

Foreword

The International Society for Tropical Root Crops held its Fourth International Symposium at the Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT) in Cali, Colombia, from 1 to 7 August 1976. Over 170 scientists from 44 countries took part in the sessions.

The participants were welcomed to CIAT by its Director-General Dr John Nickel, who stressed the importance of tropical roots and tubers in the diet, especially of lower income groups in developing countries. Participants were then welcomed on behalf of the Government of Colombia by Dr J. Franco, the Director General of the Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario; by Dr H. A. Al-Jibouri speaking on behalf of the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; and finally by Mr D. G. Coursey the Society's President.

The week-long symposium focused consecutively on four main themes: (1) Origin, dispersal, and evolution; (2) Basic productivity; (3) Preharvest and post-harvest losses; and (4) Utilization. Each theme commenced with a plenary paper — usually by a distinguished scientist from outside the tropical root crop field. Following the discussion on this paper in terms of its relevance to root crops, contributed papers on the theme topic were presented. Many of these dealt with the better-known root crops such as cassava, yams, potatoes, and sweet potatoes, although there were an encouraging number of contributions dealing with some of the lesser-known root crops, and as in previous symposia, an occasional paper discussing the potential of a virtually unknown species. Over 200 papers were submitted of which more than 60 were selected for presentation at the meeting. In addition to the paper presentations, participants took part in two field trips.

As mentioned in Mr Coursey's address, financial assistance to the Symposium was provided by CIAT, IDRC, and USAID. IDRC is pleased to be associated with CIAT, USAID, and the Society in jointly publishing these proceedings. The format of this publication follows that used for the proceedings of the cassava workshops sponsored by IDRC in that the discussion has been included in point form rather than in question and answer style. This has only been possible through the collaboration of a number of Society members who acted as discussion rapporteurs and summarized the main points of the discussion periods. Thanks are due to them and to our team of highly organized editors whose efforts have made the prompt publication of this volume possible.

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