

ADVANCES IN BIOFORTIFICATION RESEARCH IN LATIN AMERICA – AgroSalud

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AgroSalud is a consortium of centers from the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR), national agricultural research system, universities and others. AgroSalud partners work in Latin American and Caribbean countries in the development, evaluation, dissemination and promotion of biofortified crops and food products. With support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) from 2005 to 2010, biofortification was advanced in the region in the following ways. AgroSalud plant breeders made significant breeding progress with increasing the nutrient concentration of target crops. As such, there are now experimental and advanced breeding lines that meet or surpass the nutrient goals established for rice, sweet potato, beans and maize. Getting these improved crops into the hands of thousands of farmers was achieved through a diversity of partners. Further, 2386 (30% female) technicians and farmers in Central America received training in biofortification, seed production (thus reducing their dependence on outside sources for this seed), and crop management, among others. Consumers in urban settings in Colombia were reached through an alliance between AgroSalud partners and the private industry, as nutritionally improved crops were been used in the production of three commercial food products developed with maize, rice and sweet potato. Political support for AgroSalud was obtained at different levels. Institutionalization of the biofortification approach occurred and will serve to enhance its sustainability. Communication efforts focused on maintaining partners informed as well as the larger Latin American community about biofortification and advances in AgroSalud. With support from HarvestPlus in 2011 several activities, focused on Central America, are ongoing, such as breeding for more nutritious beans and maize, and nutrition studies to estimate the potential dietary impact of biofortification. These achievements and ideas for moving forward with biofortification in the region will be presented.