



# Biodiversity Monthly Newsletter

Ethiopian Institute of  
Biodiversity



Ethiopian Institute of  
Biodiversity

P. O. Box 30726

Tel. 251 116612244

Fax 251 116613722

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Public Relation and Communication Directorate

[www.abc.gov.et](http://www.abc.gov.et)

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## World Wetlands Day Focuses on Water Management

**2 February 2013:** As a contribution to the UN International Year for Water Cooperation, the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention) focused the celebrations of this year's World Wetlands Day on wetlands and water management. The Day aims to show the interdependence between water and wetlands and the key role wetlands play.

World Wetlands Day (WWD) is celebrated globally every year on 2 February to raise awareness of the vital role healthy wetlands play in sustaining life and its diversity. This year's WWD aims to highlight the importance of conserving and enhancing the ecosystem services provided by water and wetlands. Its slogan is "wetlands take care of water."

In his message to mark the Day, Anada Tiéga, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, underlined that this year's celebrations provide an opportunity to raise awareness among water managers that "wetlands are not competitors for water but rather they are essential components of water infrastructure, providing a clean source and store of freshwater."

Also to mark the Day, Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), stressed that wetlands are natural infrastructure that "help us manage water problems, and in doing so, provide multiple benefits beyond water itself."

## CGIAR Partners Decode Chickpea Genome

**28 January 2013:** In a breakthrough that may lead to new, improved varieties of chickpeas with drought tolerance and disease resistance, scientists from the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) have decoded the genome sequences of 90 chickpea varieties from 10 countries.

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Chickpea is a drought tolerant and high protein crop that is central to food security in India and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. The article describing the research identifies clues on how the genome sequence can be used to improve crop yields in marginal environments. The research began by sequencing the large seeded CDC Frontier chickpea variety, followed by resequencing the additional genotypes, which can be used to identify genetic markers. The work will help to reduce the time to develop new varieties of chickpea.

The research was part of efforts by the International Chickpea Genome Sequencing Consortium (ICGSC) led by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), a member of the CGIAR.

### **CGIAR, Global Crop Diversity Trust Collaborate to Maintain Genebanks**

February 7th, 2013. An agreement between the Global Crop Diversity Trust and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Consortium will provide \$109 million over five years to establish a new research programme to maintain the 706,000 samples of plant genetic resources held at 11 CGIAR research centers globally.

The CGIAR Research Program for Managing and Sustaining Crop Collections will be central to ensuring that the global network of genebanks continues to function and act as resources to secure global food security. According to CGIAR, the diversity held in these genebanks is central to tackling current and future agricultural challenges related to climate change and pests. CGIAR stresses that it has already distributed over one million samples to plant breeders and researchers over the past decade to help address such issues.

The two entities will complement each other, as the Global Crop Diversity Trust is devoted solely to protecting crop diversity, while CGIAR provides a wide network for collecting and storing plant materials. The Program will be supportive of and consistent with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGR). The funds will be used to continue research on advanced

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preservation techniques such as cryopreservation, as well as for responding to challenges at particular genebanks.

Efforts will also be undertaken to add over 50,000 new samples to genebanks by 2015. In addition, the Program will seek to identify approaches to develop a long-term endowment for the CGIAR genebanks.