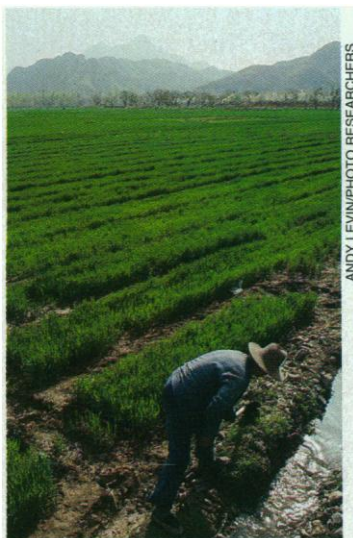


edited by RICHARD STONE



**Field of genes.** Chinese hope to crack code for better rice crops.

## Chinese to Map a Favorite Foodstuff

The human genome is spoken for—in that U.S. and European scientists already are busily mapping it—so the Chinese have decided to tackle another major natural resource: rice.

The Chinese government has just begun funding a 15-year effort to map the rice genome. For the first 5 years of the project, supported to the tune of 23 million yuan (\$3.8 million), an 80-scientist team intends to identify and sequence genes that, after some tinkering, would improve rice yield, quality, and resistance to pests. In addition, the Rice Genome Project (RGP) plans to

build a high-powered computer center at a newly created National Center for Gene Research at Shanghai's Academia Sinica.

Although they produce more rice than any country, the Chinese weren't the first to begin mapping rice genes; the Japanese had already begun dabbling in this paddy. Aware of this, Chinese scientists have set up a loose collaboration with the Japanese but haven't "laid out a detailed plan yet," says Academia Sinica's Guo-fan Hong, head of the RGP. And because the RGP will employ technology used in the human genome program, Hong says he hopes to set up ties with Western collaborators as well.

## Army Expected to Clear AIDS Scientist

A United States Army investigation has "exonerated" Robert Redfield, a prominent AIDS researcher at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Washington, D.C., of allegations that he misrepresented data from a trial of a therapeutic AIDS vaccine, Army sources briefed on the report's results told *Science*.

Although sources say Redfield was "slapped on the wrist" over some nonresearch matters, the report is expected to clear him of misconduct allegations that arose during the 1992 international AIDS conference. At the meeting, Redfield reported positive results from a trial of the MicroGeneSys "gp160" vaccine in infected patients. Last October, the Army initiated its investigation after receiving formal complaints from military researchers that Redfield had "overstated" the trial's results at the meeting (*Science*, 6 November 1992, p. 883).

Since the beginning of the probe, Redfield, who the Army did not allow to speak with *Science*, has maintained that he has done nothing wrong. His detractors, meanwhile, have insisted that the military is incapable of investigating its own personnel. The report was expected to be released shortly after *Science* went to press.

## Shalala Draws Line on AIDS Test Royalties

In January 1992, France's Pasteur Institute began a campaign to persuade U.S. officials to renegotiate the percentage of royalties it receives from a blood test to detect HIV. After making little headway with the Bush Administration, Pasteur's attorneys were hoping for a more sympathetic ear from the Clinton team. But the Clinton Administration is tuning out: Donna Shalala, secretary of Health and Human Services, told *Science* last week that the United States will not renegotiate the agreement. "We've told [the French] to forget it," she says.

The French-American conflict dates to 1984, when the Pasteur's Luc Montagnier and the National Cancer Institute's Robert Gallo began feuding over who first discovered the cause of AIDS. In 1987, after much hand-wringing, the two parties agreed to be called "codiscoverers" and to have their institutions split patent royalties from a test for HIV antibodies in the blood. The French have asked to renegotiate that agreement in the wake of a scientific misconduct evaluation of Gallo's lab, the results of which were made public last December and are currently being appealed (*Science*, 8 January, p. 168).

The French intend to con-

tinue pressing their case with the Clinton Administration. "Secretary Shalala may want this to go away, but it's an issue that's going to have to be reckoned with," says Michael Epstein, a New York-based attorney for the Pasteur Institute. "We're certainly not going to let this matter rest," he says.

## Space Station Survives Another Vote

It's just one cliffhanger after another for big science projects in Congress. Early this week Space Station Freedom survived yet another attempt to kill it, when the House defeated by 24

votes an amendment to strip its \$2.1 billion request from the 1994 budget. That's better than last week's one-vote margin on the same amendment, but it took a weekend of heavy lobbying by the president, vice president, and other station supporters to convince key opponents to skip the vote, ensuring a victory for the project. Now the battle goes to the Senate, where Freedom will join the Superconducting Super Collider on the big-science endangered list. Senate aides give Freedom the better chance of surviving intact, but they predict a fierce battle over both projects in the month to come.

## Rumor Mill Grinds on Goldin

Dan Goldin, champion of "cheaper, faster, better" projects as chief of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), has thrown his agency into turmoil with management studies and job changes, and in doing so, has become the subject of rumors. But rumors about his (and the space station's) demise, it appears, have been greatly exaggerated.

On the eve of President Clinton's big decision on the space station, news reports kept popping up that Goldin was about to quit or be fired. For example, a top Administration aide recently told *Science*, "We just got a call from NASA headquarters asking if it was true that Friday would be Goldin's last day." Why Friday? The aide had no idea. Another report claimed that retired Air Force general Donald Kutyna was about to take Goldin's place. Not



Dan Goldin

so, says the aide: Kutyna sent a letter ruling himself out "months ago." Then came the counterthrust—a story in *The Washington Post* claiming that Goldin had been asked to stay on indefinitely. But this report has been just as hard to substantiate. "There's been no change" in Goldin's status, insists the aide.

Why is this happening to Goldin? Perhaps there's a precedent. Admiral James Watkins, head of the Department of Energy in the Bush Administration, was similarly plagued by retirement rumors. He, too, had riled the bureaucracy and shaken up the "beltway bandit" contractors that catered to his agency. Many hoped he would leave, and their wishful thinking from time to time found its way into print. The same kind of wishes may be coloring the news on Goldin.