



INTERNATIONAL COFFEE ORGANIZATION
ORGANIZACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DEL CAFÉ
ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO CAFÉ
ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DU CAFÉ

ED 2094/10

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**International Coffee Genome
Network (ICGN):**

**Meeting on 22 September 2010
(09:00 – 10:30)**

1. The Executive Director presents his compliments and wishes to inform Members that, in response to ED-2086/10 (circulated in January 2010 and attached for information), a number of countries have expressed an interest in ways of coordinating and cooperating with the ICGN on developing a project or programme of work for the coffee genome with long-term benefits for the coffee industry. During the 104th Session of the Council in Guatemala City, Guatemala, in March 2010, it was suggested that coffee institutions could cooperate on developing a well thought out proposal for the coffee genome with long-term benefits for the coffee industry. Details of proposals which have been developed already are listed in the Annex.
2. Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Vietnam and the InterAfrican Coffee Organisation (IACO) are among those interested in exploring future cooperation.
3. A meeting with the ICGN and interested Members and their research institutions will take place at 09:00 on Wednesday 22 September 2010 at the ICO headquarters during the 105th Council Session from 20 to 24 September 2010 in London. A draft Agenda for the meeting is attached. The meeting will be open to all interested Members.

**COOPERATION WITH THE
INTERNATIONAL COFFEE GENOME NETWORK (ICGN)**

Wednesday 22 September 2010 (09:00 – 10:30)

Draft agenda

- 1. Welcome by the Executive Director**
- 2. Reports on existing activities on the coffee genome**
 - 2.1 ICO project proposals**
 - 2.2 ICGN activities**
 - 2.3 Member activities**
- 3. Strategy and structure for cooperation**
- 4. Development of programme of work**
- 5. Sources of finance**
- 6. Dissemination of information on coffee genetic resources**
- 7. Next steps**

PROJECTS RELEVANT TO COOPERATION WITH THE ICGN

- 1. Coffee genetic resources conservation and sustainable use: global perspective** (document WP-Board 1058/09), submitted by IACO and approved by the Council in September 2009 for submission to either the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) or the Global Environment Facility (GEF) – to be considered by the CFC in July 2010.
- 2. Renovation of CATIE’s international coffee collection** (document WP-Board 1036/07), submitted by PROMECAFE and approved by the Council in September 2007, subject to merging it with the proposal ‘Enhancing use of coffee germplasm – an African perspective’ (see below). In March 2010, the Council noted a request to keep these projects separate and to assist with seeking financing. In July 2010, the ICO received a revised proposal from PROMECAFE which requested assistance with financing for its implementation, from sources other than the CFC.
- 3. Enhancing use of coffee germplasm – an African perspective** (document WP-Board 880/00 Rev. 1), approved by the Council in May 2001. Technical assistance is being sought from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), ICGN, Bioversity International (ex-IPGRI) and IACO to reformulate it/merge it with the previous proposal.
- 4. Sequencing of the genome:** Cenicafé is developing a revised project on the sequencing of the genome which will be considered by the Board and Council at a future meeting.



International Coffee Genome Network

Coordination with research institutions

1. The Executive Director presents his compliments and, as noted by the Executive Board in September 2009, wishes to invite Members to consider, in consultation with coffee research institutions in their countries, ways of coordinating and cooperating with the International Coffee Genome Network (ICGN) on the development of a project or programme of work for the coffee genome with long-term benefits for the coffee industry.
2. As noted by the Council, the conservation of coffee genetic resources is vital for the sustainable development and future of the global coffee industry. The representative of the ICGN made a presentation on sequencing the coffee genome to the PSCB and Executive Board in coffee year 2008/09 (see document PSCB-113/09, a copy of which is attached to this document). Practical applications of this initiative include improving quality and resistance to pests and diseases.
3. In this context, Members may recall that in September 2009, the Council approved a proposal submitted by the InterAfrican Coffee Organisation entitled 'Coffee genetic resources conservation and sustainable use: global perspective' for submission to either the Common Fund for Commodities or the Global Environment Facility (see document WP-Board 1058/09). Another proposal 'Sequencing the genome for enhanced characterization, utilization, and conservation of *Coffea* germplasm diversity' (document WP-Board 1054/08 Rev. 1) is also under development by Cenicafé.
4. Members are invited to send the Executive Director their suggestions on this matter (to: info@ico.org), together with contact details for institutions which would be interested in cooperating on and securing finance for an international initiative to preserve coffee genetic resources. The matter will be discussed by the Executive Board at its meeting on 1 March 2010.



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PSCB 113/09

13 March 2009
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Private Sector Consultative Board
28th meeting
16 March 2009
London, England

**International Coffee Genome Network –
report and concept note**

Background

The attached concept note entitled ‘Sequencing the Coffee Genome’ and a report on the Coffee Genome Sequencing Initiative have been received from the International Coffee Genome Network (ICGN).

The representatives of the ICGN will make a presentation to the PSCB at its meeting on 16 March 2009.

Action

The PSCB is requested to note this document.

SEQUENCING THE COFFEE GENOME

ICGN Concept Note

March 16, 2009

The ICGN (<http://www.coffeegenome.org/>) is a worldwide network of scientists from universities, research institutes and industry within the coffee producing and consuming countries. It includes more than 50 individual and Institutional members networking scientific groups around the world in Africa, America, Europe, & Asia. Our collaborative network is focused on building the foundation for advancing agricultural research for sustainable coffee production worldwide by developing genomic tools and resources to further our understanding of the coffee genome at the molecular, biochemical, and physiological levels. ICGN membership is opened to any individual, laboratory, or institution that can contribute to this effort in genomics resource development, sequencing and genome assembly, annotation, biological scientific expertise, or funding.

