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Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research CGIAR

NOURISHING THE FUTURE THROUGH SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE

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**Organization/Unit:** [IRRI \(International Rice Research Institute\)](#)

### NUS Partners with International Rice Research Institute

February 17, 2009

NUS and IRRI signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) yesterday to promote joint research and scientific exchange between both organizations. Some possible areas of collaboration include research into the biology of rice crops and the design of new rice strains to improve productivity, nutritional value, or resistance to hotter climate or harsh environments. This is IRRI's first formal research collaboration with a Singapore research institution.

In Singapore to sign the MOU, IRRI's Deputy Director General for Research Dr Achim Dobermann said he expected the MOU to lead to stronger connections between IRRI and Singapore and valuable research outcomes.

Dr Dobermann commented, "The Department of Biological Sciences at NUS is one of the best in the region. This MOU will facilitate cooperation and research collaboration between researchers at NUS and IRRI to help improve the sustainability and productivity of rice production."

"We are particularly looking forward to strong scientist interactions and hosting NUS students and young scientists at IRRI for conducting research on many aspects of rice improvement," Dr Dobermann said.

Through this and other collaborations, NUS hopes to evolve a small but highly focused effort on food-related issues, leveraging on its strengths in areas such as biology, chemistry, food science, environment and engineering. Professor Barry Halliwell, Deputy President (Research & Technology) of NUS and Tan Chin Tuan Centennial Professor, said, "We are excited to work with IRRI to contribute our research expertise to help boost regional rice production. NUS' approach has been to address challenges facing Singapore by engaging in high impact research, and securing our food supply is one of our priorities. This is especially so as Singapore relies on our neighboring countries to produce food."

"Our collaboration with IRRI provides the opportunity for us to extend our expertise in biological sciences, which has been applied widely in medical sciences, to other important fields such as agriculture," added Prof Halliwell. The university boasts one of the best Life Sciences groupings in the Asia Pacific Region with core strengths in biodiversity and environmental science; cell, molecular and developmental biology; and biophysical sciences.

Enhancing the productivity is critical for ensuring regional food security in the future and NUS' expertise in biological sciences can contribute directly towards this goal.

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Researchers at the university's Department of Biological Sciences have developed expertise in areas such as regulating plant growth and development, with potential application to crop improvement. There are also researchers in the Department looking into enhancing rice yield and stress tolerance, which is an important area because the current overall yield of rice in the regional countries is well below (about 50%) the optimum yield from intensive commercial cultivation.

In addition to strengthening its research expertise, NUS also hopes to train a new generation of scientists and researchers who could make significant contribution towards accelerating rice research for the region.

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#### **About National University of Singapore (NUS)**

[www.nus.edu.sg](http://www.nus.edu.sg)

A leading global university centred in Asia, the National University of Singapore (NUS) is Singapore's flagship university. It offers a global approach to education and research, with a focus on Asian perspectives and expertise. NUS has 14 faculties and schools across three campus locations in Singapore – Kent Ridge, Bukit Timah and Outram. Its transformative education includes a broad-based curriculum underscored by multi-disciplinary courses and cross-faculty enrichment, as well as special programmes which allow students to realize their potential.

The learning experience is complemented by a vibrant residential life with avenues for artistic, cultural and sporting pursuits. Over 30,000 students from 100 countries further enrich the community with their diverse social and cultural perspectives.

NUS shares a close affiliation with 21 university-level, 16 national-level and more than 80 faculty-based research institutes and centres. Research activities are strategic and robust, and NUS is well-known for its research strengths in engineering, life sciences and biomedicine, social sciences and natural sciences. It also strives to create a supportive and innovative environment to promote creative enterprise within its community.

#### **About the International Rice Research Institute**

[www.irri.org](http://www.irri.org)

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is the world's leading rice research and training center. Based in the Philippines, with offices in 13 other countries, IRRI is an autonomous, nonprofit institution focused on improving the well-being of present and future generations of rice farmers and consumers, particularly those with low incomes, while preserving natural resources. IRRI is one of 15 centres supported, in part, by members of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR; [www.cgiar.org](http://www.cgiar.org)) and a range of other funding agencies.

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