

Annual Report 2004



Global Forum on Agricultural Research



GFAR

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In memoriam, Robert Lamb

At the time of going to press, we learned of the sudden and tragic death of Robert Lamb, who as a member of the Green Ink team compiled and edited this report. We at GFAR remember and greatly appreciate Robert's dedication to the job, his gift for language and his wonderful sense of humour. Robert will be sorely missed by his colleagues and many in the international development community.



A message from the Donor Support Group Chair

Partnership among equals



GFAR is in a dynamic and expansionary phase. The scope and depth of its activities have grown significantly in the last year and a half, boosted by a significant increase in budgetary resources. Mobilization of new resources for GFAR has also been accompanied by an increase in operational scope and programme activities. As Chair of the Donor Support Group and on behalf of my colleagues, I am very pleased with this development.

The recently approved GFAR Business Plan for 2004–2006 has sharpened the focus of GFAR interventions in support of inter-regional cooperation, collaborative research partnerships, advocacy, public awareness, strategic thinking and information management. This constitutes a highly relevant and meaningful agenda in a world where innovation is no longer considered the outcome of a linear process of knowledge generation, transfer and use. Rather, it is more often the result of complementary interactions among various stakeholders, including farmers, traders, processors and consumers alike. Researchers and these other groups that are working in and around the agricultural sector can therefore best generate relevant knowledge jointly.

GFAR efforts to support worldwide collaborative research partnerships are providing the institutional home, both at the regional and at the inter-regional levels, for such a process of joint generation of knowledge. This process involves mobilization, mutual recognition and negotiation between different actors and their common vision. The challenge and the value added by GFAR, as a form of organizational innovation, is to increasingly foster inclusiveness in those decision-making processes that set and deliver research agendas at the global level, with particular reference to the involvement of such civil society organizations (CSOs) as farmers' associations and non-governmental organizations.

The Donor Group recognizes that improved stakeholder representation through closer work with CSOs requires a forging of new alliances and strategic partnerships. One such example worth highlighting is the recent collaboration of GFAR with the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP). This initiative provides an avenue for exploring



creative ways to better connect local initiatives at the grassroots level – that empower farmers as researchers in their own right with collective actions taken by the producer organizations on their behalf in order to influence the strategic decisions affecting research and development.

Our Group stands ready to continue providing its support to the shaping of global multi-stakeholder platforms of this nature. In this Annual Report for 2004 you will find examples of how the involvement of different interest groups in innovation dynamics can benefit smallholder farmers by involving them and other actors in all stages of the decision-making process.

Rodney Cooke

Chair, Donor Support Group



A message from the Donor Support Group Representative

Un grand merci



It is an honour to introduce the GFAR 2004 Annual Report, as a former representative of the donors on the GFAR Steering Committee, from Dresden in 2000 through to Mexico in 2004.

In its first years the Forum was kept busy building its legitimacy and demonstrating its value. In the beginning, few believed in this innovative platform

to connect better agricultural research with development, but a small team of very hard-working people steadily brought GFAR to a prominent role in agricultural research for development (ARD).

The donors who took a bet on GFAR at that time, recognizing an initiative taken by the national agricultural research systems and their Regional Forums, shared a vision with other GFAR partners – and we all committed ourselves to do our utmost to help. As Dr Raj Paroda, then Chair of GFAR used to say, “This baby GFAR will grow and become the apex of the world ARD community. It will act as a neutral coordination mechanism, that belongs to and links actors involved in agricultural research in order to serve its end users, the resource-poor.” It was – and still is – our common duty to fulfil this vision and make GFAR useful to those end users.

At that time, very limited financial resources were available to make our dreams and clever ideas come true. On the donors’ side, under the leadership of Rodney Cook, Chair of the Donor Support Group, a coherent approach to back GFAR was diligently followed, including (when necessary) advocating FAO and IFAD support and involvement. We all played our advocacy role to attract more and more potential new donors to come on board.

2004 has seen a rather odd situation compared to previous years, when actions used to be constrained by lack of funds. This year the GFAR Secretariat had some internal constraints, mainly in terms of personnel, which did not permit putting all the foreseen actions into full gear. In addition, the postponed approval of the 2005 budget led to stalemate at the end of 2004. I do not doubt that the Steering Committee will address these issues promptly and I am fully convinced that donors and other stakeholders will confirm their commitments and help GFAR to continue delivering the expected outcomes and impacts.



Friends must be nearby when there are difficulties to overcome. The donors have been and will continue to be present for GFAR in the coming years. From the European Commission's side, my colleagues will now take over this exciting dossier and, from the Directorate General for Research, I shall also remain at GFAR's disposal.

I would like to conclude by saying 'un grand merci' – a big thank you – to all with whom I have had the chance to work in my association with GFAR. Compared to what remains to be accomplished, only a little has been achieved so far. Please continue this work for the benefit of those who stand in need of it and will suffer if it fails to materialize.

Philippe Vialatte

Outgoing Donor Support Group Representative, GFAR Steering Committee



Foreword

GFAR's vital role of facilitation – of quietly shepherding research partnerships, helping people share knowledge and taking care of the global and regional logistics that go with these functions – is often played out far from the points of impact of agricultural research and development in the field. Hence we need constantly to improve our communications outputs, for instance by issuing ever more informative and comprehensive Annual Reports. We have introduced changes this year that we hope move us in that direction.

This year we have singled out one of GFAR's flagship concerns – partnership – as the subject of a feature article that explores the many facets of what partnership means in terms of boosting the effectiveness of agricultural research for development (ARD). The article places GFAR's work in the perspective of unresolved dilemmas of agriculture and development, highlighting how farmers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are increasingly adding their voices to the debate on (and participating actively in) setting the agenda for ARD. Examples are cited of partnership in action and the critical importance of the partnership building process. The article ends by showing how GFAR is active in promoting – or leveraging – partnerships and the effect that in a relatively short time GFAR has had in influencing how ARD is governed, and thought about, in both developing and developed regions.

As we move through the three years of the current Business Plan our Annual Report will highlight other GFAR priorities such as stakeholder inclusiveness in decision making and information and communication management. We hope that the presentation of these cross-cutting themes will enhance our public's understanding of what GFAR is all about and illustrate convincingly the value addition that comes by bringing diverse stakeholders together to tackle the many challenges associated with eliminating poverty and hunger.

With difficulties associated with financing put behind us for perhaps the first time in our short history, we were able to successfully conclude preparation of the GFAR Strategy 2004–2013 and rolling three-year Business Plan 2004–2006. The Business Plan and the availability of resources to implement it open up new challenges in terms of delivery and impact, yet the active participation of all GFAR stakeholder groups in the Plan's development has built up a level of ownership that we feel sure will translate into a firm commitment to deliver on all we aim to achieve.



The pages that follow report significant achievements made by ongoing Global Partnership Programmes (GPPs) and steady progress in developing new programmes. Of particular note, I feel, is the momentum that is building behind our initiative on information and communication management. All our Regional Forums feel tremendous enthusiasm for this activity. Without doubt, managing and sharing knowledge effectively and efficiently worldwide – whether horizontally or vertically – will increasingly be the key to building innovative and successful ARD programmes. Another important and pleasing development is the progressive strengthening of the role of civil society in all GFAR’s actions. We still have a long way to go but there is a groundswell of enthusiasm from all sides to ‘make things happen’ and do things differently so that increasingly ARD agendas justly reflect the interests and aspirations of the agricultural community at large.

In sum, 2004 has been a year for forward movement on many fronts. The challenges of bringing together the plurality of stakeholders that make up the GFAR community are great and should not be underestimated. In that context, I want to thank the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), GFAR’s facilitating agencies, and my colleagues on the GFAR Steering Committee for their unconditional support and in particular to extend on their behalf our appreciation for the faith our donors have placed in GFAR as a promoter and advocate of progressive agricultural research for development.

Mohammed Roozitalab
Chair, GFAR



Executive Update

The GFAR year in review

During 2004 GFAR made steady overall progress, passing several important landmarks. Conspicuous among these landmarks was completion of the Forum's 10-Year Strategy for 2004–2013 and its spearhead in the near term, a rolling Business Plan for 2004–2006.

