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## EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

We are proud to celebrate with you, in this edition of *ifc*, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of IPI.

For fifty years IPI has been serving farmers worldwide, giving scientific backing to extensionists and advisors, cooperating with scientists to discover the most efficient way to manage nutrients, and informing decision-makers on the benefits of balanced fertilization whilst also safeguarding natural resources and protecting the environment.

IPI has also been privileged to bring together eminent scientists and researchers to exchange results and views on how potassium behaves in soils and how it affects yield, quality and stress tolerance of crops. Equally important has been the transfer of knowledge, especially to farmers in developing countries. This has been achieved through regional programmes in China, India, SE Asia, the WANA region, Central/Eastern Europe, the countries of the Former Soviet Union, and Latin America, through workshops, seminars and field days. This work has been supported by publications in more than 20 local languages. In all, IPI has been able to provide a comprehensive package of information on balanced nutrition with potassium.

But challenges remain. The global population is still growing. We need more food but we have to obtain it from shrinking land and water resources. Productivity must therefore be increased and this will require more nutrients. But consumers are demanding not just more food but better, more diverse food that is also, of course, safe. Globalisation is another challenge. Farmers face greater competition and yet must meet ever stricter international standards in food safety and hygiene. Plant nutrition can do much to help but it will be essential to have more site and crop specific knowledge, and a better understanding of how to manage soil nutrients in order to achieve economically the most viable yield with the quality expected by the market. Some of the ways in which these challenges may be met in future are outlined later in this edition. Above all, if the needs of farmers and consumers into the next half century are to be met, an integrated approach that includes decision makers will be essential. Those who, for example, decide at a political level on fertilizer imports and distribution should be kept informed about the benefits of balanced nutrition and the payback to the national economy in terms of increased wealth. IPI will continue to play its part and respond to the challenges ahead.

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## IPI celebrates 50 years of service

The world has changed greatly in the last fifty years. Half a century ago, just after the Second World War, the total population was about 2.5 billion people, two-thirds of whom were in the developing world. Cereals yielded, on average, less than 1.3 t/ha. By the early '60s, global per capita cereal production was 290 kg although, in developing countries, it was a meagre 193 kg. At the time, agriculture was hard pressed to produce enough food for the growing population.



Wenn du düngst dann mach es richtig!  
und merkt dir: Kalifalz ist wichtig!

(by courtesy of K+S Kali GmbH, Germany)

Now the global population has risen to over 6 billion. Almost 80% are living in developing countries where food production has also risen. They now achieve cereal grain harvests of about 2.7 t/ha while, in developed countries, the average has increased to 3.6 t/ha. Per capita cereal production has increased by almost 30% to 340 kg, more than keeping pace with the increase in population.

Agricultural research, with the collaboration of the fertilizer industry, has played a key role in this achievement throughout the '50s and since. But the contribution, especially of the French and German potash industries in the '20s and '30s, should not be overlooked. They were convinced that it was essential to promote balanced fertilization, not only in their home markets but also in countries outside Europe. This led to the foundation of the International Potash Institute on 11 October 1952 in Berne, Switzerland.