitator and transfer agent for technology, training and technical assistance.

At the local level, IFDC works with farmer organizations and private sector trade associations to help develop value-added commodity chains and service-providing clusters. It also works to improve the natural resource base.

At the national and regional levels, IFDC supports the efforts of public and private sector organizations to improve the business and policy environment, as well as capacity for increasing agricultural trade and investment. Funding for IFDC work in West Africa comes from a variety of donors.

Current projects in West Africa demonstrate the nature and scope of IFDC's work. For example, IFDC's integrated soil fertility management (ISFM) programme

receives support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), IFA and others. This programme entails participatory learning for representatives from public, private and non-governmental organizations on techniques to increase productivity and soil fertility with mineral fertilizers and locally available soil amendments such as organic matter and rock phosphate.

IFDC-Africa also fosters the development of agribusiness clusters. When combined with ISFM, this approach, called Competitive Agricultural Systems and Enterprises (CASE), helps link farmers to markets and to value-adding opportunities. The Dutch government has agreed to fund the scaling up of the programme to reach millions of farm households, compared with thousands currently. At the same time, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is channelling support through IFDC for a regional effort aimed at improving market information services and strengthening the trade and producer organizations' capacity. Another Dutch-funded project interacts with West African intergovernmental and private sector organizations to harmonize policies and regulations in order to stimulate more robust trade in agricultural inputs.

Training is a major part of all our activities in Africa. In 2005, for example, IFDC projects in West Africa provided training for 5,700 stakeholders, of which 30 per cent were women. In 2006, IFDC has planned training workshops in Africa on the Development of Competitive Agricultural Systems; Market Information Systems;



ISFM training in Adjodogou, Togo



A retailer selling small fertilizer packs

Strengthening Producer and Trade Organizations; and Agricultural Inputs Market Development.

Consolidating and Spreading Achievements

In Africa, IFDC will continue to focus on what it does best: helping farmers, traders, governments and other stakeholders gain access to and use the research, techniques, training, information and inputs needed in order to transform the agricultural sector into a dynamic, competitive and effective force for overall development. Priorities are to:

- Ensure successful implementation of the ongoing portfolio of projects;
- Work with partners to further extend the proven techniques and approaches to many more farmers in West Africa; and
- Replicate approaches, systems and best practices in other regions of Africa.

In the quest to help Africa realize its agricultural potential and to achieve lasting food security, IFDC looks forward to continuing its partnership with African stakeholders, with the agricultural input industries and with donors. In particular, IFDC is dedicated to playing a full part in the Africa Fertilizer Summit (see related article), which will be a historic opportunity to mobilize actions aimed at improving fertilizer production, marketing and use. ●

what's working in Africa

This article is part of a special series in 2006 to highlight successful projects in Africa and draw lessons from them.

Improving the Fertilizer Link in the Agriculture Value Chain

Ames Gounhossou, a maize farmer in Togo, has learned to combine fertilizers with organic matter to improve soil quality and productivity. When Ms Gounhossou mixed NPK, urea and organic matter following the cover crop mucuna, her yield increased eightfold compared with what it would have been using the traditional method.

Ms Gounhossou's farmer group makes available a storage facility accommodating 10 tonnes of grain. A bag of maize, worth about US \$7.50 just after harvest, can later be sold for about US \$26. No matter when the sale takes place, a profit is now guaranteed to farmers who were previously unable to save their produce.

This type of learning and support is needed throughout Africa in order to meet the UN Millennium Development Goal of halving (by 2015) the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, as well as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) goal of 6 per cent annual agricultural growth.

Building Markets from the Ground up

The problems encountered in converting primarily subsistence smallholder agriculture in Africa to commercial farming, with increased production and added value, are well known. Infrastructure, distribution and transport systems are often poorly developed. Input prices at the farm gate are high, while agricultural product prices remain low. Low population densities impede the development of markets and infrastructure - reducing the potential for agricultural intensification, off-farm employment and economic growth.

But progress is being made in West Africa, with support from donors and



Ames Gounhossou in the field

facilitation from organizations such as IFDC - An International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development. A coherent, consistent, market-oriented programme combining the following five interlinked elements can help improve farmers' livelihoods:

- Demonstrating that fertilizer use can be profitable for smallholder farmers;
- Developing fertilizer dealers' capacity to increase business and services;
- Integrating agricultural inputs and harvests into commodity chains;
- Improving access to market information and other support services;
- Strengthening national and regional policies so that they encourage trade and investment.

The main reason that demand for fertilizers increases is that it is profitable to use. IFA and others have been providing funding for the promotion of integrated soil fertility management (ISFM) techniques, which improve both the efficiency and the profitability of fertilizer use. To increase land productivity, while maintaining or enhancing soil fertility, ISFM uses (as efficiently as possible) inherent soil nutrient stocks, locally available soil amendments and mineral fertilizers.

As a result of pilot efforts in 16 regions of West Africa, over 100,000 farmers are practising ISFM techniques that enhance soil fertility, fertilizer use efficiency, productivity and income.