For some organizations such forward planning exercises are routine or humdrum affairs. Not so for GFAR, seeing the architects in its case included stakeholders of all kinds. They participated in a succession of consultations and meetings, culminating in an externally facilitated retreat attended by a comprehensive array of stakeholder representatives. This process, as much as the final product itself, ensured that the content of the Plan reflects the broadest possible spectrum of concerns, expectations, views and ideas. The enthusiasm stakeholders brought to the planning process affirmed their sense of inclusion and bodes well for their future commitment to implementing the resulting long-term and interim



Inclusion makes a difference at this field day for women farmers and extensionists near Mpika, Zambia.

Photo: FAO/19230/P.Lowrey



plans. These identify priorities and cross-cutting issues on which ultimate success will hinge. The four top-priority areas flagged in the plans are:

- Inter-regional collaboration, which lies at the core of GFAR's potential to add value to the global research system through stronger linkages among the Regional Forums;
- Collaborative research partnerships, providing opportunities and tools to implement multi-stakeholder programmes in priority areas of concern defined by stakeholders;
- Advocacy, public awareness and strategic thinking. Stakeholders seek a growing role in this area, fundamental to gaining global political support for agricultural research;
- Management information systems (MIS), which confirms information exchange and knowledge-sharing as an enduring and central part of GFAR's responsibility to ensure effective communication and understanding between its various stakeholders.

Two cross-cutting issues considered important to GFAR activities across the board are:

- Full and active involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs), such as farmer groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in setting and delivering research agendas;
- More and better interaction between researchers, farmers and the private sector.

This Annual Report for 2004 contains, in addition to a round-up of Stakeholder Highlights (page 37), a specially commissioned theme feature focusing on one of the four priorities flagged in the Strategy – collaborative research partnerships (see page 13). As the Business Plan unfolds over the coming three years, subsequent Annual Reports will feature in-depth commentaries on the other key strategic themes, intended to provide a basis for free-ranging discussion on these themes as well as a routine source of reference. The Business Plan priorities also provide a framework for this overview of 2004.

Inter-regional collaboration

In the year under review, a solid foundation was laid for future inter-regional interaction. All five Regional Forums had previously carried out regional priority-setting exercises, which the Secretariat was mandated to facilitate and provide support. The need to review and update these priorities soon became evident, and work began in the South and West Asia region where the Asia–Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) collaborated with the World Vegetable Center (AVRDC), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and a number of centres from the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) to mount a two-day workshop on research needs assessment and priorities in agricultural research for development in the region, with a view to the potential for interplay and synergy with stakeholders in other regions.

The second of the biannual meetings of the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Forums, now a regular event, took place in May in Rome, and a third in Mexico. These encounters offered a very useful platform for sharing information and experiences with a



view to identifying areas of collaboration and complementarity between existing regional initiatives. During the first meeting in Nairobi last year, the Executive Secretaries agreed on a number of thematic areas round which inter-regional activities might be built, making the most of relative strengths and opportunities. The list has since been refined and each Forum has been assigned a lead role in developing a specific realm of activities.



National Centre of Agricultural Investigation, Panama. Connecting biotechnology work conducted in laboratories to sustainable farming activities on the ground is a prime GFAR concern.

Photo: FAO/16066/G. Bizzarri

Hence the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA) is the forum with a lead role in commodity development networking, while biotechnology and bio-safety issues will be spearheaded by APAARI, advocacy and public awareness by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and inter-regional cooperation on institutional innovations by the Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technological Development (FORAGRO). During the Mexico meetings in late 2004 the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) Sub-Committee and the third Executive Secretaries meeting gave each of the Regional Forums an opportunity to present a vision and a plan on how to move forward with fresh initiatives on an inter-regional basis in the thematic area on which it focuses. Implementation of these plans is expected to begin in 2005 after some additional fine-tuning.

One of the expected outputs listed under inter-regional collaboration in the Business Plan is stronger representation of CSOs on the Regional Forums, along with effective and functional participation of these stakeholders in decision-making processes and activities.



The rationale behind this intended shift is that it will strengthen all the Forums, thereby improving the quality of collaborative activities across regions.

During 2004, GFAR supported the efforts of France's technical assistance agency the Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement (CIRAD) to connect with the Regional and Sub-regional Forums as it embarked on a review of its current research programme and development of a new version. In an effort to bolster North–South collaboration, workshops and discussion sessions were held between CIRAD, the Centre Africain pour la recherche et le développement agricoles (CORAF), APAARI and FORAGRO that helped to identify priorities and areas of mutual interest for CIRAD to take into account when developing its research strategy.

Finally, all the Regional Forums as well as the GFAR Secretariat will be represented at the 2005 triennial conference of the European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD) next April, which will take European responses to changing global needs as its theme. Future collaboration between EFARD and its constituent national Forums, and the five Southern regional and sub-regional forums will be debated at a subsequent meeting of the GFAR Steering Committee (GFAR-SC), together with proposals for a new forum for North America and progress in activating the Central Asian and Caucasian Association of Agricultural Research Institutes (CACAARI) in the existing Southern array (see page 42).

Collaborative research partnerships

Activities in 2004 under this heading revolved around progress on three ongoing Global Partnership Programmes (GPPs) and on the development of three more, as well as the launch of a competitive funding scheme for collaborative research. The ongoing GPPs were PROLINNOVA (see page 20), Underutilized Species (see page 21) and the Direct Sowing, Mulch-based Systems and Conservation Agriculture (DMC) programme (see page 25).

The PROLINNOVA GPP made important progress this year as it entered its second phase. Additional funding from the Government of the Netherlands enabled it to expand country programmes beyond the three locations where it began (Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda) to other countries, including Cambodia, Nepal, Niger, South Africa, Sudan and Tanzania. In March the GFAR Secretariat supported an international workshop hosted by PROLINNOVA on *Promoting Farmer Innovation and Experimentation in Ethiopia*. The workshop, held in Axum, Ethiopia, was designed to enable partners to share experiences on developing partnerships and to compare national action plans with a view to an international approach and programme governance. Finally, the Secretariat provided input to facilitate development of proposals for a PROLINNOVA set of activities in Africa's Sahelian region.

The first phase of the DMC programme came to term in 2004, having developed a framework for using case histories to identify drawbacks for farmers to adoption of the



direct sowing approach. Casework was carried out in Bolivia, Ghana and Tanzania. A second phase is on the cards, once a review of gains, shortcomings and lessons learned to date has been presented, followed by a workshop in early 2005 to decide on future directions and actions, including the form a facilitating unit to drive Phase Two should take. The Secretariat is helping to plan for a workshop to be held next year, ahead of the Third World Congress on Conservation Agriculture (October 2005) when the launch of the DMC's next phase is expected.

Partners involved in planning inputs to this event so far include the African Conservation Tillage Network, which has offered to host a facilitation unit for second phase activities, the Regional Land Management Unit in the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), FAO, farmer organizations and NGOs with a wide range of sustainable agriculture interests. A concept note was brought before the GFAR-SC meeting in Mexico, outlining these plans.

GFAR continued to help stakeholders join forces to develop new GPPs. One of these is the potential new GPP on Global Post-harvest Systems (Linking Farmers to Markets), which was at the development stage by the close of 2004 and is reported in detail elsewhere (see page 29). It brings together GFAR stakeholders, FAO and the Post Harvest Forum, *PhAction*, a consortium of research and technical assistance institutions, in a bid to boost efficient, equitable and sustainable development of post-harvest components of the production-to-

Non-timber forest products

A recommendation from stakeholders during the GFAR 2003 conference was that the Global Forum should adopt a more comprehensive outlook on agriculture that latches crops, livestock, forestry and fisheries research together into an integrated whole. An initiative on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) that GFAR has taken steps to launch goes part of the way towards addressing that recommendation. NTFPs are a significant source of cash income generation for the rural poor, worth an estimated US\$100 billion a year or more. Neighbourhoods where these products are extracted benefit less than they should from this potential economic activity on account of unregulated extraction systems, unequal access, very limited value addition at source, and lack of organization, institutional and infrastructure support and market linkages. The International Network on Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) has developed a range of bamboo and rattan technologies and enterprise models designed to generate more and better livelihood opportunities. It has shown willing to lead various other institutions, NGOs, CBOs and extension systems at local levels, to work on NTFPs.

As a preliminary to developing a GPP on NTFPs, brainstorming sessions were held during 2004 with INBAR, with the participation of FAO's Forestry Division, leading to a first set of ideas, which has since then been developed into a more comprehensive concept as a result of informal consultations, including an electronic consultation with partners carried out by INBAR across Asia. The concept note was discussed during the Mexico meetings, and a one-year timeline to move the initiative forward was agreed in principle. Progressing in stages from strategic partnerships development to action research partnerships development, information resource development and the establishment of stakeholder forums, leading up to a second regional consultation in the latter part of 2005.



