

## Sweetening Lives with Sweetpotato

*A five-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will help set the groundwork for reducing malnutrition, combating vitamin A deficiency, and improving incomes for 10 million African households within 10 years*

[Des Moines, Iowa, October 15, 2009]

The International Potato Center is launching a major project to leverage the untapped potential of sweetpotato to significantly improve the nutrition, incomes, and food production of farming families in sub-Saharan Africa, especially among impoverished women and children. The project, entitled Sweetpotato Action for Security and Health in Africa (SASHA), will be implemented in eight Sub-Saharan African countries, and is supported by a five-year, \$21 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Sweetpotato is the third most important food crop in East Africa in terms of production and the fourth most important in Southern Africa. It can produce better yields in poor conditions with fewer inputs and less labor than other staples, making it particularly suitable for households threatened by migration, civil disorder, or diseases such as AIDS. Yet the potential of sweetpotato to address these challenges is largely untapped due to a lack of investment to improve yields, market potential, and its negative perception as a poor person's food.

“This project will improve the food security, nutrition, and livelihoods of at least 150,000 families directly, with an indirect impact on 1 million families in Sub-Saharan Africa in five years, and the creation of conditions to reach 10 million households in 10 years.” explains Dr. Pamela K. Anderson, Director General of the International Potato Center.

SASHA will also focus on empowering women farmers. “Women are the nutritional guardians of the family and the primary producers of sweetpotato, but don't typically reap the rewards from their labor,” says Dr. Anderson. “This project tackles this challenge directly by including an African gender specialist and integrating strategies to ensure women have a full voice in project interventions and gain equitably from them.”

Along with white sweetpotato varieties commonly grown in Sub-Saharan Africa, SASHA will promote the orange-fleshed varieties that are rich in pro-vitamin A. These varieties can significantly lessen Vitamin A deficiency that threatens an estimated 43 million Sub-Saharan children under age 5. Vitamin A deficiency contributes to high rates of blindness, disease, and premature death in children and pregnant women.

To meet consumer and producer preferences, the project also aims to develop a wide range of locally-adapted sweetpotato varieties through conventional breeding that are resistant to drought and disease. Because conventional breeding has not been successful at creating varieties resistant to weevils, which can wipe out 60 to 100 percent of sweetpotato crops during droughts, the project will use advances in biotechnology to develop weevil-resistant varieties.

SASHA will address a major challenge for smallholder sweetpotato farmers, regarding access to disease-free planting material, in time for the planting season. The program will increase the availability of healthy vines for planting and will explore novel systems for disseminating planting material to more cost-effectively benefit poor producers, especially women and their families. A final component of the project involves establishing three regional support programs, based in leading national program research centers in Ghana, Uganda, and Mozambique, to promote sustainable local breeding skills and capacity.

“We will work with local scientists, partners, and stakeholders and in close collaboration with the Alliance for a Green Revolution (AGRA) to ensure that we strengthen the capacity to engage in sweetpotato breeding *in Africa for Africa*,” explains Dr. Jan Low, who will be leading the project from the Center’s Regional Office in Nairobi, Kenya. AGRA is currently funding doctoral training in conventional breeding within the region as well as providing financial support to sweetpotato breeders in several national programs. CIP scientists will backstop this training effort and together with national breeders test new methods to accelerate the development and release of improved sweetpotato varieties.”

SASHA is part of a 10-year, multi-donor Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative, which seeks to reduce child malnutrition and improve smallholder incomes and livelihoods through greater awareness, expanded market opportunities, and the diversified use of sweetpotato in Sub-Saharan Africa. It’s potential for sweetening the lives of Africa’s poor is widely recognized.

“Uganda has seen how sweetpotato has helped provide food security during times of severe food shortage and when other crops succumb to disease. We stand ready to share our experience with others.” says Dennis Kyetere, Director of the National Agricultural Research Organization of Uganda.