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What's Working in Africa

Maize yields, for instance, can double or triple through the use of ISFM practices, bringing a profitable return on investment in inputs and significantly increasing rural incomes.

Reliable Private Sector Suppliers Are Key

To address the lack of availability of fertilizers and other inputs, a reliable private sector supply system needs to be developed.

The objective is to provide business and technical training to agro-input dealers. This training helps them to increase business and serve farmer clients better by:

- establishing more retail outlets;
- providing private sector extension services;
- achieving economies of scale;
- creating more competition to increase transparency and reduce transaction costs.

An integral aspect of dealer development is the establishment of trade associations that provide channels for advocacy, education, communication and sustainability.

IFDC activities with private sector dealers in Ghana began in 2002. By 2004, these activities had resulted in a cadre of 420 trained dealers servicing 260,000 farmers. Thanks to 390 new retail outlets, farmers have benefited from lower fertilizer transaction costs. The distances they have to travel to buy fertilizers have decreased by an average of 24 per cent. Purchases have increased by 11 to 26 per cent and yields by 69 to 76 per cent, depending on the crop.



Woman with child working in the field

The CASE Approach Improves Efficiency and Access

As farmers increase production, IFDC serves as a facilitator for a network of local public, private and non-governmental organizations that help to improve farmers' market access and to overcome bottlenecks. The Competitive Agricultural Systems and Enterprise (CASE) approach, which incorporates ISFM, encourages producer organizations to develop demand-driven clusters that support the growth of agribusiness and link farmers to markets.

CASE is a proven approach that increases access to inputs at lower cost, as well as value-added processing and marketing of agricultural produce, by improving the efficiency of markets and coordination between markets and producers. The Dutch government recently agreed to provide funding to scale up the CASE approach, so that a million farm households in West Africa can be reached in the next five years.

Information Systems Underpin Robust Markets

Market information systems are critical for an open, competitive, transparent and effective market. Funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), IFDC is currently strengthening West Africa's regional and national market information systems and trade organizations. This activity aims to ensure timely and commercially relevant price and other information on key traded commodities, as well as stimulate the growth and effectiveness of agricultural trade and producer organizations in the region.

Open, efficient regional markets can help reduce costs and increase the availability of fertilizers and other inputs. The main challenge is to reform and harmonize policies, regulations and practices that constrain regional marketing and impede the expansion of private sector trade and investment in agro-inputs. Efforts are under way to create common agricultural policies and common agricultural markets in West Africa, led by the West African Economic and Monetary Community (WAEMU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).



An agri-retailer in Tamale showing her licences.

Lessons for Success from the IFDC Agribusiness Approach

- Integrating the use of inherent soil nutrient stocks, locally available soil amendments and mineral fertilizers increases efficiencies and can make fertilizer use profitable, even for smallholder farmers.
- Increasing the number of qualified agricultural input dealers can help raise fertilizer demand, which leads to greater economies of scale. As a result, farmers can also gain easier access to knowledge about how best to use fertilizers and other agricultural technologies.
- A more robust retail network reduces farmers' direct costs (as a result of economies of scale and competition among providers) and indirect costs (by reducing the distances travelled and the time needed to reach the retail outlets).
- Associations of farmers and retailers can create demand-driven clusters to support the growth of agribusiness and to help link farmers to markets.
- Open, efficient regional markets can help reduce costs and increase the availability of fertilizers and other inputs.
- Further reform and harmonization of policies, regulations and practices are needed to foster the expansion of private sector trade and investment in agricultural inputs.
- The fertilizer industry can contribute to accelerating demand growth through investments in farmer knowledge, private sector marketing systems, the establishment and training of national and regional dealer associations and improving access to regional fertilizer and trade information.

The photos of the two articles are all from IFDC.

from principle to practice

This article is part of a series that explores how IFA members integrate concepts such as sustainable development into their business strategy and daily activities.

Leveraging Knowledge in Agriculture

Johan J. van Biljon, General Manager Agricultural Services, and Megan A'Bear, Manager Research & Development

The Omnia Group produces a wide range of industrial and specialty chemicals, including fertilizers. Inspired by its founders, Omnia has a culture that combines the values of a family business, such as a strong commitment to integrity, with values of professional management, including a robust spirit of enterprise. The company is well established in Africa and growing worldwide, with operations in a dozen countries and clients in another twelve.

In addition to its fertilizer business, described in more detail below, Omnia is involved in a number of initiatives to support the development of the communities in which we do business.

Growing People and Developing Communities

Starting at school level, we have a Community School Project that aims to develop and equip future bursary holders destined for universities or technikons (technical colleges). Assistance is also given to teachers to further their knowledge.