Making rattan chairs in an artisanal cooperative, Uganda.

Photo: FAO/17508/R. Faidutti

consumption chain. The initiative builds on five regional consultations in 2002 and one global workshop organized in late 2003.

In 2004 GFAR and FAO took steps to promote this emerging initiative and secure the support and participation of other partners, including donors. One such was a presentation of the initiative to permanent country representatives to FAO in November 2004. Finally GFAR and FAO embarked on ‘taking the initiative back to the regions’ by using an expert consultation organized by APAARI in December 2004 to develop country and region-specific action plans, for implementation by southeast Asian countries grouped in several permutations.

A further GPP idea is *Putting Knowledge to Work*, which relates to research under the leadership of CABI Bioscience, Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT) and GFAR on issues surrounding knowledge systems and innovation processes, and how to encourage and stimulate the innovative talents of local groups and communities. A consensus emerged on the way forward, expressed in a concept note submitted for funding to IFAD. Consultations at the regional level and efforts to obtain funding for this new area will be intensified to ascertain whether the idea can be developed into a fully fledged and funded GPP in the future.

GFAR carried out a series of preliminary activities to prepare the launching of a competitive grant scheme designed to foster multi-disciplinary and cross-stakeholder research and development initiatives in two thematic areas: agro-biodiversity and genetic resources management and local knowledge in natural resources management. The scheme is described in detail elsewhere in this report (see page 30). The final selection process was completed and funds disbursed for implementation from the start of 2005



Advocacy, public awareness and strategic thinking

GFAR's two main objectives under this strategic heading are:

- To project the voice and perspective of GFAR into global and regional debates and initiatives on policy, institutional and other critical emerging issues that shape and affect agriculture and agricultural research, and
- To contribute to on-going efforts to sensitise decision and policy makers to the need for a long-term commitment to – and support for – agricultural research.

In 2004 the Secretariat participated in a number of global, regional and national events at which the views, approaches and philosophy of GFAR enriched the debate and promoted the partnership concept on which GFAR is built. Pertinent examples include participation in a research workshop organized by the World Bank on development of research systems to support the changing agricultural sector. GFAR presented a paper on promoting regional and international alliances as part of the search for new directions for future investment in agricultural research.

GFAR also participated in a symposium organized by the Association of Applied Biologists (AAB) of the United Kingdom, on increasing the effectiveness of world public sector agricultural research through partnerships, subtitled *Bases for Novel Paradigms*, during which the GFAR model was promoted as one such paradigm.

Inputs from a GFAR perspective contributed to a debate organized by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in July on the way forward for the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) programme in relation to agricultural science policy. During this debate GFAR voiced the concerns of some of its stakeholders over the focus of the new ISNAR programme, indicating that while the focus is on sub-Saharan Africa, ISNAR's scope should continue to be global.

Another dimension of advocacy activities has been a process of self-scrutiny to ensure that GFAR itself is living up to principles of inclusiveness and participatory decision-making, notably by boosting participation by CSOs in the Regional Forums. Some progress was made, building on the example of CORAF, which has representatives of NGOs and farmers' organizations on its Executive Committee. Three of the Regional Forums have taken steps to tackle this issue. FORAGRO, which already has NGO representatives on its decision-making body, is in the process of providing a similar opportunity to producers' organizations. FARA recognises farmers, NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) as legitimate stakeholders in its decision-making body, and includes their representatives in its Executive Committee. APAARI has also begun to follow suit by inviting representatives of both NGOs and farmers' organizations to attend its forthcoming general assembly as observers, with the short-term objective of making them full members of the Executive Committee.



Management information systems

With the completion of the first phase of the Global Regional Agricultural Information System (GLOBAL.RAIS) project (page 27) GFAR took steps in 2004 towards enabling each Regional and Sub-regional Forum to shape and apply an information and communication strategy and – in addition – to be part of a global strategic information system linking the regions. Last year's Annual Report indicated that only one of the planned five regional workshops had been carried out by October 2003. All the rest were successfully organized this year. The meetings laid the basis for an inter-regional workshop held in Rome in June 2004, the findings of which have been used to develop a global agenda for information and communications technology (ICT) and to formulate a Global Partnership Project on Information and Communication Management for Agricultural Research and Development (ICM4ARD) that will take the GLOBAL.RAIS initiative into its second phase. GFAR's ambition is to enable equitable access to global ARD information in support of the more knowledge-intensive agriculture that is emerging globally.

The proposal was presented to the NARS Sub-Committee in October for endorsement and subsequently submitted to a consortium of donors including the European Commission (EC), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO). The Secretariat continued to devote attention and resources to the Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research (EGFAR) website, an invaluable means of communication and information sharing for all GFAR stakeholders. The EGFAR Back Office (EBO) system, a tool that moves GFAR closer to its goal of decentralized information management, was deployed and tested. The October issue



Using a mobile telephone in a cassava processing plant, Ghana.

Photo: FAO/22315/A. Proto



of the EGFAR Newsletter was devoted to sharing information on the competitive funding scheme of the Promotion du développement durable dans les systems de recherche agricole du sud (DURAS) project. This year GFAR introduced two new features to the newsletter. The first was a regular section devoted to a profile of an NGO or a farmers' organization, authored by the body concerned. Organizations highlighted in 2004 were the Foundation for the Corporación para el Desarrollo Participativo y Sostenible de los Pequeños Agricultores (Participatory and Sustainable Development of Small Farmers) an NGO from Colombia and Ghana's Apex Farmers' Organization.

A second novelty was the introduction of a feature article addressing a global, regional or national issue of topical importance, as part of GFAR's advocacy role. The first article was contributed by M.S. Swaminathan on *Building Impact-oriented R&D Institutions: Lessons from the National Agricultural Research System of India*. It shared lessons learned from the process of strengthening India's NARS, that might be of practical interest to other NARS that are still striving to fulfil their potential to serve their communities and country.

A second lead article addressed the often-neglected topic of policy and institutional development in developing countries, under the title *Policies for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development: a Time for Action*, authored by Marcelino Avila, project coordinator of the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Systems Evolution Project in FAO's Sustainable Development Division. Avila reviewed major challenges and future imperatives, painting positive scenarios for ARD in developing countries and instancing strategic priorities and innovations that could help speed the progress of GFAR's constituencies towards sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Working with civil society organizations

As in previous years, GFAR continued in 2004 to expand its database of information on farmers' organizations and NGOs. Increasing numbers of these organizations use the survey instrument posted on the website to provide the relevant information. The database comprises contact information, geographic coverage, outreach capacity, and thematic interest. It will soon be posted on EGFAR to make the information available for organizations seeking potential partners for collaborative work. EBO will enable participating organizations regularly to update their own data to ensure currency.

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) is an important stakeholder constituency of GFAR, representing some 500 million farm families grouped in 100 national organizations from 70 countries. The President of IFAP is the current farmer's representative on the GFAR-SC. In June 2004, IFAP organized its biennial event, the World Farmers' Congress. In a debate subtitled *Farmers Speaking for Themselves* members aired concerns affecting farming and the farming community.



The GFAR Secretariat facilitated participation by other GFAR stakeholders at the World Farmers' Congress, including two representatives (a farmer and a researcher) from each of the Regional Forums, at regional sessions (Africa, Mediterranean, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean) where a paper jointly prepared by the farmer–researcher duos on the topic of *Strengthening the Linkages between Farmers' Organizations and Agricultural Research Institutions* was presented in respective regional sessions.

The GFAR delegation also took part in other technical and specialized committee sessions. Contacts made during this meeting with farmers have proved invaluable and have given rise to new alliances that promise to be a positive help to future plans and to the goal of strengthening functional linkages between farmers and researchers.

One of the outputs of the CSO consultation carried out ahead of the GFAR 2003 Conference was the identification of CSO focal points in all the regions, charged with mobilizing their respective constituencies for collaborative activities. GFAR has taken advantage of subsequent meetings to bring some of these focal points together. In Mexico GFAR started discussions with a round table on stakeholder analysis (see box, below), and ended with a full day of deliberation to produce a workplan that will spell out how NGOs aim to mobilize support behind implementation of the GFAR Business Plan during 2005.

