

# *Politics of Urgency :*

## *Challenges of Addressing Future Crisis Today*

*Public Goods and Private Goods*

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# Agenda

- *Ensuring Public Goods and Encouraging Private Goods*
- *Overcoming Institutional Inertia*

# Agenda

*Ensuring Public Goods and  
Encouraging Private Goods*

# Ensuring Public Goods and Encouraging Private Goods

Both are critical to the future of society --

- *protect and conserve the public domain* for the germ plasm -
  - Non-core crops
  - Non-commercial regions
- *encourage the private sector use* of this germplasm -
  - Better understand molecular make-up
  - Share valuable agronomic traits - e.g. drought resistance

# Ensuring Public Goods and Encouraging Private Goods

*Inherent tension* around important issues such as --

- sharing of *proprietary breeding material* for overlapping markets
- *Research ascendancy* of private sector
- Intellectual *property ownership* -
  - genome mapping
  - trait ownership
- *Competitive* regulatory and market *information transparency*.

# Ensuring Public Goods and Encouraging Private Goods

Need to focus on common ground -

- Traditional reliance upon one another for the development of planting material
- Molecular Breeding to accelerate product development
- Coordinated efforts for dissemination of seed and inputs to the developing world.

# Ensuring Public Goods and Encouraging Private Goods

Essential the participants --

- be *informed and persuasive advocates* for public goods
- But *not antagonistic adversaries*

# Ensuring Public Goods and Encouraging Private Goods

*Important and urgent* to maintain an open dialogue regarding -

- *coordinated* approaches and *use of germ plasm*
- intellectual *property issues* are *complex*
- *responsible deployment* of new technologies is a valid concern to all
- developing newly *adapted varieties* to *feed the poor* are important



# Ensuring Public Goods and Encouraging Private Goods

- Financial *resources* and *time* are *too limited* for inefficiency and polarization.
- *Ensuring public* and encouraging *private goods* is *essential*.

# Agenda

## *Overcoming Institutional Inertia*

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

What do we need to mobilize the Politics of Urgency?

Use crop biodiversity and the current economic crisis as an analogy-

- Neither crisis is new
- Have been warnings of an impending crisis among experts for years
- Public seems is largely unaware of the issue

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

The economic crisis -

- Economist, even bankers have been warning of this for years
- These warnings were ignored by policy makers as well as public-
  - First, to *solve a problem you need to acknowledge* that there is a problem
  - Secondly, you have to *overcome the denial* of the problem
  - *Definition of neurotic behavior*

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

Why this neurotic behavior?

Immense and systemic *institutional inertia* throughout the economy -

- Consumers - own more goods through credit
- Investors - desire for higher rates of returns
- Bankers - forgot their business model
- Governments - financial growth and stability

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

Similar situation regarding Crop biodiversity --

- *Is not new*
- *Warnings are being ignored -*
- *Again, definition of neurotic behavior*

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

## *Immense and systemic Institutional Inertia*

- Inertia of Consumerism in the
  - Developed world - want fast and cheap food .
  - Developing world - want to emulate the developed world.

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

- *Inertia of Industrial Food Processors* want
  - increase sales,
  - reduce costs and
  - increase earnings -
  - all this reliably and safely -
- Companies are highly resistant to change
- Change is not a simple issue within the companies - lots of inertia not seen by the public -



# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

- Involves at least 6 functional departments
  - purchasing - reliable and uniform supply
  - manufacturing - retooling
  - marketing - advertising claims
  - sales - increase in sales
  - legal - patents and claims
  - Financial - revenue projections

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

- Change is not a simple issue within the companies - lots of inertia not seen by the public -
- Involves at least 6 functional departments
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  - financial - increase in profitability

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

- More inertia in *Industrial Scale Agriculture* -
  - Farmers grow the products necessary to meet the needs of the industrial food processors
  - Farmers want to grow as much as possible for as little in dollars and labor, with as little risk, as possible.

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

*Governments subsidize this inertia through*

- farm subsidies,
- trade barriers, and
- program incentives

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

- Inertia and Germ-plasm?
  - the *seeds* that are developed to meet the needs of the *farmers* to meet the needs of the *food processors* to meet the needs of the *consumer*.
  - To do so reliably with as little variation as possible, at a low cost - breeders work with a very narrow base of germ plasm in each crop.
- Uniformity and lack of variability creates the danger and the necessity for change - especially in the face of new pressures.

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

- Role of Biodiversity --
  - Crop biodiversity and genetic variability is critical to meet the ensuing challenges of today's food systems.
  - The larger question is -- how we get more variability into the food system
  - How do we overcoming the Institutional Inertia that exists throughout the system.

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

- Final consumer is a long way from the issues of biodiversity -- Most think produce comes from the supermarket.
- Crucial, in fact urgent, to find the ways and means of making the public and our governments aware of the importance of the conservation and use of crop biodiversity.
- Can't let the public ignore it.

# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

- Important role for a third player - responsible Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
  - educate civil society on the issues and urgency
  - organize and advocate to policy makers
  - conduct bridging dialogues between the private and public sectors



# Overcoming Institutional Inertia

What can we do?

Engage the NGO of your choice to urgently support these goals

# Politics of Urgency

THANK YOU