

# SCRI Worldwide

## Phil Taylor

SCRI continued to reinforce and expand its overseas links and partnerships during the course of 2010. Of the many pleasing opportunities to react with organisations around the world, one of the most notable for us was the cooperation agreement made with Zhejiang Academy of Agricultural Sciences (ZAAS) in China.

A formal signing ceremony was held at SCRI in the Autumn. The Memorandum of Understanding anticipated that the two partners would identify and develop collaborative research programmes of mutual interest. It was also hoped that the two centres would be able to exchange staff and graduate students.

The main areas of common interest between ZAAS and SCRI are plant pathology, sustainable methods of controlling pests and diseases and crop and environmental molecular biology and biotechnology.

Dr Lesley Torrance, Head of the Plant Pathology programme at SCRI said: "This is a very exciting opportunity to develop a collaboration with Chinese scientists in the important area of sustainable pest and disease control."

It was particularly appropriate that Dr Jianping Chen was able to sign the agreement for the Chinese side; he gained his PhD in Plant Virology at SCRI. He was an honoured guest at Invergowrie this time in his capacity as president of ZAAS. Director of Science Planning, Professor David Hopkins, signed on behalf of SCRI.

SCRI was also able to announce further involvement in the African continent during the year. A project to

assist farmers in Malawi was backed by the Scottish Government with an award of nearly £400,000 from the International Development Fund.

SCRI is working with farmers, national potato researchers and CIP (International Potato Center, Lima, Peru) potato specialists based in Malawi to help combat constraints on the potato crop within the Malawian agricultural system. The ultimate goal is to improve potato crop yields to reduce poverty and increase food security.

SCRI specialists are finding ways to develop sustainable potato production through the development of disease-free potato seed tuber production systems and marketing for improved productivity and trade.

Scotland's External Affairs Minister, Fiona Hyslop, said: "Scottish Government funds go directly to Scottish organisations who have demonstrated that they have the relevant skills, capacity and expertise to deliver services on the ground to the people of Malawi. Rigorous monitoring shows our funding is having a positive impact on the lives of Malawians and I was fortunate to witness this at first hand during a visit to the country."

All of the projects receiving funds target the priority areas set out in the Co-operation Agreement between the Scottish Government and the Government of Malawi. These are health, education, civil society and governance and sustainable economic development.

SCRI is also leading similar work to support potato production in Kenya as part of a project backed by The Monsanto Fund.



Dr Jianping Chen and Professor David Hopkins signing the Memorandum of Understanding.

Closer to home, 2010 saw researchers from SCRI joining their counterparts in 12 other EU countries in a consortium seeking better ways to use legume crops. The Legume Futures programme was launched in Edinburgh.

The three-year long €4 million programme is being coordinated by the Scottish Agricultural College which, along with SCRI, will fulfil the UK commitment to the project funded under the EU framework.

Dr Pietro Iannetta of the Environment Plant Interactions programme at SCRI is leading a work package on data management and novel system design, including a website [www.legumefutures.eu](http://www.legumefutures.eu) and an online database for the exchange of information between scientists.

The aim of the research is to identify the best way to use legumes in each of Europe's climatic zones, identify the most suitable crop and design a cropping system that reduces farming's environmental impact.