



NEWS RELEASE – Contact Tori Miller at +1 703 373 4300

World Food Logistics Organization and UC Davis Postharvest Technology Center to Help Improve Small Farmer Incomes in Africa, South Asia

One-year project funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

ALEXANDRIA, VA, 23 March 2009 – The World Food Logistics Organization (WFLO) in partnership with the Postharvest Technology Research & Information Center at the University of California, Davis, announced today that they have received a \$1.2 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to identify strategies to increase the incomes of small-farm growers in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia by reducing crop losses and keeping fruit and vegetables marketable longer.

Improvements in the handling, transportation, and storage of harvested crops are critical to boosting rural economies. Often large amounts of produce are “lost” before they can reach markets, mainly due to high rates of bruising, water loss, and decay. This project will create an international network of specialists at public and private institutions in Benin, Ghana, Rwanda, India and the United States who will determine the extent of postharvest crop losses and formulate suggested interventions.

Linking postharvest and marketing professionals from WFLO and the University of California, Davis with African and Indian institutions, the project will assess the levels and core causes of postharvest fruit and vegetable losses in these regions, where 40 to 50 percent of horticultural crops produced are lost before they can be consumed. Reducing these losses is an important part of sustainable agricultural development efforts to increase food availability. During the past 30 years, however, less than 5 percent of the funding for horticultural development has gone toward improving postharvest handling.

The project will also evaluate five previous horticultural development projects to determine what educational outreach and technologies have been effective in reducing local postharvest losses

“A vital component to sustainable agricultural development is a stable and complete ‘cold chain’ to deliver produce from the field to consumers,” said WFLO President and CEO Bill Hudson. “As a result, this project, over time, will certainly have a long-lasting, positive impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.”

Dr. Lisa Kitinoja, a WFLO Senior Technical Advisor and UC Davis alumnus, was instrumental in the development of this project.

“Reducing postharvest losses of horticultural crops will provide additional income to small-farm operators, who are traditionally women in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia,” said Kitinoja, an authority on postharvest extension systems in developing nations. “We believe that the health, education and welfare of families in the developing world can be significantly improved.”

Dr. Adel Kader, professor emeritus of postharvest physiology at UC Davis and one of the team members, added, “This is a first-of-its-kind opportunity from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to revisit previously completed postharvest agricultural development projects to assess what has and has not worked in the past, and plan effective postharvest interventions for the future.”

The new international network of postharvest extension specialists includes participants from the World Food Logistics Organization, UC Davis, UC Berkeley, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (Benin), Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Rwanda, Crops Research Institute (Ghana), Kwame Nkrumah Science and Technology University (Ghana), PolyTechnical Institutes (Ghana) and Amity University (India).

This grant is part of the foundation’s Agricultural Development initiative, which is working with a wide range of partners in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to provide millions of small farmers in the developing world with tools and opportunities to boost their yields, increase their incomes, and build better lives for themselves and their families. The foundation is working to strengthen the entire agricultural value chain—from seeds and soil to farm management and market access—so that progress against hunger and poverty is sustainable over the long term.

The World Food Logistics Organization is the primary source for education, technical information and development in the global cold chain industry. More information is available at <http://www.wflo.org/wflo>.

UC Davis' Postharvest Technology Research & Information Center is one of the world's leading extension programs focused on reducing postharvest losses and enhancing the quality, safety and marketing of horticultural crops. More information is available at: <http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/>.

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About the World Food Logistics Organization

The World Food Logistics Organization (WFLO) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the proper handling and storage of perishable products and the development of systems and best practices for the safe, efficient, and reliable movement of food to the people of the world. Founded in 1943, WFLO delivers education and research to the industry and empowers economic development by strengthening the global cold chain. WFLO is a Core Partner of the Global Cold Chain Alliance, an umbrella organization that unites partners to be innovative leaders in the temperature-controlled products industry.

About UC Davis

For 100 years, UC Davis has engaged in teaching, research and public service that matter to California and transform the world. Located close to the state capital, UC Davis has 31,000 students, an annual research budget that exceeds \$500 million, a comprehensive health system and 13 specialized research centers. The university offers interdisciplinary graduate study and more than 100 undergraduate majors in four colleges -- Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Biological Sciences, Engineering, and Letters and Science -- and advanced degrees from five professional schools: Education, Law, Management, Medicine, and Veterinary Medicine. The UC Davis School of Medicine and UC Davis Medical Center are located on the Sacramento campus near downtown.