

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**The Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) and IFDC's CATALIST project sign MOU to support agricultural intensification and provide environmental stability**

*Feb. 3, 2010 – Kigali, Rwanda* – Ambassador Gabriel Toyi, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Region (CEPGL), and Dr. Henk Breman, Chief of Party of IFDC's CATALIST project, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) at CATALIST's Kiyovu office in Kigali, Rwanda.

The MOU will formalize the organizations' mutual goals, including promoting economic development in the nations of Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. Both CEPGL and IFDC focus on the transformation of subsistence farming into market-based agriculture. The collaboration between

CEPGL and CATALIST is based on common objectives: agricultural intensification; input market development (fertilizers, seeds, crop protection products, etc.); and value chain creation and support (developing all aspects of agriculture from crop cultivation to purchase/consumption by the consumer). These objectives are accomplished by professionalizing those involved in the agricultural value chains and by creating a socio-economic climate that is conducive to growth and adaptation.

“Since most of the population from this region lives on declining agriculture caused by overpopulation, the only way to ensure food security is through agricultural intensification. By satisfying existing demands for crops, such as Irish potatoes, this process will increase farmers' incomes and generate new employment opportunities,” said Breman.

A key goal shared by CEPGL and IFDC is contributing to the fight against poverty in the Great Lakes Region. To accomplish this goal, the organizations will:



From left to right, Ambassador Gabriel Toyi, CEPGL Executive Secretary and Dr. Henk Breman, CATALIST Chief of Party, sign an MOU to support agricultural intensification.

1. Facilitate agricultural intensification and rural development by working in a regional partnership.
2. Help create the conditions and support the necessary interventions to promote economic development and exchange among the three countries, particularly in the agricultural sector.

“Our collaboration with IFDC/CATALIST will help us to achieve the main tasks that we were given by the member states: to intensify agriculture, ensure food security and alleviate poverty,” said Ambassador Toyi.

CEPGL and IFDC each have their own responsibilities under this agreement. CEPGL will focus on policy and advocacy concerns, as well as participate in the IFDC/CATALIST Advisory Committee for Regional Agricultural Trade and Collaboration. IFDC/CATALIST will be responsible for the technical aspects of agricultural intensification, for example, in the Ruzizi Plain, which is common to the three involved nations. In addition, both parties have agreed to put in place a monitoring and evaluation committee, which will meet every three months.

### **Background on CATALIST**

CATALIST stands for “Catalyze Accelerated Agricultural Intensification for Social and Environmental Stability.” The five-year project aims to increase food security, reduce poverty and improve regional collaboration to foster peace and security in the Great Lakes Region. CATALIST is funded by the Dutch Ministry for Development Cooperation (DGIS), administered by the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Rwanda and implemented by IFDC.

At a time when the world food crisis is the focus of national and international development efforts, CATALIST is enabling farmers to increase their crop production and incomes through an integrated approach that combines sustainable agricultural intensification technologies with farm-to-market linkages and road infrastructure construction.

To contribute to peace and environmental stability in the region, the CATALIST project focuses on agricultural intensification, agribusiness market development and public works (HIMO). The project’s activities are targeted to increase agricultural productivity (crop and livestock) and to develop associated agricultural input and output markets. Additionally, HIMO activities help vulnerable population groups (including demobilized, internally displaced and returnee populations) by creating jobs and developing local economic exchange. This three-pronged approach addresses a principal root cause of regional instability – farmers’ inability to provide for their families due to land degradation resulting from overpopulation and a reliance on low-input agriculture.

### **Background on CEPGL**

The Economic Community of the Great Lakes Region (CEPGL) is a sub-regional organization created by the signing of the Agreement of Gisenyi on Sept. 20, 1976. It aims to ensure peace and security of member states and the development of public interest activities aimed at promoting trade and the free movement of persons. The organization also promotes cooperation among the countries in regard to political, economic and social life.

It has three member states: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.



CEPGL is comprised of four specialized institutions:

- Development Bank of the Great Lakes Countries (BDEGL)
- Institute for Agricultural Research and Animal Husbandry (IRAZ)
- Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries for Energy (EGL)
- International Society for Electricity in the Great Lakes Region (SINELAC)

In the coming years, agriculture intensification and food security will be one of the primary focus areas of CEPGL. This is one of the primary reasons for signing the MOU.

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