Omnia is involved at university level in South Africa and Zambia, sponsoring students, lecturing and improving facilities, as well as commissioning research projects. We are a long-standing sponsor of Zakhe Agricultural College and Elgin Community College, which provide young people with the skills and motivation they need to succeed in the modern agricultural environment. As well as funding, Omnia provides expert advice and knowledge, in the form of lectures and other academic support. The company also makes ongoing presentations to students on career opportunities in agriculture.

In agricultural communities in South Africa, Omnia supports the Grain South Africa Small-Scale Farmer project, the Vlakfontein Sizanani project and the Lowveld Emerging Farmers project, which together reach thousands of people. Similar projects are also running in other African countries, such as Zimbabwe and Zambia. Omnia contributes training, fertilizers and laboratory services to support these initiatives. Some of these farmers reach commercial size

and have their successes recognized by awards such as the Female Farmer of the Year and the Grain SA Farmer of the Year for emerging farmers. In commercial agriculture over the past 11 years, nine of South Africa's 11 top Grain SA farmers have been our clients. We believe this is proof of the success of the Nutriology™ concept.

Improving Lives through "The Science of Growing"

Nutriology™, which we also call "The Science of Growing", is the cornerstone of Omnia's fertilizer business and a holistic approach for successfully growing crops, while contributing to farmers' profitability and well-being. Farmers can draw on Omnia's extensive product range, innovative technologies and the knowledge about using them well, to increase their profits and produce quality yields. Within the Nutriology™ framework, these tools help farmers manage soils and crops well at every stage of the growth cycle in order to take into account scarce resources and the environment.

Omnia's prosperity depends on that of our farmer customers, so we have developed products and technology to make sustainable production profitable for them. For the farmer, profitability is a prerequisite with respect to sustainable crop production. Our granular, water-soluble and foliar fertilizers and soil conditioners are designed to help farmers achieve these goals.

The Nutriology™ concept is designed to ensure that crops are provided with the right nutrients at the right time and in the right

quantities, reducing the risk of over-fertilization and environmental pollution. Innovative technologies such as OmniSap™ (plant sap analysis), OmniPrecise™ (precision agriculture) and OmniBio™ (microbial analysis) help farmers use resources optimally and to remain in step with nature. Nutriology™ helps prevent physical, chemical and biological degradation of the soil. This is a priority if agricultural practices are to be sustainable.

Using these technologies and leveraging related knowledge can lead to substantial improvements in profitability. For example, one potato farmer was able to increase profits by 53 per cent by implementing Nutriology™.

Growing Crops and Increasing Quality Yields

Omnia's product line and support for growers aim to optimize crop development at all stages of production. The foundation is laid using soil and microbial analyses to create a favourable soil environment for maximum root development and nutrient uptake. Samples may be taken in the conventional manner. If more sophistication is required, precision agricultural techniques, ranging from correcting soil acidity and mineral shortages to applying products that encourage microbial development, are employed.

As the crop develops, sap analyses at critical stages of the crop cycle allow farmers to correct nutrient deficiencies before yield and/or produce quality are negatively affected.

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Photos: Omnia

The Nutriology™ concept can be used from subsistence to high-tech commercial farming.


highlights

Governments Agree on New Chemicals Management Framework

In what represents a groundbreaking political precedent, government delegations and representatives of civil society – including business and industry – have jointly negotiated the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). The Strategic Approach was adopted at the first International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 6 February. The joint decision-making involved is especially noteworthy, as this was the largest gathering of world environment ministers to date.

SAICM is aimed at achieving sustainable chemicals management by 2020. The benefits associated with chemical products are to be maximized, and their unwanted impacts minimized. There is a focus on helping developing countries to improve their chemicals management capacity. Harmonizing and simplifying management procedures will produce global as well as national benefits.

While SAICM is not a binding legal instrument, it will establish global regulatory trends for the foreseeable future, with wide-ranging impacts on the chemicals industry and downstream chemicals users. The Strategic Approach will provide the framework for future international, regional and national chemicals management arrangements and regulations.

In addition to the Dubai Declaration and the Overarching Policy Strategy, which are the core of SAICM, the Conference approved a Global Plan of Action that sets out proposed “work areas and activities” for achieving implementation. The Conference recommended that the Plan of Action be used and further developed as a working tool and guidance document.

For industry, the SAICM process has had several positive outcomes:

- SAICM enhances the predictability of global chemical regulation and adds weight to attempts to harmonize and otherwise simplify procedures, which will facilitate trade;
- Implementation of SAICM will be firmly grounded in science and risk assessment;
- Enhancing the ability of developing countries to adopt existing good chemicals management practices is emphasized;
- The positive role of stewardship in the Strategic Approach is specifically acknowledged in the Dubai Declaration. In particular, reference is made to the chemical industry's Responsible Care programme.

IFA was represented in Dubai as part of a strong industry delegation, led by the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA). ●

Cape Town Programme Highlights

A rich and varied programme awaits IFA members from 5 to 7 June at the 74th IFA Annual Conference in Cape Town.