This grant is part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Agricultural Development initiative, which is working with a wide range of partners to provide millions of small farmers in the developing world with tools and opportunities to boost their yields, increase their incomes, and build better lives for themselves and their families. The foundation is working to strengthen the entire agricultural value chain—from seeds and soil to farm management and market access—so that progress against hunger and poverty is sustainable over the long term.

In conjunction with Bill Gates’ keynote address today at the World Food Prize Symposium in Des Moines, Iowa, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced this grant, along with a package of nine agricultural development projects totaling \$120 million to address long-term food security.

“Melinda and I believe that helping the poorest small-holder farmers grow more and get it to market is the world’s single most powerful lever for reducing hunger and poverty,” Gates said.

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October 14, 2009

# Bill Gates to Call for United Action to Support World's Poorest Farmers

## Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to announce \$120 million in new agriculture grants

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

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DES MOINES, Iowa -- Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, today urged governments, donors, researchers, farmer groups, environmentalists, and others to set aside old divisions and join forces to help millions of the world's poorest farming families boost their yields and incomes so they can lift themselves out of hunger and poverty. Gates said the effort must be guided by the farmers themselves, adapted to local circumstances, and sustainable for the economy and the environment.

Speaking at the World Food Prize in Des Moines, Iowa, in his first major address on [agricultural development](#), Gates laid out the foundation's vision, which includes investments in better seeds, training, market access, and policies that support small farmers. Gates also announced nine foundation grants totaling \$120 million that illustrate the range of efforts necessary to empower millions of small farmers to grow enough to build better, healthier lives.

"Melinda and I believe that helping the poorest small-holder farmers grow more crops and get them to market is the world's single most powerful lever for reducing hunger and poverty," Gates said.

After his speech, Gates was joined on the stage by the [2009 World Food Prize laureate, Dr. Gebisa Ejeta](#), a renowned Ethiopian sorghum researcher who was honored for his work to develop hybrids resistant to drought and the Striga weed—advances credited with increasing food security for hundreds of millions of Africans.

The foundation's new grants include funding for legumes that fix nitrogen in the soil, higher yielding varieties of sorghum and millet, and new varieties of sweet potatoes that resist pests and have a higher vitamin content. Other projects will help the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa support African governments in developing policies that serve small farmers; help get information to farmers by radio and cell phone; support school feeding programs; provide training and resources that African governments can draw on as they regulate biotechnologies; and help women farmers in India manage their land and water resources sustainably. To date, the foundation has committed \$1.4 billion to agricultural development efforts.

Gates said the world should draw inspiration from the agricultural transformation in Latin America and [Asia](#) during the 1960s to 1980s, known as the Green Revolution, which averted famine, saved hundreds of millions of lives, and fueled widespread economic development.

But Gates warned that as scientists, governments, and others strive to repeat the successes of the original Green Revolution, they should be careful not to repeat its mistakes, such as the overuse of fertilizer and irrigation.

“The next Green Revolution has to be greener than the first,” Gates said. “It must be guided by small-holder farmers, adapted to local circumstances, and sustainable for the economy and the environment.”

According to the World Bank, three-quarters of the 1 billion people who live in extreme poverty depend on agriculture for a living. More than 1 billion people suffer from chronic hunger in the developing world. In the world’s poorest areas, small farmers frequently face harsh conditions, including depleted soils, pests, drought, diseases, and lack of water. Even if they manage to grow a surplus, they often lack a reliable market where they can sell it.

Despite these challenges, there are reasons for optimism in the fight against hunger. After two decades of neglect, the world’s attention is once again focused on agricultural development. The G20 group of leading donor and developing nations recently made a three-year, \$22 billion pledge to help solve global hunger by supporting small farmers in the developing world.

“It’s a great thing that donor nations are focusing on this issue,” Gates said. “But we need them to spell out clearly what the \$22 billion means—how much is old money, how much is new, how soon can they spend it, and when will they do more?”

While Gates said that major breakthroughs in the fight against hunger and poverty are now within reach, he cautioned that progress toward alleviating global hunger is “endangered by an ideological wedge that threatens to split the movement in two.” On one side, he said, there are groups that support technological solutions to increase agricultural productivity without proper regard to environmental and sustainability concerns. On the other, there are those who react negatively to any emphasis on productivity.

