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Book Review

Conserving the Wild Relatives of Crops. Erich Hoyt. IBPGR, % FAO of the United Nations, Rome. 1988. 45 pp. illustr.

The brief but adequately covered material in this booklet, presented in language designed to reach the non-technical audience, will go far in the urgent need to spread the message about the necessity of conserving samples of the genetic diversity of crop plant relatives. The opening sentences strike home a basic, yet still not fully recognized truth: “The conservation of crop genetic resources—the plants that feed us and their wild relatives—is one of the most important issues for humankind to-day. We live in a world in which vast population increases are predicted for the remainder of this century and beyond. Also, major changes in climate may disturb our habitat and force us to modify our agriculture. It is essential for our survival that enough effort be put into conserving genetic resources and making them available for breeding programs to produce the new and improved crops of the future on which we will rely.”

Financed by the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (IBPGR), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), this contribution should have wide influence far beyond its modest size. We have long awaited anything so succinct and authoritative.

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