Despite its economic and social importance for numerous countries around the world, coffee has received very little attention with respect to molecular genetics and genomics research. ICGN has developed a coordinated and cost efficient strategy to sequence the coffee genome using new generation sequencing technologies. ICGN is interested on securing international funding for this important effort on behalf of the coffee scientific community worldwide. Support from ICO and the private sector is needed to ensure a broad international participation and a broad funding base.

Sequencing the coffee genome will help decipher the genetic and molecular bases of important biological traits in coffee that are relevant to growers, processors, and consumers. This knowledge is fundamental to allow efficient use and preservation of coffee genetic resources for the development of improved cultivars in terms of enhanced quality, yield, and resistance with reduced economic and environmental costs. Although considerable diversity exists in diploid *Coffea* species, its use in conventional coffee breeding programs has been very limited. *Coffea arabica* is characterized by a very low genetic diversity, which is attributable to its allotetraploid origin, reproductive biology, and evolution. The narrow genetic base of cultivated *C. arabica* has created a bottleneck for coffee breeding and limits cultivar improvement. Similarly, the considerable genetic diversity observed in *C. canephora* is still largely unexploited in the cultivated varieties. In the future, the ability to capture and manipulate genetic diversity and effectively utilize germplasm in traditional coffee breeding programs will be vital for sustainable coffee production.

Significant advances in our understanding of the coffee genome and its biology must be achieved in the next decades to increase quality, yield and protect the crop from major losses caused by insect pests, diseases and abiotic stress related to climatic changes. Unravelling the coffee genome will contribute significantly to the characterization and utilization of germplasm needed for future coffee improvement. Development of genomic tools for coffee can help breeders identify, characterize, and utilize diversity.



REPORT ON THE COFFEE GENOME SEQUENCING INITIATIVE .

Coffee provide earnings for about 120 million people in the producing countries and the economy of many developing countries depends on the trade of this commodity. In the consuming countries, coffee acquires added value through industrial processing and commercialization and it generates earning and occupation for a large number of people. Investment on research on coffee does not correspond to its commercial relevance, in facts only a few tens laboratories or institutions carry out research on coffee, less than a dozen in the consuming countries. The reason for such a low support to research are several, ranging from the scarcity of economical and human resources in some of the producing countries, to the disinterest of most of the research funding agencies in the consumer countries. It is obvious that low level of research is detrimental to development of new products, agronomic characteristics amelioration and quality improvements.

Genomics of coffee: why sequencing the coffee genomes.

Research interests of the producer countries and of the consumer countries do not necessarily coincide: the producer are more interested in high yield, in the resistance of the plant to pests and diseases, while the consumers are more interested in the cup quality and in the characterization of the different green coffees. Genomics can unify the different interests through one single approach: both the agronomic characteristics and the quality aspects can be disclosed by studying the complete genetic composition of the coffee plant.

Agronomy advantages. In the last few years a consistent number of genes coffering resistance to the various pest have been identified. It is obvious that plant naturally resistant to nematodes or to drought require less labour and investments. Resistant plants can avoid the risk of the complete loss of a plantation (see the relatively recent case of Congo). Resistant genes can be transferred to relevant plants by conventional breeding and selective techniques. Similar considerations applies to productivity traits as well as to other important agronomic characteristics as flowering synchronization.

Quality advantages. The genetic composition of the plant is the fundamental base for a good quality coffee. There is no way to have a good coffee out of beans produced by a plant with "bad" genes. The coffee can be easily spoiled at any stage along the productive chain, up to the brewing machine, but technological cosmetics cannot always cure the defects a low quality coffee. Moreover the genetic characterization of the different coffee varieties will allow for a better identification of the right environment for a specific genetic composition.

Consumer protection. Modern DNA fingerprinting techniques allow for the biological certification of specialty coffees and terruars. Moreover the indisputable certification on DNA should help the traders as well as the producer in obtaining a better premium for the high quality coffee sector.

The scientific approach.

A number of molecular tools of coffee are now available and we are in the position of sequencing the entire genome and construct a catalogue of all the genes of the coffee plant. Seven laboratories, Brazil, France, Canada, two in Italy and two



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In the USA, invested some of their resources to start the sequencing of Robusta. The sequencing of Arabica will be started when the Robusta sequences will be available because technical reasons do not allow for a direct approach to Arabica. Once we have the catalogue of the coffee gene, we will proceed to the proteomics and to the metabolomics to identify those important molecules which confer to good coffees their unique aromas.

Costs and resources.

Taking in account that research does not have an end, significant results, including the complete sequence of Arabica and Robusta as well as the downstream informatic analyses, can be obtained with the investment of less than US \$ 2 millions. Public resources can provide part of the sum but the participation of the Private Companies is essential, especially to provide the necessary input on the strategies as well as for the development of links between research and coffee trade. Relevant investment on the genomics of coffee has been done by Nestlè and by Illycaffè. Governmental financing agencies supported coffee genomics in Brazil, Colombia and India and applications are now under consideration in Italy, France and USA. It is obvious that the establishment of a "Coffee Companies Consortium" would substantially promote the genomics of coffee and it would be the first beneficiary together with the producers.

Contacts.

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