

DIALOGUES

Innovating towards climate-resilient food production

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Innovating towards climate-resilient food production

by Michael Keller, Secretary General, International Seed Federation (ISF)

Amid a worldwide health crisis and a continuing climate emergency, the search continues for ways to transform agriculture towards a more sustainable food system. Today we face enormous pressure to produce enough food while adapting to climate change. Warmer weather and more frequent extreme conditions will bring more pests and diseases, so plants must become more resilient, using resources such as nutrients and water more efficiently.

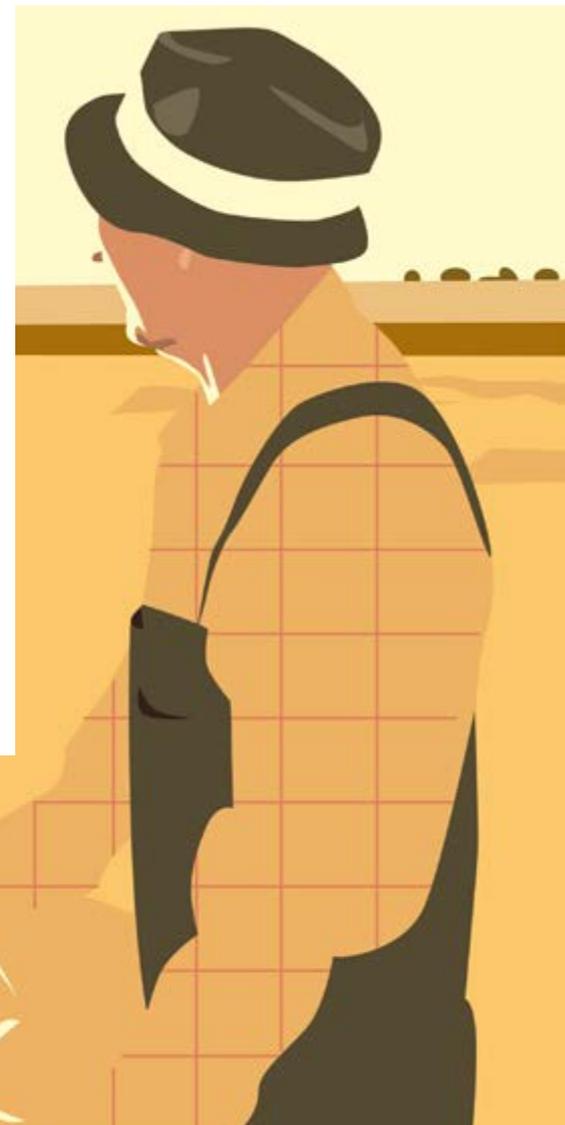
Fortunately, science and nature provide us with important tools. For over a century, plant breeders have been successfully selecting, breeding, and improving plants to the benefit of farmers and society alike: the doubling of Mexican wheat yields in the 1960s, the rescue of hundreds of millions from starvation in South Asia, and the increase of European crop yields after World War II. Today's improved varieties are even more productive, more nutritious, more resilient.

Plant breeding delivers innovations that meet the needs of farmers and consumers. With the help of the latest breeding methods, plant breeding will be more than ever part of the solution towards climate-resilient agriculture.

Genome editing has the potential to increase crop resilience and solve challenges for farmers and the planet. Ever since, breeders have been working on improving varieties – and with the latest breeding methods, breeders are able to make improvements with more precision than ever before and to support beneficial characteristics such as drought tolerance or improved nutrition.



Michael Keller is Secretary General of the International Seed Federation.



These tools could help breeders deliver improved crop varieties more efficiently, providing farmers with crops that have a better chance of survival and, thus, allow them to grow enough while improving their use of natural resources like energy, land and water.

As a society, we need full and open discussions about innovation to achieve climate resilient food production. One of the most effective ways to spark dialogue is to align with other actors in the value chain, and for ISF, coalescing with farmers is a clear and obvious step. The seed sector and farmers are working towards the same goals and must continue to strengthen cooperation and build understanding. That is why my organization, ISF, actively engages with the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO) and its Climakers Initiative, which puts farmers at the heart of the discussions on climate change.

Like WFO, ISF recognizes the key role of farmers in providing food for the world in a sustainable way. With seed as one of the most critical inputs to agricultural production, both farmers and the seed sector are similarly seeking solutions to the agricultural and ecological challenges facing our world and achieving together the Sustainable Developments Goals 2030. We know that this cannot be done in isolation. It is only through our collective and conscious efforts that we will make a difference. I would like to call for an active, joint engagement on our way to the Food Systems Summit 2021, which provides a unique opportunity to discuss and share solutions to transform and improve our way to feed 9 billion people on the planet.

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