The Social Analysis System

Effective stakeholder participation has to be based on sound analysis and knowledge of the interests of the various stakeholders, and how they can affect the viability of partnerships. To improve its grasp of this issue, GFAR organized a round table on *Stakeholder Analysis for Effective Partnership Building* in Mexico City in October. It asked the question: What strength and quality of partnerships need to be achieved to tackle the many challenges confronting rural and agricultural communities? In the showcase was a social analysis system (SAS) developed in Canada, which interfaces participatory techniques and software tools in ways that make it easier to perform participatory social analysis, using step-by-step instructions to assess the problems, the parties, their profiles, their positions, and the paths or solutions that could form part of project plans and activities. The resulting assessments are most relevant in situations where stakeholders need effective dialogue and wish to move beyond technical fixes by taking the social dimension of development seriously. The system also promotes strategic participation by targeting those parties that can or must be involved and those that should be empowered through ongoing research and development activities.

SAS techniques and tools are especially useful in projects with multiple stakeholders and can be used for self-directed or group learning. They have been applied successfully to project work in many developing and developed countries. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) generously met the costs of organizing the GFAR round table on SAS, the first in a planned series of activities designed to build stakeholder analysis into GFAR-sponsored activities. A draft strategy was agreed for developing capacity to utilize such analytical tools as SAS in effective and sustainable ways.

For more details of the SAS methodology, visit the website at <http://www.sas-pm.com>



Other landmarks and outputs

Last year's Annual Report noted under the section on interaction with the CGIAR centres that action was in progress on the suggestion that a GFAR Stakeholder Committee be established to work with the Programme Committee of the Generation Challenge Programme (GCP, see page 33) in an advisory capacity and to provide linkage with interested stakeholder groups. The Committee was constituted as requested after a consultative and screening process of candidates recommended by the various GFAR stakeholder groups, with the active involvement of the Director of the GCP. The composition and terms of reference of the Committee were approved and it held its first meeting in November 2004, thanks to financial support from the EC.

A key assignment given to the Secretariat at the end of the GFAR meetings in Nairobi in 2003 was to undertake a review of the GFAR Charter, last reviewed in 2001. Consultants were given the task of carrying out this review, guided by terms of reference and documentation prepared by the Secretariat. They discussed an interim report with the Management Team and Executive Secretaries of Regional Forums during the mid-year Management Team meeting in May 2004. Armed with suggestions and recommendations from this meeting, the consultants completed their assignment and produced a first draft report, which was presented to the GFAR-SC for discussion and approval. The report recommended – among other things – that GFAR should recognize both EFARD and the North American Forum for Agricultural Research (NAFAR) as peer bodies with the same rights and responsibilities as the five Southern forums.

Another task assigned to the Secretariat in Nairobi was to invite the People's Republic of China to send a representative to GFAR-SC activities, initially with observer status but with a view to substantive and permanent status in future. The rationale for this step is that inter-regional collaboration, especially on the South–South axis, depends a great deal on stronger NARS assisting smaller and weaker systems through the exchange of knowledge, information, expertise and experiences, as well as by collaborating with them in research activities.

The Secretariat contacted the appropriate authorities in China and finally made a formal request on behalf of the SC. Dr Lijian Zhang, Vice-President for International Co-operation of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) and Dean of the Graduate School of CAAS, was nominated and participated in all the GFAR meetings organized in Mexico. The Secretariat will continue to cultivate this relationship, as it moves towards GFAR's objective of a substantive and permanent position for China on the GFAR-SC.

The private sector seat on the GFAR-SC has been vacant since 2001, and the absence of representatives from this sector was conspicuous during GFAR's 2003 meetings. GFAR as a group is aware of the role the private sector could and should play in all of its activities and identified this engagement as one of the cross-cutting issues in the current business



plan. As a first step towards achieving this goal, the Secretariat carried out the required consultations with Regional Forums, and invited Dr Arvind Kapur, Managing Director of the Nunhems Seeds Pvt. Ltd. (NSPL) to fill the role of private sector representative on the GFAR Steering Committee (see page 51). Dr Kapur accepted the invitation and is now actively participating in GFAR meetings. GFAR plans to use his expertise and experience to reactivate the GFAR Private Sector Working Group and, in collaboration with the CGIAR Private Sector Committee, to develop closer links with the agro-industry sector.

The Secretariat organized and serviced a full round of statutory meetings during 2004. There were two management meetings as provided for in the Charter, the first in February to take a critical look at the Business Plan, the second in May to endorse the final draft of the Plan for approval by the GFAR-SC.

During this meeting the management team also reviewed the draft 2003 Annual Report and the first report of the team of consultants working on the Charter review. As usual, financial reports and budget reviews for the year were examined and approved. The second meeting of Executive Secretaries of the Regional Forums took place in May to harvest inputs into the Charter review and the draft Annual Report and Business Plan. Three end-of-year meetings in Mexico (the NARS Sub-Committee, the GFAR Steering Committee and the Donor Support Group meetings) concluded events for 2004.

During the year, the Donor Support Group helped GFAR make swift headway on the course charted by its stakeholders and mentors in the Strategy and Business Plan, by enabling the Secretariat to boost its professional payroll. There are many challenging new areas to discover and landmarks to reach but so long as all stakeholders embark willingly on the next phase of the journey, GFAR can look forward to having a wealth of significant and tangible outcomes to report on in the coming year.

Publications

GFAR's publications output rose in 2004, reflecting an increased level of activities in new and existing areas. Among those issued in print and digital formats in 2004 were:

- Three EGFAR quarterly newsletters available online in PDF and HTML versions
- French and Spanish versions of the proceedings of GFAR 2003 meetings
- The GFAR Business Plan 2004–2006
- The GFAR 2003 Annual Report
- Proceedings of the inter-regional GLOBAL.RAIS meeting
- Promotional brochure on the post-harvest systems GPP initiative
- New GFAR posters.

For copies of all print outputs, contact the Secretariat at the address on the back cover.



Theme Feature

Encounters at the cutting edge: partnership and change

GFAR's Business Plan for 2004–2006 hinges on four 'priority areas of focus' and two cross-cutting issues, all defined in the GFAR Strategic Document for the medium to long term (see box, page 14). The theme of this section of GFAR's 2004 Annual Report is arguably the foremost of its priorities. Characterized in the Plan as 'collaborative research partnerships' it is paraphrased in these pages as innovative partnerships, or partnerships for innovation. Though not synonymous, collaboration and innovation are co-factors of partnership, just as new encounters in daily life rarely occur without triggering new and different chains of events. Subsequent Annual Reports will highlight developments under other headings in the Business Plan. Yet the theme of partnership extends across the board, embracing all the strategic imperatives and cross-cutting issues – and more. For Ola Smith, partnership and innovation define the core of GFAR's principles and mandate.

"The idea more or less universally accepted in the business we work in, is that we need to work together because the tasks are enormous," notes GFAR's Executive Secretary. "We can't work on them alone. That's where the partnership concerns came in; we need partnerships at different levels, and of all sorts. As for innovation, we're looking at getting away from the stereotyped partnership where the ideas come only from one side." He instances the habit to which some international development agencies have at times been prone, of recruiting local groups in a token way to help implement a preconceived programme of work, without using the chosen partner's design input or enquiring into whether or not the task fits their profile. "They can't afford to turn funding opportunities down," explains Smith, "but such 'partnerships' will rarely resolve a root problem, or survive beyond the project term."

"We are looking for innovation in the sense that enables any stakeholder group within the GFAR context to come up with an idea and say, 'we have a problem here we need to work on and we know you have expertise



"We need to work together because the tasks are enormous. We can't work on them alone, we need partnerships ... As for innovation, we're looking at getting away from stereotyped partnerships where the ideas come only from one side."

Olanrewaju Smith (Executive Secretary, GFAR)



in one, two or three areas that line up with what we'd like to do, so we want to work with you on it.' This process, in other words, isn't coming from the usual sources. Farmers, for one, have a lot of ideas. When they put them forward, others should be able to buy into them, support them, work together on them, so nobody's ideas are wasted. What that means on another level is that if we accept we want to work that way, then we will have to enable those traditionally disadvantaged stakeholders – farmers, NGOs and CBOs – to put ideas forward in a way that potential partners can understand and say – 'Yes, this is where we will follow your lead'. That's where GFAR can come in."

