



March 2020

Be Safe, Be Well, Be Hopeful

We at the BGRI share your concerns for the extent to which all of our lives have been disrupted as COVID-19 spreads around the world. Whether you are a scientist or a student passionate about wheat, a farmer concerned about disease- and drought-resilient varieties, a processor in the critical wheat supply chain, or a researcher wondering when you can get back into your field or lab, we are all in this together.

Just as the BGRI community is in a continual battle to overcome wheat pathogens that disrupt people's lives, the world is uniting to overcome the health, economic and social challenges associated with the coronavirus.

The pandemic affects us all, and no rural or urban community is safe. Some of the hardest-hit ones are the most urban where density and infection rates are highest. We know many of you live in these areas, and our thoughts and prayers are with you.

For those who have already lost loved ones, we grieve with you for your losses as you struggle to honor your loved one's passing in this time of social distancing.

But it is social solidarity that will move us beyond the infection period. As respirator and personal protection equipment manufacturers meet the demand, as scientists come up with treatment protocols and vaccines, and as governments rise to the emergency responses that are needed - we will overcome the worst.

Our hats are off to the medical and essential personnel who are on the frontlines of this battle.

Be safe, be well, be hopeful,
Ronnie Coffman and the BGRI Team

[Read Ronnie's March 21 update about the pandemic HERE .](#)

2020 BGRI WIT Early Career & Mentor Celebration! May 21, 10-11 am (EST)! SAVE THE DATE!

The BGRI's first virtual online event in what we hope will be a series of events will honor and celebrate the 2020 Women in Triticum Early Career and Mentor awardees. It will feature short selfie videos by the awardees, a keynote by Barbara Stinson who is director of the World Food Prize, and a panel discussion with former WIT winners.

MORE DETAILS TO COME! STAY TUNED!

2020 BGRI Technical Workshop News & Questionnaire



We have cancelled the 2020 BGRI Technical Workshop scheduled for June 1-4 at the John Innes Center in Norwich, UK, along with all associated trainings prior to the workshop, due to evolving uncertainties surrounding COVID-19.

Being creative and pro-active in these tumultuous times when community and agriculture are essential, we are planning for future online workshop-type events that people will attend virtually on a variety of platforms. The first is the 2020 BGRI WIT Winners & Mentor Celebration for May 21, from 10-11 am (NY time).

Planning for future activities is being done in consultation with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, UK aid, and team leaders. We are eager to hear from you about your needs, preferences and connectivity. Please fill out our questionnaire regarding upcoming online events by April 17.

Please answer this [QUESTIONNAIRE](#) by April 17.



Hans Braun: COVID-19 and food security

Daily life as we know it has ground to a halt and crop scientists are pondering next steps in the face of the global COVID-19 crisis.

Hans Braun, Director of the Global Wheat Program at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and the CGIAR Research Program on Wheat, discusses risks of a global food security crisis and the need for

increased investment in crop disease research, based on what he has learned from his work on contagious wheat diseases.

A valuable read from an experienced scientist with years of work on contagious diseases.

[Read the Q&A with Hans Braun here](#)

Quality Wheat Seed Production in Chitwan, Nepal



Top dressing of urea in wheat seed plots.
Photo by S. Dhakal



Farmer Field School being held at the demo plots. Photo by D. Marasini

Kashiram Khanal and more than 100 of his fellow farmers are benefitting from from the Seed Village Model at the Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU) in Nepal.

The farmers from the Torikhet cluster of the Chitwan region are participating in a multi-pronged approach that includes training in mechanization, implementing best practices to improve productivity, participating in farmer field trials and field days, and learning from experts from Nepal and India.

Comprehensive efforts led to farmers achieving a 2.7-fold increase in yield in 2018-19 as compared to the previous season, with a phenomenal yield of 4.6 MT/ha reported in one field. Farmers also benefitted from the seed-buy-back strategy of AFU.

The seed village model was conceptualized under the Delivering Genetic Gain in Wheat (DGGW) project (2016-20) to facilitate access to quality certified wheat seeds for smallholder farmers in the Terai Region of Nepal and improve farmers' livelihoods.

[Read the latest from the Seed Village HERE](#)

Videos of Note

Some of you might remember the Norman Borlaug 100th birthday video that CIMMYT produced in 2014 for the 2014 BGRI Technical Workshop in Oregón. Dr. Borlaug's 106th birthday was March 25, 2020. This is an especially hopeful and helpful call to action now - and fun to watch. Thank you John Boswell, Jenny Nelson and Petr Kosina!

[Watch the video here](#)

News

[Rust, blast attacks dash hopes of wheat farmers,](#)

The Independent, Jhenidah, Bangladesh, 29 February 2020

A Wandering Botanist: Barberries and Wheat.

By Kathy Keeler, 8 March 2020. With great barberry photos, including one from WIT awardee Should About Kharouf.

COVID-19 virus spread prompts food insecurity fears in Africa.

By Joseph Opoku Gakpo, Cornell Alliance for Science, 26 March 2020.

Mitigating impacts of COVID-19 on food trade and markets.

Joint Statement by QU Dongyu, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and Roberto Azevedo, Directors-General of FAO, WHO and WTO, 31 March 2020.

Recent Publications

Molecular Characterization of International Collections of the Wheat Stripe Rust Pathogen *Puccinia striiformis* f. sp. tritici Reveals High Diversity and Intercontinental Migration.

Dipak Sharma-Poudyal, Qing Bai, Anmin Wan, Meinan Wang, Deven See, and Xianming Chen. APS, 3 March 2020.

Pathotype diversification in the invasive PstS2 clonal lineage of *Puccinia striiformis* f. sp. tritici causing yellow rust on durum and bread wheat in Lebanon and Syria in 2010-2011.

Rola El Amil, Sajid Ali, Bochra Bahri, Marc Leconte, Claude ve Vallavieille-Pope, and Kumarse Nazari. British Society for Plant Pathology, 13 February 2020.

VIEWPOINT: Five recommendations for an inclusive and collaborative One CGIAR.

William Ronnie Coffman, Maricelis Acevedo, Sarah Davidson Evanega, Jaron Porciello, Hale Ann Tufan, Linda McCandless. Food Policy, Volume 91, February 2020.

Events

SAVE THE DATE: 2020 BGRI WIT Early Career and Mentor Celebration

May 21, 10-11 am (NY time), meet the 2020 Women in Triticum and Mentor honorees, w/keynote by Barbara Stinson. Details to come.

International Conference on Septoria and Cereal Leaf Blights

April 19-21, 2020: Hammamet, Tunisia
POSTPONED UNTIL APRIL 2021.

Contribute to the BGRI newsletter and social media

If you have any news of interest to the BGRI community, please send us a message and we will try to include it in subsequent BGRI newsletters! We also publish and share stories on our [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts. Use [@globalrust](#) to tag any contributions.

Events, career and educational opportunities, photos, and new publications are especially welcome.

Contact BGRI newsletter editor [Linda McCandless](#) or [the BGRI](#).

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

The Borlaug Global Rust Initiative is supported through the Delivering Genetic Gain in Wheat (DGGW) project at International Programs at the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University. DGGW is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and UK aid from the UK government.



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