During the Fertilizer Demand Meeting on the morning of Monday, 5 June, a brief overview concerning global-level forecasts will be combined with four presentations summarizing prospects for agriculture and fertilizer demand in Brazil, Pakistan, South Africa and the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa. Other presentations will provide perspectives on long-term fertilizer requirements and on the outlook for feed demand.

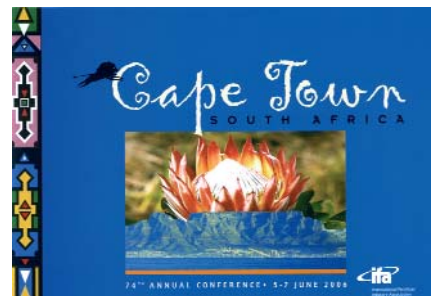
The main programme will begin on Tuesday, 6 June, with the welcoming address by Alfred Pitse, Chairman of the Fertilizer Society of South Africa (FSSA). The Opening Session will conclude with the presentation of the 2006 IFA International Crop Nutrition Award to John Ryan, Soil Fertility Specialist at the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) [see related story].

Later on Tuesday, the First General Session will, for the first time, be organized thematically. Three speakers will address the topic “Securing Tomorrow's Markets”. John Kearsley, from SSY Consultancy & Research, will discuss managing risk in a volatile freight market. A speaker from

EcoSecurities will present an overview of how companies can take advantage of carbon trading to convert environmental management into a commercial opportunity. Finally, Tom Mabesa from CropLife South Africa will explain how, across the continent, CropLife's stewardship activities are preparing tomorrow's commercial opportunities.

Once again, of course, members will be able to benefit from the Secretariat's supply and demand outlooks for fertilizer in the medium term. These will be presented during the Second and Third General Sessions, both of which will take place on the afternoon of Wednesday, 7 June.

IFA members will have plenty of time to meet informally during breaks and the organized social events, notably the President's Reception at the Castle of Good Hope on Monday and the Closing Evening offered jointly by IFA and its South African members on Wednesday. ●



Photos: South African Tourism

Innovation, Safety and Environment Featured at IFA Technical Symposium

Innovation and Core Technology for Sustainable Growth was the theme of this year's IFA Technical Symposium, held in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 25 to 28 April. Some 130 international participants gathered at Vilnius' historic City Hall for a series of lively and informative discussions related to critical fertilizer production issues.

The biennial Technical Symposium is a key industry event. As in the past, participants examined developments in traditional production technology. However, the Vilnius Symposium also included a parallel "track" concerned with safety, health and environmental (SHE) issues that affect fertilizer producers' daily business operations. Participants could review 34 technical papers on topics ranging from climate change and workplace safety management to ammonium nitrate safety, product stewardship and how to optimize plant operating cycles. The technical papers are accessible by members on the IFA web site.

Immediately following what was acknowledged to be a highly successful and innovative meeting, two local IFA member companies, AB Achema and AB Lifosa,

hosted site visits to their plants for more than 80 of the participants.

The Vilnius Symposium provided an opportunity for the IFA Technical Committee to meet and discuss its past and current work plan, as well as its overall strategic direction for the next two years. In particular, it reviewed draft reports of the recent emissions and safety benchmarking surveys. These surveys are designed to allow member companies to better assess their operations and relative competitiveness, using key industry metrics.

The Technical Committee made important decisions regarding a review of existing analysis and sampling standards, promulgated by intergovernmental organizations, and a global fertilizer industry product stewardship initiative. In addition, it discussed how to move forward with respect to issues surrounding phosphogypsum storage.

More information on the Vilnius Symposium and the Technical Committee Meeting is available from Ben Muirheid, IFA's new Technical Executive Secretary [see related story]. ●

IFA Names Technical Executive Secretary

The IFA Secretariat is pleased to announce the arrival of its newest staff member, Benedyct Muirheid. On 1 April, Ben assumed the duties of Executive Secretary, Technical Committee. He joined IFA from the World Liquefied Petroleum Gas Association, where he was Director of International Market Development. Ben was previously a consultant for international market and business development. Before that, he worked for five years in the Foreign Commercial Service of the United States Embassy in Paris, where he became Director of its Strategic Industries Group.

Ben is a dual citizen of France and the United States. He obtained his Master of Business Administration (MBA) Degree from the prestigious Institut Européen de l'Administration (INSEAD) in Fontainebleau. His Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Virginia focused on international relations, with an emphasis on economics and political science.

"Ben's strong policy and business background makes him an ideal candidate to help the Technical Committee continue re-orientating itself to the vital areas of safety, health, environment and increased efficiency," said IFA Director General Luc Maene. "We are pleased to welcome him to our dynamic management team." ●



Photo: IFA/K.S. Sukalac

Information Update from IFA

Members may be interested in the following new releases from the IFA Secretariat:

- IFADATA Statistics from 1973 to 2003 cd-rom(AG);*
- Quarterly ammonia, urea, phosphate rock, processed phosphates and sulphur statistics covering the period January-December 2005 (PIT);
- Final sulphur and sulphuric acid statistics for 2003-2004 (PIT);
- Annual potash statistics for 2005 (PIT);
- Papers presented at the 2005 IFA Production and International Trade Conference in São Paulo, Brazil (PIT);
- Chinese translation of "Short-Term Prospects for World Agriculture and Fertilizer Demand: 2004/05-2005/06" (AG);

- Chinese translation of "Global Fertilizer Supply and Trade 2005-2006" (PIT).

