IAEA Press Releases

Press Release 2012/21

Nuclear Technologies Secure Food For Future

11 September 2012 | For nearly fifty years, applications of nuclear technology have been helping the world's farmers, contributing new varieties of crops, controlling pests, diagnosing livestock disease, improving soil and water management and increasing food safety.

The significant role of nuclear technology in supporting agriculture will be the focus of this year's *IAEA Scientific Forum* in Vienna on 18-19 September. *Food for the Future: Meeting the Challenges with Nuclear Applications* is the theme of the Forum, which takes place during the annual *IAEA General Conference*.

"Demand for food is rising significantly as the world's population grows," IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano said.

"Fighting hunger is a key priority. It is essential not only that the world should produce more food. We must also protect crops and livestock and make sure that food is safe to eat. Nuclear applications can make a real difference in all of these areas."

"The goal of the *Scientific Forum* is to make Member States more aware of the very important work of the IAEA in nuclear applications related to food and to encourage more countries to make use of our services."

Nuclear technology has many possible uses in food and agriculture.

By irradiation, scientists can accelerate natural spontaneous mutation and improve crop varieties to suit particular conditions. Farmers are benefitting from rice that grows in salty conditions, barley that flourishes above 4 000 metres (13 000 feet) and hundreds of other crop varieties.

The use of the sterile insect technique, in which males of a targeted species such as the tsetse fly or the Mediterranean fruit fly are sterilised by radiation and released into the wild, is expanding significantly. This effectively combats insect pests that damage crops and spread disease among humans and livestock, while limiting pesticide use.

The world was last year declared free of the deadly cattle disease rinderpest after a campaign made possible by nuclear techniques.

The use of such techniques to protect plants and animals against disease and pests means many more farmers can produce enough food to feed their own families and to sell on markets. Ultimately, fewer people go hungry.

The IAEA collaborates with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in providing support through a joint division in Vienna.

"While our profile is modest, the size of our footprint is significant," said Qu Liang, Director of the Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques. "We are putting the benefits of tried and tested nuclear technologies into the hands of farmers, particularly small producers in poorer countries, to improve their food security and livelihood."

"The assistance is driven by advanced technologies," Liang added. "But what we are delivering has to be appropriate to farmers' needs. That means crops that can flourish in changing and often harsher conditions, pest control without a chemical legacy and protection for livestock."

The *Scientific Forum* will be opened by the IAEA Director General and ministers from Indonesia, Kenya and Vietnam. FAO Director General Graziano da Silva will deliver a video address.

The Forum will address IAEA activities in the fields of food production, food protection and food safety. Each session features a panel of experts who will present and discuss the benefits of nuclear techniques in food and agriculture. A moderator will guide the discussions.

Additional Resources:

» Scientific Forum, 18-19 September 2012
» IAEA General Conference, 17-21 September 2012
» Topics in Focus

Press Contacts

- Press Office
  Division of Public Information
  [43-1] 2600-21273
  Press Enquiries

Related Resources

- More Press Releases
- More Media Advisories

Responsible/Contact: Division of Public Information | Last update: 17 September 2012

More on the IAEA

- Secretariat
- Employment
- Meetings
- Publications
- Statute of the IAEA
- Mission Statement
- Business Opportunities

Departments

- Nuclear Energy
- Nuclear Safety and Security
- Nuclear Sciences and Applications
- Safeguards
- Technical Cooperation

News Centre

- Top Stories & Features
- Topics In Focus
- Press Releases
- Statements
- Multimedia
- IAEA Bulletin

Documents

- Annual Reports
- Information Circulars
- Treaties & Conventions
- Standards & Guides
- Legal Agreements
- Safeguards & Additional Protocols

Policymaking

- General Conference
- Board of Governors
- Member States

Data Portals

- Nucleus Knowledge Portal
- Publications Catalogue
- International Nuclear Information System (INIS)
- Power Reactor Information System
- Nuclear Data Service
- General Conference Archive

International Atomic Energy Agency
Vienna International Centre, PO Box 100

A-1400 Vienna, Austria
Telephone: (+431) 2600-0, Facsimile (+431) 2600-7
E-mail: Official Mail