“It’s a false choice, and it’s dangerous for the field,” Gates said. “It blocks important advances. It breeds hostility among people who need to work together. And it makes it hard to launch a comprehensive program to help poor farmers. The fact is, we need both productivity and sustainability—and there is no reason we can’t have both.”

Gates said the foundation is supporting research on crops that can withstand drought and flooding so poor farmers can adapt to climate change. It is also supporting a ground-breaking effort with the World Food Programme (WFP) to buy food from small farmers in the developing world for food aid. WFP has already purchased 17,000 metric tons of food from small farmers through the program, linking many to markets for the first time.

Gates said the foundation isn’t an advocate of any particular scientific method. “Of course, these technologies must be subject to rigorous scientific review to ensure they are safe and effective. It’s the responsibility of governments, farmers, and citizens—informed by excellent science—to choose the best and safest way to help feed their countries,” Gates said.

Gates also paid tribute to Dr. Norman Borlaug, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for his pioneering work in expanding agricultural production in the developing world, who died on September 12 of this year.

“His passing is cause for sadness, but his life should make us optimistic,” Gates said. “He not only showed humanity how to get more food from the earth—he proved that farming has the power to lift up the lives of the poor. It’s a lesson the world is thankfully relearning today.”

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#### **Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)**

The AGRA Policy Program: \$15 million

To develop a strong policy support system in Africa that will raise incomes, and assure household and national food security. The program focuses on policies to speed adoption of approaches to improve farmer productivity, market and trade policies to stimulate expanded markets for staple crops, and land and property rights policies to stimulate equitable agricultural growth for the poor.

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#### **American Institutes for Research (AIR)**

Farmer Voice Radio: \$10 million

To create a network of radio broadcasters, farmer groups, universities, research institutes, non-governmental organizations, ministries of agriculture, and African media organizations to generate quality content and facilitate impact-driven and sustainable broadcasting to small-holder farmers to enhance their livelihoods. The project aims to reach 1.6 million small-holder farmers in Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Mali, Ghana, and Tanzania in its first four years.

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#### **Grameen Foundation**

Building a Network of Community Knowledge Workers: \$4.7 million

To develop a network of 4,000 community knowledge workers in Uganda who use mobile devices to increase the reach and relevance of agricultural information, leading to improved productivity and livelihoods for small-holder farmers. The project aims to reach up to 280,000 small-holder farmers, reduce the cost of adoption of new and improved practices by 25 percent to 50 percent, and ultimately provide a model that can be scaled to reach millions of small-holder farmers throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

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#### **International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)**

Harnessing Opportunities for Productivity Enhancement (HOPE) of Sorghum and Millets: \$18 million

To help small-holder farmers in moisture-deficient areas of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia increase their yields of sorghum, pearl millet, and finger millet to improve food security and increase the income of farmers. The project aims to benefit 200,000 households by increasing yields of sorghum and millet by 35 to 40 percent over four years.

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### **International Potato Center (CIP)**

Sweet Potato Action for Security and Health in Africa (SASHA): \$21.25 million

To produce high-yielding, stress-tolerant varieties of sweet potato to help farming families in Sub-Saharan Africa improve their productivity, incomes, and nutrition. The project aims to benefit 150,000 families directly from the initial seed systems work, and up to 1 million families indirectly from the first set of improved varieties in five years.

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### **New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Michigan State University (MSU)**

African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE): \$10.4 million

To create a center in Africa that provides training, education, and technical support to African regulators to develop regulatory systems for biotechnology, ensuring countries can make informed decisions on how to use these advances while protecting farmers, consumers, and the environment.

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### **Partnership for Child Development (PCD)**

Home-grown School Feeding: \$12 million

To support the delivery of cost-effective school feeding programs that promote local agriculture and benefit small-holder farmers. The project aims to increase the income and improve the nutritional status of approximately 200,000 small farmers; improve the education, health, and nutrition of school-age children; and provide opportunities to those involved in the transportation, processing, and preparation of food along the school-feeding value chain.