In addition, IFA has recently published several documents for a wider general public, including:

- Chinese translation of "Summary Report - World Agriculture and Fertilizer Demand, Global Fertilizer Supply and Trade: 2005-2006" (AG and PIT).

IFA Online in Chinese

IFA also recently launched its first Chinese-language web portal (www.fertilizer.org/ifa/chinese_portal/home_chinese_portal.asp), which contains extensive information on fertilizers and their use as well as about their market. While most of the documents available on this site are reserved for IFA members, a number can be accessed by the general public. Unveiled for the Chinese New Year, the portal was featured at the IFA Agriculture Conference in Kunming [see related story].

* Enquiries may be addressed to the pertinent IFA Committee, as indicated in brackets: AG = Agriculture Committee; PIT = Production and International Trade Committee

highlights

IFA Conference Provides Fertile Ground for Making Agriculture More Sustainable

“Soil fertility and nutrient management provide the most economical, practical and time-efficient solutions for correcting nutrient deficiencies and nourishing the increasing population worldwide.” Thus David

Zeng summarized the outcome of the IFA Agriculture Conference in Kunming, China, which took place from 27 February to 2 March. Mr Zeng, of The Mosaic Company, was the Convenor of the Conference Task Force.

Zeng summarized the outcome of the IFA Agriculture Conference in Kunming, China, which took place from 27 February to 2 March. Mr Zeng, of The Mosaic Company, was the Convenor of the Conference Task Force. To improve land productivity, food security and human well-being, speakers pointed to a number of integrated, comprehensive approaches that involve multidisciplinary expertise. These include remote sensing, site-specific nutrient management and biotechnology.

Speakers also examined the extension challenges that are part of any type of technology transfer. This was the first time extension services had been directly addressed during an IFA Agriculture Conference. Case studies from China, India and the United Kingdom highlighted the complementary roles of government, industry, and co-operative and private advisory systems in moving new technologies and practices from the laboratory to the field.

The Conference also looked at the framework constituted by national agricultural policies. Participants were told about the major soil testing programme launched in 2005 by the Government of China. This programme, which will continue throughout 2006, should greatly improve nutrient management in one of the world's most important fertilizer markets.



Photo: IFA/P. Heffer

Yunnan Province where Kunming is located, is an important and growing centre of agriculture in China.



Photo: IFA/K.S. Sukalac

David Zeng

The Kunming Conference focused on optimizing resource use efficiency to achieve sustainable intensification of agriculture. Its overall purpose was to integrate plant nutrition into wider agricultural management issues, so that ways to improve crop production in general can be identified. The 212 participants (of which 132 from China itself) represented 25 countries. They included policy makers and scientists, as well as representatives of the fertilizer industry and many partner organizations.

As a backdrop to discussions on improving agricultural practices, participants were reminded that the supply of food and other agricultural goods depends on the availability of good quality land – which is becoming increasingly scarce. Moreover, poor land



Photo: IFA/D. Sandaliran



Some participants visited the trading floor of the Kunming International Flora Auction, based on the system used in the world's largest flower auction, in Aalsmeer, The Netherlands (left), and the neighbouring Dounan wholesale flower market (right).

“Whatever policy or technological solutions we develop,” cautioned David Zeng in his closing remarks, “they have to be attractive to the farmers. It is our goal and mandate to improve farmers' bottom line by growing the top line.” The Kunming Conference provided fertile ground for the creation of new links and alliances to work out innovative solutions that will accelerate progress towards this goal.

The Conference was organized in partnership with the China National Chemical Construction Corporation (CNCCC). Vital support was provided by the following IFA members: Rio Tinto Borax, Mosaic China, Yuntianhua Group Co., Ltd and Yunnan Three Circles Chemicals.

Presentations, speeches and poster abstracts from the Conference can be downloaded from www.fertilizer.org/ifa/news/2006_06.asp. A cd-rom of the conference is also available on request (see order form page 12).

On the day following the conference, the participants chose between a fertilizer plant visit at Yunnan Three Circles Chemicals and a tour of Kunming's famous flower production.



Information resources

IFA Conducts Training Session to Improve Fertilizer Demand Forecasts

To ensure that IFA members receive the highest quality fertilizer demand forecasts possible, on 3 and 4 March the Agriculture Committee conducted its first ever training session concerned with improving these forecasts. Ten people from eight Asian countries participated in the event, which took place in Kunming, China, immediately following the IFA Agriculture Conference.