Strategic Priorities

Priority areas of focus identified in the Strategic Document (2004–2013) comprise four components or pillars and two cross-cutting issues. The pillars are: inter-regional collaboration; collaborative research partnerships; advocacy, public awareness and strategic thinking; and management information systems.

In addition...under the leadership of farmers' organizations and other groups such as the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and regional NGO consortia, efforts will be made to develop strategies and approaches to better organize and empower farmers and NGOs so that they can contribute more effectively to the development of agricultural research agendas at various levels.

GFAR Business Plan 2004–2006 (Executive Summary)

The backbone of GFAR's own capacity to help a diverse mix of stakeholders bond into new and effective partnerships is its Regional Forum apparatus. Through sub-regional interfaces, the Regional Forums act as go-betweeners for the even-handed multi-stakeholder and multi-country partnerships envisaged in GFAR's strategic mandate. Much effort has gone into reinforcing or renovating existing alliances or – where there are missing links – enabling the formation of new entities, to provide matching coverage in all the world's developing regions. In places, this mosaic is still a work in progress but (as the round-up of their activities in the Stakeholder Highlights section of this Annual Report makes clear) the Regional Forums are largely effective in linking grassroots to global thinking and initiatives, through equitable and inventive pairings that 'stretch the envelope' of agricultural research for development.

At the outer layer of that envelope, GPPs (see box, page 15) advance GFAR collaborations on urgent concerns, some technical, others to do with ironing out snags in the fabric of policies or institutions that limit the scope of a 'grassroots-up' approach. They can count on international agricultural research centres (IARCs) and advanced research institutions (ARIs) for support and peer review. At national level, a key aspect of GFAR's mission is to restore or reinforce the capacity of official research and extension providers, the NARSs, to better appreciate and respond to the needs of all stakeholders. Most notable among those stakeholders are farmers and their associations but they also include such other CSOs



as citizen, consumer and community groups. The private sector also enters the frame, especially in terms of linking farmers to the market and to the benefits of biotechnologies.

Among methodologies for sharing information gathered and lessons learned from crossovers between these differing communities of interest and practice, the strategic accent is on using modern digital technologies to run management information systems that track in a virtual format those multi-layered liaisons that interest GFAR.

As a strategic horizon, it seems orderly enough. But what has happened in the general landscape to prompt so broad a re-think of time-honoured hierarchies and priorities?

Global Partnership Programmes

Global Partnership Programmes [are] collaborative programmes, projects or activities which are initiated, developed and implemented by recognized GFAR stakeholder groups, and which remain open to participation by other stakeholders as and when they find a suitable niche. [They] will continue to be the preferred tool for implementing collaborative research partnerships in the following areas of enquiry:

- genetic resources management and biotechnology
- natural resources management and agro-ecology
- commodity chains and underutilized crop species
- policy management and institutional development.

Efforts will also be made to examine interactions between these and the themes (water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity) identified during the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

GFAR Business Plan 2004–2006 (abridged)

Agriculture and development – unresolved dilemmas

From the early 1980s onwards, public investment in rural development and agriculture declined sharply in many developing countries. The trend was part of the fallout from a more general collapse of overseas development assistance. Yet farming communities in poor rural areas felt the pinch more than most. Despite ample evidence that investment in agricultural R&D ranked among the more cost-effective routes to reducing rural poverty, the application of research to rural development also lost a big fraction of its national and international backing. The delivery of new technologies and improved inputs to the farm gate, a task largely entrusted to national extension services, faltered in many developing countries as these services were cut back and in some instances completely axed. Non-governmental and private sector initiatives were expected to fill the resulting void, but this has only happened in some scattered cases. Many leading donors now recognize that 'liberalized' trade and development policies have abetted rural poverty.

They admit, too, that constraints that blocked so many of the rural poor from benefiting from the Green Revolution often also impede their participation in more recent waves of



Researchers need to listen to the problems of the smallholder farmer and help find solutions that will work.

Photo: FAO/19380/R. Jones

technology change that are transforming agriculture and the food industry globally. Among these changes, notes Rod Cooke, GFAR Donor Group Chair and Director of IFAD's Technical Advisory Division, are "a shift to new, knowledge-intensive systems that combine more efficient use of inputs with more sustainable management of the natural resource base, the exploitation of various aspects of biotechnology, including GM processes, and revolutions in food products and retailing in response to increased global urbanization and wealth, together with stricter government regulation".

Such exclusion arose not so much from deliberate decisions to neglect the rural poor or the small-scale farmer, as from a clash of agendas. "Each developing region faces a complex set of problems; problems of sanitation, health, education, the accelerating drift to cities and its impact on urban poverty," Ola Smith points out. "Governments don't have the resources to tackle them all at once. They need to prioritize, and agriculture usually draws the short straw. Urban people don't understand rural life, and politicians look for short-term benefits for the public closest to the seat of power."

Nonetheless, Smith believes that recovery is now in progress and that agriculture is coming back to the fore of the international development agenda, after a period when donors frowned on it, and when developing countries still acknowledged that agriculture was an engine of growth but failed to back up that view in their budgets. The need for more rural investment is now increasingly recognised at national level and in the donor community, although international recognition may now have new conditions attached.



This reawakening has been stimulated in large measure by the UN Millennium Development Goals, a bid by the international community to reduce by at least half the number of people living in poverty by the year 2015. These goals also interlock with the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development's pledge to pursue responsible forms of development that benefit humankind without harming the environment or the well-being of future generations. Several countries have published a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), a national matrix for 'pro-poor' development along these lines, by means of which investment can be channelled to the worthiest respondents. But officials and academics in many cases have been slow to realign their activities and agenda with this more 'joined-up' and sustainable approach to development planning.

For Jack Wilkinson, who presides over the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), the key issue is not so much how to line agricultural research up with national or international agendas, but how to match it to the needs and talents of the small-scale or medium-scale farmer. "I think there's an attitudinal shift towards having to pay attention to the needs of the people you're doing the research for," he states. "This to some extent is standard practice in the developed world. Maybe farmers are more organized there, but partly it's also because of money. If governments cut money going to research institutions, there's a fallback for these institutions to work with large commodity organizations that have the money to fund joint ventures. If you're in very small agriculture and not organized, there's no opportunity to leverage that relationship."

Wilkinson admits relations between farmers and researchers have a chequered history. "It's fair to say that in some countries in the past there have been problems

when researchers came in and prescribed solutions to a problem that tended to be costly, inappropriate, risky because of toxicity issues and so on, instead of listening to the problem and helping to find a solution that will work," he comments. "We can't follow the industrialised model in developing countries, we just have too many people and too few jobs, so why not just work with what's there, small- to medium-scale farmers that have limited resources? Give us products that are safe to use, give us cheaper inputs."

Sustainable alternatives are unlikely, in Wilkinson's view, to arise from further growth in international markets for speciality supermarket products. "There's a limit to how much of that can work," he notes. "There are only one billion consumers in the developed world. I think we need to concentrate more on how you service national needs. Sure you should have



"Why not just work with what's there, small- to medium-scale farmers that have limited resources? Give us products that are safe to use, give us cheaper inputs... Sure you should have exports but let's also make sure we can feed the people. We need to rationalize food production, try and use labour in more efficient ways."

Jack Wilkinson (President, IFAP)



some exports but let's also make sure we can feed the people. We need to rationalize food production, try and use the labour component in more efficient ways”.

Nur Abdi, whose job since 2003 has been to handle the farmers' agenda in GFAR and to strengthen their participation in Sub-regional and Regional Forums and at the global level, feels an answer to bringing farmers and researchers together is to involve them both on level terms in the work of GFAR. Obstacles to this *entente* arise partly from procedural rules and language that reflect the 'top-down' thinking prevalent when most of the Regional Forums were established, ahead of GFAR itself. On analysing the constitutions of all the Regional Forums, Abdi found that only two recognize farmers as stakeholders.

“Most of them focus on national research institutes, donors and international research centres as members, to the exclusion of CSOs particularly farmer groups,” notes Abdi. “If there's a needs assessment for a project in the Asia–Pacific, for instance, and the assessors don't have farmers to consult, they generally request the Global Forum to help identify candidates.” It might be more efficient (he points out) if the Regional Forum included farmer members. He feels farmer participation should ideally be built into all new Regional Forum constitutions or grafted on later through constitutional reform.

