Colloquium Summary

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"Tropical Horticultural Crop" Development for Export Marketing" has many key participants. The tendency to somewhat oversimplify this subject is understandable because of the prominent roles of the producers, shippers, and marketers. The roles of the various government agencies of exporting and importing countries are also critically important to the success of any multinational operation. Dealing with highly perishable products, such as fruits, vegetables, and flowers, requires a high degree of coordination among participating parties.

Raj Kumar and Campbell have clearly identified many horticultural crops in the tropics that can be exported. Several are already fairly well-known to residents of subtropical and temperate zones and can be further exploited. Several other local favorites have export potential. Exportation for profit depends on proper production and postharvest handling measures to ensure that quality horticultural crops are delivered.

Rinella (see paper by Soule) stressed the critical importance of dealing with transportation issues on long-term and regional scales. Trip by trip, crop by crop, country by country-isolated efforts must ultimately fit into an overall coordinated plan if exporters and importers are to succeed. Private enterprises need to work closely with local government and international funding agencies to resolve complex transportation issues. For example, coordination of production and shipping of perishables from several small countries and consolidation of export and import port facilities would be helpful. Rinella proposes the creation of a fully integrated food handling and transportation system to provide functional links between production areas and market places.

DeFreitas detailed several of the complexities of satisfactorily complying with the many regulations of importing countries. Conscientious efforts are being made to use only those agricultural chemicals registered for use in countries such as the United States. Fair trade agreements are important to the success of producing

countries. The development of good relationships with dependable trading partners and brokers is more important in the long run than special arrangements and privileges provided by developed nations. Production of quality horticultural crops is an attainable goal, but quality maintenance during delivery to markets is a real challenge. Reliable transportation is a continuing critical need, underscoring Rinella's plea for an effective, integrated transportation network.

Steele's comments are based on his considerable experience in developmental assistance programs. Although he works with the Office of International Cooperation and Development (OICD) in the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), he represents views held by his counterparts in other foreign assistance agencies, such as The World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank. Steele discussed problems experienced by USAID and their response to them. He described present activities and trends in Caribbean and Latin American missions, with specific examples from the region. Policies affecting bilateral foreign assistance programs of the United States with less-developed countries were discussed.

The outlook of this colloquium was generally optimistic, based on many factors. Consumption of an increasing array of tropical and horticultural products is becoming a part of U.S. tastes and preferences. Pressure on currently productive agricultural lands in temperate zones makes tropical sourcing more feasible. Despite problems identified by some of our colloquium speakers, handling, packaging, storage, and transportation facilities and methods are improving, permitting more imports from distant production regions. Wherever there is an opportunity for a profit to be made in the production and marketing of fresh horticultural crops, entrepreneurs will find ways to deal with barriers and constraints. As horticultural scientists, we will continue to play an important role in the development and delivery of technologies to make "Tropical Horticultural Crop Development for Export Marketing" a reality.