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Year of the Potato 2008
*New light on a hidden
treasure*

systems, and a stronger commitment by the international community to agricultural and rural development.

The “Cusco challenge” (*page 113*) launched by the International Potato Center underlines the urgency of framing a new, vigorous research-for-development agenda. Potato science at the service of the poor will help boost potato yields in the developing world by providing improvements in the quality of planting material, potato varieties that are more resistant to pests, diseases, water scarcity and climate change, and farming systems that make more sustainable use of natural resources. The raw material of those new varieties must be drawn from the totality of potato genetic resources, which includes thousands of Andean varieties. Needed is a renewed sense of responsibility for conservation of the potato gene pool, as well as concrete steps to ensure that developing countries have the capacity to utilize it.

Extending the benefits of potato growing also requires action on a wider front. The best strategy for achieving the first of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals – to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger – is agricultural development that benefits small-scale farmers, who constitute most of the world’s poor and undernourished. As the United Nations’ lead agency for agriculture and rural development, FAO will be a key partner in that process – advising on policies and strategies to modernize the potato sector, sharing its extensive knowledge of potato farming systems, promoting appropriate technology for sustainable intensification of production, and forging links among decision-makers, producers, processors and marketing chains.

The International Year of the Potato has helped raise awareness of the potato and support for its development. Beyond 2008, IYP will serve as a catalyst for potato development programmes worldwide that can make a real contribution to the fight against hunger and poverty.



*New light on a hidden treasure:
early morning harvest near
Buenos Aires, Argentina*