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Institute Information

The Institute for Alternative Agriculture is a nonprofit, tax-exempt research and education organization established in 1983 to encourage and facilitate the adoption of low-cost, resource-conserving and environmentally-sound farming methods. It works closely with producer groups, public research and education institutions, and government agencies in promoting a sustainable agriculture system.

Its programs include providing a national information clearinghouse, serving as a voice for sustainable agriculture in Washington, and developing and implementing research and educational outreach programs. It holds an annual scientific symposium and publishes a monthly newsletter.

The Institute is governed by a grass roots Board of Directors, which includes several commercial-scale organic farmers, and maintains a small professional staff. It is supported by memberships and donations and grants from foundations, corporations, and individuals.

Cover Photo

The cover photo shows peasant farmers in the Peruvian Andes weeding and hilling-up a field of potatoes. These farmers grow potatoes under rainfed conditions, with few or no purchased inputs. By contrast, a few kilometers away, commercial producers grow potatoes under irrigation and high levels of fertilizer application. Plant breeding programs in developing countries often use production methods that are more like those of commercial than peasant farmers. It is likely that the productivity of peasant farmers like those in this photo could be increased if they could obtain crop varieties bred specifically for their production environment. Photo by Gary N. Atlin, Department of Plant Science, Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Truro, N.S., Canada.