The NGO voice

Monica Kapiriri Vice-Chair and NGO representative on GFAR-SC, sees a need for more synergy between NGOs and formal research. “Right now the reality is that there's a scramble for resources”, she says. “For instance, extension services in the country where I live and work, Uganda, have been privatized. Under the National Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture, the National Agricultural Advisory Service has invited former agricultural extension workers to register themselves as private operators, who go and bid for services to farmers in competition with the NGOs that were already doing it. Farmers have to decide who they

Who are the NGOs?

Non-governmental organizations whose concerns run parallel with GFAR's operate at many different levels, with the greatest diversity at the grassroots. They divide broadly into those working exclusively in one chosen role, and those combining a key role with one or two others. Some deal directly with farmer groups and beneficiaries, with a focus on delivering services to farmers directly and, in some cases, conducting adaptive research together with farmers. A second category engages in capacity-building or institutional support, not working directly with agriculture or technologies but building the capacity of these service delivery institutions to improve. There are combinations of the two, doing capacity building at the same time as service delivery. Other NGOs focus on policy advocacy, engaging with government or with international bodies. They work at national level but are normally linked to international NGOs. Some NGOs can combine all three roles, using on-farm experience to feed into policy advocacy *and* leverage resources to help build capacity.



pick first, a privatised official or an NGO.”

“Official agricultural research is usually funded by central government and by donors. Some NGOs are funded by donors, too, so there’s further competition,” Kapiriri adds.

“Right now the relationship between NGOs and researchers is not too good, at best it lacks

spice. If NGOs need technology, they go and buy it wherever they like and then deliver it. If it’s foundation seed or seed for multiplication, they go and get it and train some farmers to plant it. They can then provide useful backstopping if things go wrong.” Another strength of NGOs that Kapiriri feels comes into conflict with research – though it could and should be complementary – is that many have moved away from inorganic inputs, mainly because small-scale farmers can’t afford to buy pesticides or fertilizers and the like. Instead they advocate measures like permaculture, seed conservation and mulching.

“Many people don’t realise that in a land like Uganda where most agriculture is rain-fed, if a small-scale farmer borrows money to buy improved seed or herbicide and that year’s crop fails, that farmer is ruined and can never get out of that ditch,” she points out. “That’s why many NGOs work for alternatives to dependence on agribusiness, while others go for more integrated approaches, promoting less toxic inputs that farmers can use safely.”

Kapiriri believes research centres and NGOs need more systematic ways of interacting that pool resources rather than pit them in competition against one another. In more general terms, she would like to see the ‘centre of gravity’ of GFAR’s collaborative partnerships shifting more in a national and local than in a regional or global direction.

“For GFAR, partnership starts at the sub-regional level, so is usually mediated through NARS”, explains Kapiriri. “It’s in the local to national range I think we need to function more strongly. NGO partners tend to feel that in many partnership activities they’re selected *ad hoc* as token allies and discarded when they’ve served their purpose. If they don’t perform well, the entire NGO sector is branded as ineffective. If they perform, the researchers take the credit and often don’t even mention the NGOs they’ve worked with.”

Ola Smith acknowledges a need for more flexible Regional Forums. “Some are still too closed, too dominated by researchers, and they need to create room for other partners,” he says. “We look forward to the day when a Forum’s President is as likely to be a farmer as a researcher. And we need to innovate not just in terms of who we work with but also how we work together. We need to be strategic in forming alliances, to first identify a desired result then ask: Who are the major players? Who can help us achieve our goal?”

“NGOs feel that in many partnership activities they’re selected ad hoc and when they’ve served their purpose, they’re discarded. If they don’t perform well, the entire NGO sector is branded as ineffective. If they perform, the researchers take the credit and often don’t even mention the NGOs they’ve worked with.”

Monica Kapiriri (Vice-Chair, GFAR-SC)





Smith also feels donor attitudes can constrict innovation by setting overly rigid limits on (for instance) the scope or timeframe of collaborative initiatives. Planners may preach a participatory approach but it can be hard for specialized research institutes to pursue a genuinely open agenda if problems identified by farmers lie outside their expertise.

“Though the concept of inclusiveness is important, we don’t necessarily have to work with everybody,” Smith notes. “Researchers can actually tackle difficult scientific problems without involving farmers. Farmers, too, can work together on their own, without scientists. Nevertheless when they do need scientific input or technologies, they should have access to them.” And when farmers devise innovative solutions, an added problem is scaling them up. “We see successes, but on a small scale only,” he admits. “What’s needed is support to multiply solutions on a large scale. There’s no way small-scale farmers can borrow money to do it; they haven’t the collateral. But a partner might.”

This pluralistic yet pragmatic model of partnership leaves scope for an almost unlimited range of partnership approaches. As GFAR’s Business Plan and Strategy unfold, the viability of a number of these approaches is already being proven by demonstration. Though GFAR’s mandate excludes direct project management, and its financial resources are strictly limited, it is currently enabling an array of multi-country, multi-stakeholder projects that illustrate different aspects of the innovative partnership ideal, including a post-harvest initiative to link farmers to markets, a competitive research award scheme open to all, an online super-forum and novel outreach initiatives involving conservation farming and underutilized crop species (see box, page 21).

Partnership in action

PROLINNOVA

The Global Programme on Promoting Local Innovation in Ecologically Oriented Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (PROLINNOVA) initiative is spearheaded by NGOs.



“What’s more important is the relationship between the farmers and researchers and extensionists, how they can have more communication with each other, and how they can support each other in moving the innovation system on, not sticking with any fixed agenda but developing an enhanced capacity to solve problems together.”

Ann Waters-Bayer (Senior Advisor, Natural Resource Management for ETC-Ecoculture)

It sets out to build a global learning and advocacy network that concentrates on promoting local innovation in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management. The accent is on recognising the dynamics of indigenous knowledge and learning how to strengthen the capacities



Cinderella crops

The Underutilized Species GPP seeks to increase the contribution of potentially valuable and presently overlooked plant species to overcoming poverty and alleviating hunger. It is managed by a Global Facilitation Unit (GFU) housed at the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) and typifies GFAR's approach of drawing on the complementary strengths of a mix of stakeholders. A web-based information system now provides access to most relevant information sources on underutilized species. It was further refined and expanded this year, and will soon include a database on on-going work on underutilized species and a list of experts.

In partnership with IPGRI and the University of Macerata, Italy, an international workshop was held on marketing underutilized plant species. Analysis of current marketing strategies and of products derived from such species led to identification of areas where human capacity building is most required. These insights laid the ground for an Action Plan that prescribes capacity building activities tailored to the needs of different stakeholder groups. Stakeholders from the private sector, NGOs, academic think-tanks, IARCs, fair trade organizations, ministries, farmers' organizations, donors and development organizations all contributed actively to heartfelt debates on this theme.

An external review of the first two-year phase of implementation judged that GFU provided a credible and solid base for further work and recommended that the programme should now focus on providing policymakers and decision-makers with guidelines and options for identifying opportunities to better release potential benefits from 'Cinderella' crops.

One response to this call is a joint initiative by CIAT, IPGRI, and the GFU to develop a series of innovation histories that identify factors behind successful development of previously underutilized species. These histories will be related by people directly involved and will demonstrate the contribution that underutilized species have made to income generation of individual farm families and to the rural economy in such cases as hulled wheats (einkorn, emmer and spelt) in Italy, where these near-relict crops have been brought

back to life thanks to marketing strategies that bank on their nutritional and cultural qualities. Other cases in point are those of bambara nut, a pulse from sub-Saharan Africa, and quinoa, a highly nutritious grain of the Andes, whose versatile uses spring from innovations at community level linking farmers and small processing enterprises. Another opportunity for new partnerships involving different GFAR stakeholders lies in in-depth analysis of existing national and international legal frameworks and policies in terms of their effects on releasing (or restricting) the potential for underutilized species, if properly utilized and marketed, to improve the lives of rural people blighted by poverty.



Quinoa's nutritious qualities make it the object of growing consumer interest.

Photo: Steven King/Still Pictures



The accent of PROLINNOVA's work is on learning how to strengthen the capacity of producers, including livestock keepers, forest dwellers and fisher folk (like this boy in Chokomey, Ghana) as well as cultivators.

*Photo: FAO/18306/
P. Cenini*



of farmers (including livestock-keepers, forest dwellers and fisher folk) to adjust to changing conditions by inventing or adapting their own systems and rules of resource management to gain food security, sustain livelihoods and safeguard the environment.

