



NATIONAL COALITION FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Media Advisory

“SOLVING AFRICA’S WEED PROBLEM”

Key to Improving Women’s Lives and Increasing Crop Production

Washington, D.C. — The featured speaker at a June 28 National C-FAR “Lunch~N~Learn” hill seminar was Leonard Gianessi, Director, Crop Protection Research Institute, CropLife Foundation.

“The impact of the weed problem in Africa has been overlooked because weeding has been seen as women’s work of little importance,” said Gianessi. “Investments through both public and private sector research and extension are important if small farmers in Africa are to realize gains in productivity and improve the quality of lives of women.”

“We are pleased to help facilitate the necessary discussions about how multidisciplinary research and education can help attain long-term solutions for pressing agricultural issues,” said Chuck Conner, President of the National Coalition for Food & Agricultural Research (National C-FAR). “This presentation is an excellent example of how federally funded food and agricultural research and extension in cooperation with private sector initiatives can produce the scientific outcomes and outreach needed to meet 21st century challenges and opportunities.”

The report is available at <http://www.croplifefoundation.org/africaweedcontrol.htm>. A pdf of the presentation used at the briefing will be posted at http://www.ncfar.org/Hill_Seminar_Series_2010.asp.

Abstract: Solving the weed problem in Africa is critical if farmers are to attain optimal yields and gain the full value of additional use of fertilizer, irrigation and improved seeds. African farmers lose 20-100% of their potential crop production due to uncontrollable weeds. The primary method of weed control by smallholder farmers in Africa is hand weeding with short handled tools. Women and children spend billions of hours in the drudgery of weeding fields by hand. The spraying of herbicides to remove weeds from African farm fields is a viable and proven technology which could be readily adopted with subsequent large yield increase. Herbicides have been tested for forty years in Africa and have been widely-adopted by large-scale commercial farmers but not by smallholders, who lack training in their use and ready access. Research has shown that, if smallholders used herbicides, there would be a 90% reduction in the hours required for weeding. To address these constraints, CropLife Foundation (CLF) and CNFA, Inc. have launched a pilot project in Kenya and Malawi to demonstrate the feasibility and impact of the proper use of herbicides. Demonstration plots have been supported with products, and technical support provided by five CropLife member companies. Four US land grant University weed scientists have been supported with federal funds as volunteers to visit and aid in the research demonstration plot work. Increased funding is being sought to expand the project and increase the number of cooperating US weed scientists.

NATIONAL C-FAR is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based, and *customer-led* coalition that brings food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and natural resource stakeholders together with the food and agriculture research and extension community, serving as a forum and a unified voice in support of sustaining and increasing public investment at the national level in food and agricultural research, extension, and education. National C-FAR’s Hill Seminar Series, now entering its fifth year, regularly presents leading-edge researchers working to provide answers to pressing issues confronting the public and Congress. The Hill Seminar Series and Success Profiles help demonstrate the value of public investment in food and agricultural research—investment that returns 45 percent per year on average. Go to http://www.ncfar.org/Hill_Seminar_Series.asp for more information about the seminar series and past topics. Interviews with National C-FAR President Chuck Conner are available by request. For additional information, go to www.ncfar.org; or contact Tom Van Arsdall, Executive Director, at tom@vanarsdall.com or (703) 509-4746.