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### **Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN)**

Developing Farm-based Livelihoods in Endemically Poor Regions of India: \$9.7 million

To create sustainable farm-based livelihoods for rural families in endemically poor regions of India by training women farmers in land and water management and modern farming practices, establishing village extension services, and building effective market linkages. The project aims to mobilize 120,000 women into self-help groups to assist them in improving their farm productivity and food security, enhancing their household income.

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### **Wageningen University, The Netherlands**

Putting Nitrogen Fixation to Work for Small-holder Farmers in Africa (NforAfrica): \$19 million

To increase legume productivity, family nutrition, soil health, cropping systems, and farm income for small farmers in Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, and Malawi by expanding the use of selected legumes, proven tools of biological nitrogen fixation, and sound agronomic principles. The project aims to benefit 225,000 farmers.

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[Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#)

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett





## AGENDA

Time	Activity	Person(s)
8:30-9:00	Registration	Agnes Alajo, Martha Ameru
9:00-9:30	Visit Exhibits in the Tent	Farmers & Scientists
9:30-9:40	Songs by children of Kitebi Primary School	Kitebi Primary School
9:40-9:50	Welcome Speech	Director of NaCRRI, Dr. James Ogwang
9:50-10:00	Soroti Sweetpotato Producer's & Processor's Association's Song	SOSPPA members
10:00-10:10	Overview of SPHI (Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative)	Dr. Jan Low, CIP
10:10-10:20	Overview of SASHA (Sweetpotato Action for Profit and Health)	Dr. Robert Mwangi, CIP
10:20-10:30	Children's Poem	Kitebi Primary School
10:30-10:40	Statement by the Director of the Crops Research Institute of Kumasi, Ghana	Dr. Adu-Dapaah
10:40-10:50	Statement by the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa: Breeding and Seed Systems Support	Dr. Jane Ininda
10:50-11:05	Ndere's Skit	Ndere troupe
11:05-11:15	Statement by USAID Mozambique	Irene de Souza
11:15-11:25	Statement by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Lawrence Kent
11:25-11:30	2 <sup>nd</sup> Children's Song	Kitebi P.S.
11:30-11:35	Statement by Local Council Chairperson and Member of Parliament from Namulonge	
11:35-11:45	Speech by Chairman of the NARO Council	Prof. Fredrick Kayanja
11:55-12:05	Ndere Group Poem	Ndere troupe
12:05-12:20	Speech by Honorable State Minister for Agriculture: Official Launch	Hon. Aggrey Bagyire
12:20-12:50	Official delegation visits the exhibits and Plants Trees	
12:50-14:20	Ndere group music and dance Kitebi P.S. Skit and dance during lunch	Ndere troupe
14:20	Votes of Thanks and Departure at Leisure	

**ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL NARO ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE SWEETPOTATO FOR PROFIT AND HEALTH INITIATIVE, NAMULONGE 26<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2009**

The guest of honour, ladies and gentlemen, all protocol observed.

I take this opportunity to welcome you to NARO and to NaCRRI in particular. NARO is mandated to undertake research on all crop commodities. NARO is mandated to undertake research that leads to generation and dissemination of technologies while conserving the natural resource base. It is against this background that we welcome this project which aims at expanding urban markets, reduce child malnutrition and improve small holder incomes.

In NARO we have a longstanding record of research on sweetpotato and have significantly contributed to improved people's incomes, nutrition and food security in general (for example we have released 19 sweetpotato varieties; three of which are orange fleshed and rich in pro-Vitamin A). Sweetpotato is a high priority commodity on the NARO research agenda; we conduct research with emphasis on genetic improvement for farmer preferred agronomic and food quality traits, resistance to biotic and abiotic stresses, and socioeconomic issues. In fulfilling our research agenda, we have adopted a multidisciplinary farmer participatory approach, and I wish to recognize in a special way the farmer representatives present at this occasion. We believe that this project is key, fits within the NARO agenda, and we will be central in its implementation.

