【Title】 Symposium with Dr. Cary Fowler, 2024 World Food Prize Laureate
– Dr. Fowler's Journey to Preserve Genetic Diversity and New Mission for Africa's Adapted Crops and Soils

【Organizers】 JIRCAS, in collaboration with
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Japan Intellectual Support Network in Agricultural Sciences (JISNAS)

【Target Audience】 Academics, researchers, development partners, policy makers, media

【Format/Mode】Hybrid, targeting 200+ on-site participants and 300 online participants

【Date, Venue, Language】
Friday, October 11, 2024. 14:00-16:30
Venue– Yayoi Auditorium, University of Tokyo
Language – English/Japanese: Simultaneous translation

【Concept】
The diversity of crop genetic resources serves as the biological foundation of agriculture and, consequently, our civilization. These resources are essential for all future plant breeding and crop improvement efforts as humanity faces ever-increasing challenges from climate change, pandemics, conflicts, and other existential threats. However, the gradual loss of crop genetic diversity from farmers' fields necessitates the preservation of backups at genebanks. As we navigate uncharted territories in a world full of uncertainties, the diversity of crop genetic resources --- featuring traits such as climate resilience, pest resistance, high nutritional value, and salt tolerance, among others --- is a fundamental global commons that ensures resilient agriculture and thus food security.

Dr. Cary Fowler, the Special Envoy for Global Food Security at the US Department of State, has led global efforts to promote the conservation of crop species as well as their wild relatives over the decades. He has been instrumental in the establishment of the Global Crop Diversity Trust (Crop Trust) and the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway, a modern-day Noah's Ark that provides ultimate security for more than one million unique crop varieties. Together with Dr. Geoffrey Hawtin, Dr. Cary Fowler will receive the 2024 World Food Prize in recognition of their invaluable contributions to conserving crop diversity and genetic resources, which are critical to global food security.

Dr. Fowler is also known for leading the launch of a joint US Department of State-FAO-Africa Union initiative, the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS), with a focus on Africa. African agriculture has long suffered from stagnant yields insufficient to feed the growing population, due to historical underinvestment in breeding efforts for diverse, nutritious, climate-resilient, traditional crops on one hand, and in fertility management

corresponding to heterogeneous soil conditions on the other. Facing the growing impacts of weather extremes and soil degradation, it is imperative to unlock the potentials of adapted crops and soils to ensure food and nutrition security in Africa. Addressing crops and soils simultaneously, the two foundational elements for a resilient food system, in turn, requires inter-disciplinary collaboration that goes beyond traditional siloed approaches.

This symposium will provide the audience an opportunity to learn about Dr. Fowler's journey in preserving crop genetic diversity for resilient agriculture and food systems, which awarded him the 2024 World Food Prize. He will then share his passion for and a rationale behind initiating VACS with the panelists, who will showcase their respective experiences with African adapted crops and soils, and discuss and identify potential areas for collaboration. Participants can interact with Dr. Fowler and explore frontiers for research contributing to building resilient food systems.

【Program】:

14:00 – 14:10 Opening and Welcome Remarks
Mr. KOYAMA Osamu: President, JIRCAS
Mr. KUBOTA Osamu: Deputy Assistant Minister, Export and International Affairs Bureau, MAFF

14:10 – 15:15 Session1: Dr. Fowler's journey in preserving crop genetic diversity for resilient agriculture and food systems

- Welcome from Japan's Genebank, Dr. MATSUI Katsuhiro, Plant Resources Unit, the Research Center of Genetic Resources, NARO (NGRC)
- Introduction of Dr. Cary Fowler, Dr. IWANAGA Masa, JIRCAS
- Keynote Speech, Dr. Cary Fowler, US State Department

15:15 – 15:50 Session2: Why VACS? Opportunities for the vision for adapted crops and soils to realize resilient food systems in Africa

- Livelihood and food security importance of neglected and underutilized plant species in Western Africa, Prof. Alexandros Gasparatos, University of Tokyo
- Soil type dependent cowpea cropping systems to mitigate future climate risk in the Sudan Savanna, Dr. ISEKI Kotaro, JIRCAS
- Healthy soil for adapted crops – Call for interdisciplinary research collaboration, Dr. NAKAMURA Satoshi, JIRCAS

15:50 – 16:25 Session3: Interacting with Dr. Fowler
Panel discussion, Q&A, Chair: Dr. Sarr Papa Saliou, JIRCAS

16:25-16:30 Closing remarks
Prof. EHARA Hiroshi, Nagoya University & JISNAS