Participants received background information on IFA's fertilizer demand forecasts and its forecast methodologies. The crop-based, expert-based model recommended by the IFA Working Group on Fertilizer Demand Forecasts was presented in detail. Successful experience using the model in Poland was also presented.

This theoretical introduction was followed by practical exercises. The participants identified the main constraints to developing sound forecasts and discussed ways to alleviate them. On the second day, they reported on the outcome of the exercises they had carried out. Valuable exchanges of experiences and views were stimulated by these reports.

The presentations were made available to all participants, as well as to the Working Group on Fertilizer Demand Forecasts. In light of the positive feedback with regard to this training session, the Secretariat intends to organize similar sessions in Eastern Europe and Latin America in 2007 and 2008.

The Secretariat wishes to thank Christian Pallière of the European Fertilizer Manufacturers Association (EFMA) for his very active contribution to this initiative.



Christian Pallière of EFMA debates forecasting methodology with Mohammad J. Malakouti of the Soil and Water Research Institute (SWRI) of Iran.

FAO Fertilizer Use by Crop series



Fertilizer Use by Crop in India

FAO, Rome, Italy, 2005. 45 pp.

Fertilizer Use by Crop in Zimbabwe

FAO, Rome, Italy, 2006. 54 pp.

Fertilizer Use by Crop in the Sudan

FAO, Rome, Italy, 2006. 45 pp.

Some copies of these three publications are available from IFA (see order form page 12).

Contact

FAO Sales and Marketing Group, Rome, Italy
Fax: +39 06 57053360
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The publications can be downloaded from FAO's AGL online database at
www.fao.org/ag/agl/oldocs.jsp

Outgrowing the Earth The Food Security Challenge in an Age of Falling Water Tables and Rising Temperatures

L. R. Brown, Earth Policy Institute. Norton Edition, New York, USA, 2004. 240 pp.
ISBN 0 393 32725 6

Contact

W.W. Norton,
New York, USA
www.wwnorton.com

For information on the Earth Policy Institute
www.earth-policy.org



Minerales para la agricultura en latinoamérica

Ed. H. Nielson, R. Sarudiansky. Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 2005. 574 pp.
ISBN 987 22647 0 8



Comercio y abastecimiento moderno de fertilizantes

R. Melgar, M.T. Duggan, INTA, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2006. 196 pp.
ISBN 950 504 584 0

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Forecast of Food, Farming and Fertilizer Use in the European Union 2005-2015

EFMA, Brussels, Belgium, Brochure, 2006. 7 pp.

Contact

EFMA, Brussels, Belgium
Fax: +32 2 6753961
main@efma.be
www.efma.org

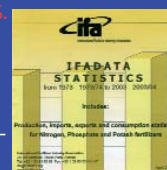


NOW AVAILABLE IFADATA Statistics from 1973 - 1973/74 to 2003 - 2003/04

Includes: production, imports, exports and consumption statistics for nitrogen, phosphate and potassium fertilizers.
IFA, April 2006. cd-rom.

Restricted to IFA members.
For further IFA statistics see page 7.

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Items are included on this page as a matter of information.

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**word: Association**

Unleashing the Lions

Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa and Ghana could rival Asian countries like South Korea economically by 2015. This is the view of Herman Cohen, former US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. Mr Cohen, a retired



Luc M. Maene
IFA Director General

career diplomat who continues to specialize in African affairs, operates a consulting firm that establishes links between private sector actors in Africa and the United States. His optimism contrasts with the pessimism of many other observers, for whom Africa is virtually a lost cause.

Herman Cohen knows Africa better than most people know their own country. He emphasizes that the Asian “tigers” were at a similar level of development in the 1960s. To flourish in the way these Asian countries began to do a few decades ago, he says, the African “lions” need to be able to profit from their agricultural assets and comparatively cheap labour, which could be a plus with respect to developing its manufacturing sector. Mr Cohen also predicts that growing Chinese investment in Africa could create a win-win situation, with African development stimulated by Chinese demand.

William Easterly, an economics professor at New York University, shares this optimism. Professor Easterly argued in a recent *Washington Post* editorial that western countries’ “focus on sensational tragedies obscures the achievement of people who are succeeding even against tremendous odds. Economic development in Africa will depend – as it has elsewhere and throughout the history of the modern world – on the success of private-sector entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs and African political reformers. It will not depend on the activities of patronizing, bureaucratic, unaccountable and poorly informed outsiders.”

He begins his editorial by listing the large number of private and public African aid efforts launched in 2005. Pointing out that he knows experienced and successful African entrepreneurs who were turned away by aid agencies, he cynically sums up the situation: “Everyone, it seems, was invited to the ‘Save Africa’ campaign of 2005 except for the Africans.”

I have been involved in international development for many years, and I have to admit that 12 months ago, I was as sceptical as the next person. But there are signs that things may just be changing, and I sincerely hope they do. In June, the first Africa Fertilizer Summit will be held by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) under the personal leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

When the Fertilizer Summit's Eminent Persons Advisory Group met on 30 March in New York [see related article], I was struck by the personal commitment of the Africans around the table. I was further impressed by how well thought out the aims of the Summit have been. Rigorous preparations are going on behind the scenes to give the Summit substance and to differentiate it from previous meetings that were essentially talking shops.