I recognize with thanks the efforts of all participating countries and institutions, the support of our development partners (BMGF, AGRA, and USAID) and together we should focus on repositioning sweetpotato in African food economies for the betterment of our people's livelihoods. Once again I thank you all for coming to witness this occasion.

ADDRESS BY THE HONORABLE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE ANIMAL INDUSTRY AND FISHERIES ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE SWEETPOTATO FOR PROFIT AND HEALTH INITIATIVE, NAMULONGE 26<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2009

Salutation

I am pleased to welcome you to this occasion when we officially launch and witness a new sweetpotato initiative that is aimed at improving people's livelihoods, nutrition and health. We need to remind ourselves that sweetpotato is a major food staple in SSA; it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important food crop in Uganda, and a key component in nutrition and health of women, children and the poor. Notably, the orange fleshed sweetpotato has made a key contribution towards alleviating Vit. A deficiency which is wide spread in children under five, pregnant mothers in the broader SSA. It is therefore important and timely that we witness the launching of this project which will make us fulfill millennium development goal number 1 and aligned national policies aimed at eradicating hunger and poverty and improving health and nutrition.

I am delighted that this project is going to involve 14 countries and 26 collaborating institutions for a period of 10 years. This is an opportunity but at the same time a challenge for us to work together coherently, deliver, and leave a footprint in the project participating countries. It calls for commitment and focus. I pledge you commitment from all circles of the government of Uganda and have trust in my cadre of staff who are going to be involved.

I recognize with high esteem the participating institutions and countries, the International Potato Center (CIP); NARO-Uganda; ISAR, Rwanda; KARI, Kenya; IIAM, Mozambique; CRI , Ghana; IIA, Angola; Malawi; Nigeria; Zambia; Ethiopia; Madagascar; Burkina Faso; Tanzania; and South Africa. Through such partnerships research and in particular science will cause an impact in people's livelihoods and in this country, science is rated highly at all levels of pre-, post, and tertiary education and is considered a pillar of a science based economy. It is my strong belief that this project will make a contribution in this direction.

I extend my profound gratitude to our development partners the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF); the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA); and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for taking a decision to support this important project. Finally I would like to thank all of you for gracing this occasion with your presence and together we pledge our commitment towards its success. I thank you all and now declare this Sweetpotato for Security and Health in Africa (SASHA) project officially launched.

For God and my country

## SASHA LAUNCHING MEETING-26 October 2009

## List of Participants

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214	Modesta Agwang	Uganda	Farmer	SOSPPA- Kyere -Soroti				
215	Stella Aluka	Uganda	Farmer	SOSPPA- Kyere -Soroti				
216	Simon Opolot	Uganda	Farmer	SOSPPA- Kyere -Soroti				
217	Olelo	Uganda	Farmer	SOSPPA- Kyere -Soroti				
218	Eyaru	Uganda	Farmer	SOSPPA- Kyere -Soroti				
219	Odeta	Uganda	Farmer	SOSPPA- Kyere -Soroti				
220	Ochola	Uganda	Farmer	Bukedea				
221	Christine Achom	Uganda	Farmer	Bukedea				
222	Mariam Asio	Uganda	Farmer	Bukedea				
223	Charles Otude	Uganda	Farmer	Bukedea				
224	Yona Baguma	Uganda	Research Officer	NaCRRI, P.O. Box 7084, Kampala		0772 930185		<a href="mailto:bjmyn@yahoo.co.uk">bjmyn@yahoo.co.uk</a>
225	Titus Alicai	Uganda	Research Officer	NaCRRI, P.O. Box. 7084, Kampala				
226	Jan Iow	Kenya	Regional Leader, SSA	P.O. Box 25171, 00603, Nairobi, Kenya	254 20 422 3601	254 733 411010		<a href="mailto:j.iow@cgiar.org">j.iow@cgiar.org</a>
1	Please note that there were 15 pupils from Kitebi P/S but only six registered							
2	Most people just came in for lunch and were not registered							
3	The Ndere Troupe, some Press people and Drivers did not register							