For Ann Waters-Bayer of ETC-Ecoculture, Netherlands, who has followed PROLINNOVA'S progress from its outset, one of the special features of this GPP is the way it was set up. "It arose," (she recalls), "from a situation where NGOs concerned with agricultural research for development over many years were not happy with the way research was being done or the linkages between research and extension. They got to thinking and talking about how things could be done differently, based on their own experiences. When GEAR came up with this idea of GPPs, there were a number of NGOs on the CGIAR NGO Committee who said – Wait, this could be an opportunity to show what NGOs could do."

What NGOs could do, was to bring together diverse stakeholders at provincial or national level to analyse their experiences in promoting local innovation and participatory research and extension and then agree on what needed to be done to deliver this result more effectively. NGOs who led this process hoped that from these localised country initiatives might come multi-country or multi-regional partnerships based on ideas from many sources. Notes Waters-Bayer: "This was more of a 'bottom-up' model for trying to build a global programme. It doesn't say this is what's going to be done in different countries. It's not a blueprint. It's a general effort to build research for development on local initiatives, innovation and boosting the creativity and adaptive capacity of farmers."

How different countries went about applying that model depended on what experience they had already had with participatory approaches and what degree of strengthening such approaches needed before farmers could meaningfully be involved in them. The emphasis was on small-scale farming and poverty alleviation rather than on large-scale commercial production. NGOs and government organizations in each country made inventories of their participatory programmes and ways of working, assessing their strengths and weaknesses. Then they conferred at country level and decided on this basis which activities could best serve to advance and embed innovation and participation in development processes. Then



the country programmes came together at a meeting in Ethiopia in March 2004 and asked ‘What kind of things do we need to do at international level to strengthen what we plan to do within our countries?’

The evolution of PROLINNOVA has not been a smooth blending of close-knit ideals. The NGOs involved in the original thinking behind the programme were much influenced by Latin American models that did not have universal appeal. “If one model had been forced on everyone, some of the current programmes couldn’t have come out as they did,” says Waters-Bayer. “In Uganda, for instance, there’s a more market-oriented approach, of which some other countries were saying, ‘what has this got to do with poverty alleviation?’ But when they begin to see what is actually being done and what difference it’s making, then they can maybe then say – yes, that makes sense.”

Apart from their grassroots credentials and their focus on sustainable resource use, the activities and outcomes that PROLINNOVA embraces show little in the way of orchestrated themes or obvious patterns. They can range from farmer-developed rice varieties in Nepal (see box page 24) to improved farmer-devised fencing techniques and rodent traps in South Africa, to a ‘how-to’ video made by and for farmers for distribution in several regions, about participatory planning. As findings are shared and innovations scaled up, however, they create their own dynamic. Sometimes outcomes or side effects have not been quite as expected. Monique Salomon, who directs the Farmer Support Group in the University of KwaZulu-Natal and coordinates PROLINNOVA activities in South Africa, feels that if it had not been for PROLINNOVA and the idea of multi-stakeholder involvement to get different parties together, her group would not be working so closely with government.

“That was a weakness in the past,” she comments, “governments often acknowledged NGOs as useful for disseminating technology or organizing events but they didn’t see them as part of the agricultural research business. NGOs work independently of government by

Seeds of an idea

The concept of PROLINNOVA emerged in late 1999 from discussions between NGOs from the geopolitical South and North at a meeting in Rambouillet, France sponsored by GFAR, the NGO Committee of the CGIAR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the host country. ETC-Ecoculture (the Netherlands) was invited to coordinate the proposal's further development and donor relations. By the end of 2004 PROLINNOVA initiatives were ongoing in seven African countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Niger, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda) and in two (Cambodia and Nepal) in Asia.

IFAD has been a major investor in the programme since 2002, joined more recently by the Netherlands Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS), with support for meetings and workshops coming from (among others) the Rockefeller Foundation, the EU by way of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), Swiss Development Cooperation, CGIAR, the World Bank and such bodies as Misereor (Germany) and the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) in the Philippines.



Starting on the ground in Nepal

Farmer breeder Devraj Sapkota Devnagar shows off (left of picture) an improved rice variety he developed on his farm in the Kaski district of Nepal. Mr Devraj took seeds of an experimental cross offered as part of official trials but later discarded by researchers after it failed to meet their selection criteria, then he continued the selection process, applying his own criteria and judgement. He came up with



Devraj Sapkota Devnagar with his self-developed rice variety Judi 141F (left) compared with a standard variety (right).

Photo: Pratap Shrestha

a variety named Judi 141F, now widely preferred by local farmers that has since been reinstated in the research trial as a potential variety for general release. This unexpected success arose from a participatory plant breeding (PPB) project funded by the Plant Sciences Programme (PSP) of DFID and implemented jointly by a national NGO in the PROLINNOVA network, Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD), and the Centre for Arid Zone Studies (CAZS) of the University of Wales, Bangor, UK.

LI-BIRD's Executive Director, Pratap K. Shrestha reports that Mr Devraj has also developed another variety that is becoming increasingly popular among farmers in surrounding villages. He raised it from the same cross by taking some of the panicles from segregating lines grown in the research plots and continuing to improve and multiply them on his own. He is now collaborating with four neighbours and providing seed to many others to test the variety for wider adaptability. His initiative has persuaded national research and extension systems in favour of adopting farmer-led approaches and has also influenced Nepal's crop variety release policy and procedures, which have now been modified to facilitate and encourage national release of PPB varieties.

definition, of course, but there's now more recognition and more encouragement to work on complementarities between the two.”

PROLINNOVA's experiences in Ethiopia were very different. Lead NGOs defined ‘platforms’ for different parts of the country on which representatives of extension services, NGOs, innovative farmers, bilateral project teams and researchers could come together. They called a workshop at Axum in March 2004, involving about 30 innovators, identified by the Bureau of Agriculture, people from projects and NGOs. Participants agreed that some innovations were worth spreading and some should be further investigated, by other farmers or by researchers. But though people from the regional research institute were invited, none showed up.

The workshop participants decided to form a commission, which went to the institute and told its directors what it planned to do, then enquired after the institute's own plans. “The very fact that they challenged the research establishment to act, for me is a sign of progress”, concludes Waters-Bayer. “In the long run, specific problem-solving outcomes



tend to appropriate only for that moment in time. What's more important is the relationship between farmers, researchers and extensionists, how they can communicate more with each other and support each other in moving innovation on, not by sticking with any fixed agenda but by developing enhanced capacity to solve problems together."

Direct Sowing, Mulch-based Systems and Conservation Agriculture (DMC)

DMC is a GPP formed on GFAR's initiative. It aims through research and development programmes to develop and promote a range of conservation farming technologies. Such technologies have already thrived in many countries over several decades. Yet their extensive adoption by small-scale farmers is still limited by a tangle of technical, economic and institutional constraints. Reports from regions where DMC has been widely adopted suggest that better understanding of factors that enable small-scale farmers to adopt DMC successfully, could speed up poverty reduction.

The DMC programme hinges on a circuit of learning and synthesis, which proceeds by analysing and comparing experiences from decentralized initiatives, then by synthesizing lessons learned, and finally by identifying and filling gaps. Formally launched in January 2000 at a meeting of national agricultural research institutes (NARIs), NGOs, IARCs, regional networks and farmers' associations, DMC has been staffed since March 2002 by a facilitator from the Instituto Agronômico do Paraná (IAPAR), Brazil – hosted by CIRAD. So far, the main activities are the development of a DMC Website and the implementation of a series of study trials. The first was carried out in Bolivia, in collaboration with Asociación de Productores de Oleaginosas (ANAPO) at Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Early experiences with the no-tillage system began in 1986 as a result of farmer innovations. From 1994, ANAPO and Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maíz y Trigo (CIMMYT) launched research and development activities aimed at increasing the profitability of wheat–soybean systems through such conservation technologies as no-tillage. This system has caught on widely, and prevails on almost half of the agricultural area in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Even so, adoption has occurred mainly among larger or medium-scale farmers and ANAPO wants to see smaller-scale farmers taking up DMC.

A second study trial is being carried out in Tanzania by DMC jointly with FAO and with funding from IFAD. A centrepiece of these studies is an assessment of labour-saving technology and practices with special reference to women farmers and highly vulnerable groups. Specific aims of the study, due to be completed by May 2005, are to:

- Confirm that reduced tillage practices and conservation agriculture can save significant amounts of labour;
- Verify that vulnerable groups are capable of adopting and practicing conservation agriculture without jeopardizing their own food security and the stability of their livelihoods;
- Identify and overcome stumbling blocks which hinder the adoption of labour-saving practices such as DMC.