It is the African leaders involved who have come to the conclusion that their countries' development will remain limited until their agricultural sectors begin to grow. Overwhelmed by the large number of tasks required, it was the African leaders who decided to focus on fertilizers, not as a magic bullet, but as a logical entry point that will provide early returns as they address other issues – strengthening input and output markets, developing infrastructures, helping farmers access affordable credit, and so on. They also realize that they must make sure that fertilizer use is encouraged in a way that will avoid excesses and related problems. Each of the African governments involved is busy developing its own customized action plan, as are the regional authorities in Africa.

If the Africa Fertilizer Summit achieves its objectives, we may finally be able to witness long-promised African growth. The continent has many assets, including millions of people who desire a better life. If Africa's leaders now understand how to unleash that potential, the Fertilizer Summit could make a dramatic difference. Helping Africa take charge of its own future would be a great honour, and all of us in the fertilizer industry could proudly claim our small role. But ultimately Africa will only succeed if its own people take the lion's share of the responsibility. ●

continued from page 3

Leveraging Knowledge in Agriculture

Understanding the physiology of the crops we work with is essential to achieving both yield and quality improvements. Based on knowledge possessed by our agronomic force, farmers may use biostimulant products to improve root growth, flowering, fruit setting and development. Flourishing crops often have greater appetites, so we help farmers adjust their fertilization to support increased nutritional demands, so that produce quality is not adversely affected.

Hand in hand with this is the need to address plant stress, which is managed through skilled application of innovative tools and products.

Top production is achieved by managing soil/climate/crop interactions for the benefit of the producer, the environment and the consumer. It is a constant endeavour to increase the client's profit while lowering risk. Our research work frequently not only reduces production risk (less variability), but increases the minimum yield that farmers can expect.

The success of the Nutriology™ approach is underpinned by Omnia's fertilizer agronomists, the largest such team in Southern Africa. They are on farms throughout the growing season to help farmers achieve optimal production that is good for their crops, good for their economic development and good for the environment. Helping them is our contribution to sustainable agriculture.

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Calendar

While every attempt is made to provide accurate information, IFA cannot guarantee the details for non-IFA events. Contact the organizers for confirmation.

IFA - 2006

5 - 7 June
74th IFA Annual Conference #
 Cape Town, South Africa

13 - 16 November
IFA Asia-Pacific Crossroads 2006 "Growing Markets, Nurturing Success" incorporating the 2006 IFA Production and International Trade Conference programme
 Chiang Mai, Thailand
 Registration opens in July 2006

5 - 7 December
32nd IFA Enlarged Council Meeting #
 Buenos Aires, Argentina
 Registration opens in July 2006

Restricted to IFA members

Non-IFA - 2006

15 - 16 May
IFDC* – Strengthening Market Information Systems Abuja, Nigeria

9 - 13 June
NEPAD – Africa Fertilizer Summit Abuja, Nigeria
 Fax: +1 256 381 7408 Fax: +27 11 313 3778
fertilizersummit@nepad.org AFS.secretariat@ifdc.org
www.AfricaFertilizerSummit.org

19 - 21 June
AFA – Workshop "Turn Around & Maintenance Management"
 Aqaba, Jordan
 Fax: +20 2 4172347 info@afa.com.eg www.afa.com.eg

19 - 23 June
IFDC* – Strengthening Agricultural Trade Organizations
 Bamako, Mali

20 - 24 June 2006
International Oil Palm Conference & Exhibition 2006
 Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia
 Fax: +603 7880 2817 info@expam.com www.iopc2006.com

27 - 29 June
IPI – International Workshop on Effective Fertilization and Soil Fertility Minsk, Belarus
 Fax: + 41 43 810 49 25 brissa5@mail.belpak.by
www.ipipotash.org/events/75+anniversary+BRISSA+in+Minsk.html

5 - 7 July 2006
FMB – 4th East European Fertilizer Conference & Exhibition
 Riga, Latvia
 Fax: +44 208 979 7866 fmb@fmb-group.co.uk www.fmb-group.co.uk

9 - 15 July
18th World Congress of Soil Science Philadelphia, PA, USA
 Fax: +1 608 273 2021 Lee.Sommers@colostate.edu www.18wcss.org

16 July - 6 August
IAAS – World Congress "Sustainable Development – Environmental Protection & Agricultural Innovation"
 Kuching, Malaysia
 Fax: +45 61655688 mette@malaysia2006.dk www.malaysia2006.dk

23 - 26 July
University of Minnesota – 8th International Conference on Precision Agriculture Minneapolis, MN, USA
 Tel: +1 612 625 6721 mulla003@umn.edu
www.precision.agri.umn.edu/Conference

21 - 28 August
IFDC* – Challenges in Developing Agricultural Input Markets in Africa Arusha, Tanzania

4 - 8 September
IFDC* – Decision Support Systems and Crop Modelling
 Casablanca, Morocco

10 - 12 September
TFI – World Fertilizer Conference San Francisco, CA, USA
 Fax: +1 202 962 0577 www.tfi.org

18 - 21 September
AFA – Workshop "Import/ Export of Fertilizer, Government Policies, Shipping Arrangement & Port Handling Operations"
 Alexandria, Egypt
 Fax: +20 2 4172347 info@afa.com.eg www.afa.com.eg

19 - 21 September
New AG International – Irrigation & Fertilizer Expo
 Beijing, China
 Fax: +44 20 8744 1705 advertising@newaginternational.com
www.newaginternational.com/chinaexpos/chinaexpos

22 - 25 October
BSC – Sulphur 2006 International Conference & Exhibition
 Vienna, Austria
 Fax: +44 20 7903 2444 conferences@crugroup.com
www.britishtsulphurevents.com

25 - 27 October
FMB – 20th European Fertilizer Conference & Exhibition
 Marbella, Spain
 Fax: +44 20 8979 7866 fmb@fmb-group.co.uk www.fmb-group.co.uk

6 - 10 November
IFDC* – NPK Production Alternatives Southeast Asia

9 - 11 November
Recherphos - The Second International Conference on the Valorization of Phosphates and Phosphorous Compounds
 Marrakech, Morocco
 Fax: +212 22 24 64 41 contact@recherphos.com
www.recherphos.com/covaphos2.htm

*IFDC – An International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development
 Fax: +1 256 381 7408 hrd@ifdc.org www.ifdc.org

To view a more exhaustive list of conferences click on "Conferences and Events" on IFA's web site.

continued from page 1 **African Summit**

A full range of issues concerning African agriculture, fertilizer use, hunger and the environment were discussed at the 30 March meeting of the Fertilizer Summit's Eminent Persons Advisory Group, where the African soil health study was previewed. African leaders consider the Fertilizer Summit an essential part of NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme, which aims to raise farm yields by six per cent annually by 2015 and to reduce food insecurity by half, in line with the Millennium Development Goals agreed at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000.

IFA welcomes the initiative taken by Africa's leaders to organize the Fertilizer Summit. IFA Director General Luc Maene is a member of the Eminent Persons Advisory Group. The Fertilizer Industry also takes part in the Summit's Technical Committee, and IFA contributes to the Fertilizer Summit Communications Strategy Group.

For more information on the Africa Fertilizer Summit, see www.africafertilizersummit.org.



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IFA comprises around 450 member companies in more than 80 countries and includes manufacturers of fertilizers, raw material suppliers, regional and national associations, research institutes, traders and engineering companies.

IFA collects, compiles and disseminates information on the production and consumption of fertilizers and acts as a forum for its members and others to meet and address technical, agronomic, supply and environmental issues.

IFA also sponsors research related to the efficient use of plant nutrients in agriculture, and liaises closely with relevant international organizations, such as the World Bank, FAO, UNEP and other UN agencies.

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IFA Director General

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continued from page 1 **IFA Award**

Dr Ryan was Professor of Soil Science at the American University of Beirut for 11 years. After a year spent as Visiting Professor at the University of Arizona, he joined the University of Nebraska (United States) as Professor of Agronomy and Soil Scientist based at Settat, Morocco, as part of the USAID-sponsored Dryland Development Project. Throughout this period, he worked with scientists from other disciplines to develop new synergies.

For the past 14 years, Dr Ryan has been a Soil Fertility Specialist at the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) in Syria. ICARDA is one of the 16 centres in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). At ICARDA, Dr Ryan has supervised the soil laboratory, developed laboratory techniques and training, emphasized nutrient dynamics in cropping systems, studied the implications of soil carbon changes in soils and demonstrated the potential of municipal wastewater as a source of nutrients. This work has contributed to improved fertilization and integrated water management for irrigation, as well as supporting the provi-

sion of additional sewage plants in the Middle East.

The prestige of Dr Ryan's work, especially in the field of dryland agriculture, is reflected by the many awards that recognize both its quality and its international dimension. These include the International Soil Science Award and the International Service in Agronomy Award. Dr Ryan is a fellow of the American Society of Agronomy and the Soil Science Society of America. In recognition of his contribution to international scientific literature, he has also been made a Doctor of Science by University College Dublin.

Dr Ryan is an associate editor/editorial board member of several regional and international journals, including the European Journal of Agronomy, Nutrient Cycling in Agroecosystems and Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems. He is on the Scientific Advisory Committee of The World Phosphate Institute (IMPHOS).

IFA member Kemira GrowHow Oyj nominated Dr Ryan for the IFA award, which he will accept on 6 June during the Opening Session of the 74th IFA Annual Conference.

IFA Request Form fertilizers  agriculture **May 2006**

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