A third initiative is in progress in Ghana, part of collaborations between the Sedentary Farming Systems Project, the Netherlands-based International Centre for Research Oriented to Development in Agriculture (ICRA) and the DMC programme. Farmers in the region traditionally practise zero-tillage using hand tools, usually combined with burning. Now some are adopting no-burn slash and mulch techniques allied to use of herbicides and direct planting. Some have also started to rotate their crops with *mucuna* (velvet bean) as improved fallow. But there is an urgent need to increase labour productivity, an advance that could be achieved by mechanising some farming operations. Disc-ploughing is the only tractor-powered service available in savannah areas. This practice has also started to spread into the transitional zone of Ghana.

DMC sets a high priority on curbing this trend by offering mechanized services for conservation farming. In this context, the study aims to find out whether mechanized options of conservation farming could be introduced with an eye to social, ecological, technical and economical factors, and organized in ways that guarantee small-scale farmers access to such services.

Partnership as process

ICM4ARD

Information and Communications Management for Agricultural R&D (ICM4ARD) is the shorthand term for a swiftly evolving and highly ambitious GPP designed to help bridge the 'digital divide' that impedes efforts by developing countries to harness fully the power of new digital ICTs to share research and knowledge. A novel aspect of GFAR's thinking is its vision of a multi-directional flow of knowledge, finessing orthodox typologies of North–South, South–North or South–South technology transfer. Another is the decentralised yet concerted process applied by GFAR to developing the principles and proposals on which the programme rests. GFAR started the first ICT workshop with AARINENA in February 2002, then went to the other Regional Forums. Work began in each case by forming a Steering Committee representing the sub-regions, plus nominees from regional and international organizations. The GFAR-SC commissioned a survey of the technical resources of the region's NARS and another of human resources available at national level, then drew up a submission to donors for strengthening ICT resources. Regional consultations involving a comprehensive cross-section of stakeholders followed in December 2003. Results were fed into a global consultation convened by GFAR hosted at FAO in Rome in June 2004. For each region, GFAR developed a preliminary strengths and weaknesses document, then a strategy paper on how best to move forward.

In AARINENA's case, as in several others, capacity and skills surveys produced mixed results. "In some countries they simply don't have any ICT resources worth surveying,



Strength in numbers

Dorothy Mukhebi coordinates the Regional Agricultural Information Network (RAIN) within the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), which in turn is a sub-regional component of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the apex research body for the continent. RAIN is one of 17 networks (most of them focusing on specific crops or commodities) that ASARECA supports. Since 2003, RAIN has encouraged countries to create their own national networks of stakeholders in rural and agricultural knowledge.

"Different people were working on similar things but were not talking to each other, or only in a small way", says Mukhebi. "Now that we're there we've seen a lot more interaction within and between countries. They find there are resources that can be shared without having to go outside the region, if one country has (say) training expertise the other needs. So we saw that as our role. To exchange that kind of information requires some guiding principles, policies, strategies and standards so they can network together effectively. Some 20 percent of the countries we serve now have that."

RAIN's name is easily confused with the RAIS (regional agricultural information systems) or the national agricultural information systems (NAIS) that will ultimately form the main layers of the GLOBAL.RAIS 'onion', though efforts are in hand to merge RAIN into this layout at the regional level. "It can be baffling," admits Mukhebi, "especially as we also have national systems, although we don't call them NAIS!" She believes the new alliance is already adding value to her network's efforts, as well as to FARA's. "It will strengthen FARA because we can identify our problems *en bloc* and represent them more forcefully to donors and other potential partners. There is strength in numbers when you do that."

Though aware of ICM's power, Mukhebi sees it as just part of the toolkit. Adding value to information means more than just multiplying it *ad lib*. "It's nice to have technology but first we need the content, the knowledge," she warns. "So one of my jobs is to get everyone penning their knowledge and ideas down in a readable form."



Dorothy Mukhebi (Coordinator RAIN/ASARECA)

countries like Somalia and Algeria will have a lot of catching up to do", says Ibrahim Hamdan, Executive Secretary of AARINENA. "If you look at the state of communications in general there is widespread illiteracy, in places farmers can't read so you can't even have a newsletter. While some other countries, like the oil-rich ones, abound in resources and literacy but don't see agriculture as an issue. There is a lot of variability and diversity in the region."

At June's global meeting in Rome, results from the capacity surveys sparked a broad debate on how developing countries could claim fair access to agricultural know-how online and curb information poverty in countries on the wrong side of the 'digital divide'.

A gateway function (GLOBAL.RAIS) was proposed for GFAR at the global level, extending the existing EGFAR hub site's capacity to interface with RAIS.



Breaking virtual ground

GFAR's recent assessments of ICM resources in the regions reveal that Latin America, represented by FORAGRO, has a significant lead over other developing regions when it comes to technical and human resources for cooperative networking in the virtual realm. An example is FORAGRO's genetic resources network, which connects the genetic resources programmes of many organizations, especially the germplasm and gene banks they maintain, and makes them available over a comprehensive information technology network.



Emilio Ruz (Executive Secretary, PROCISUR)

Emilio Ruz is Executive Secretary of the PROCISUR sub-regional grouping, which covers Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay from a compact base in Montevideo. He believes that his job would be impossible without the economies of scale that electronic networking can offer. "PROCISUR is a very small outfit, there's only me, an assistant and two other office workers," he explains. "But we operate the whole system out of Montevideo through PROCISUR Online, a very powerful tool for operating this system. All the information is here. More importantly," he adds, "into PROCISUR Online we incorporate an electronic forum for each of the topics that we're working on. So for our genetic research work there's an electronic forum connecting all countries and the directorates of member institutions so that any of the participating bodies can track what any of the others might be doing at that time."

Online debates and discussions are another feature of these forums. "Some of them are moderated, some are closed, others totally open," says Ruz. "There is also a virtual library that gives access to all publications and reports issued by PROCISUR. We report the results of any international event involving PROCISUR online in synthesis form. As our work advances along new lines we are refining the system. For our organic farming work, for instance, we can now select information for organic farmers that's sorted according to their own demands and interests. We organize events to discuss organic agriculture where a lot of information comes out and we make that directly acquired information available, as well as linking with INFOTEC to pick up on more generally distributed knowledge on key topics.

A further step envisaged in the plan is for the RAIS to enable strong and effective information systems at national level (NAIS). On its own account, GFAR also expects the programme to fulfil the strategic objective of enabling information about and from other current or forthcoming GPPs to be rapidly shared. "Having defined a global framework through an innovative, 'bottom-up' approach we now need to be alert to opportunities to set up collaborative platforms at various levels that champion specific programme components within that overall framework," comments GFAR's Senior Information Communication Management Officer, Jean-François Giovannetti.

He presented a first draft of a GLOBAL.RAIS programme to the GFAR Steering Committee during the CGIAR meeting in Mexico in November 2004, highlighting advocacy,



Ibrahim Hamdan, Executive Secretary, AARINENA (left) and Ajit Maru at the RAIS workshop in Cairo.

capacity-building, technical integration and governance and ownership as major avenues for future work. An initiative was launched to develop a donor consortium to finance sub-projects to the tune of US\$4 million. Work on capacity development elements of GLOBAL.RAIS has already begun with European Commission support, linking into work already begun by CTA in the Asia, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) region. Full details of the GLOBAL.RAIS programme are available online at www.egfar.org

A global post-harvest initiative

In 2002 FAO's Agricultural Support Systems (AGS) Division promoted an initiative called the Global Initiative on Post-Harvest Technology (GIPhT). GFAR helped AGS organize five regional workshops to assess the status of post-harvest systems in terms of technology, conservation, packaging, and the like. Yet the main idea that came out of these meetings was that the market was a critical and dynamic aspect of the post-harvest scenario. At around the same time, GFAR was responding to its 2001 regional priority-setting exercise with the CG Science Council by setting up 'facilitation functions' on key themes that came out of the exercise. One of these themes was small to medium enterprises or SMEs.

"We had GFAR collaborating with AGS to support GIPhT at the same time as trying to develop this SME facilitation function," recalls Antonio Schiavone of GFAR's Research Partnership Programme. "What happened in the end was that we also got together with the PhAction Group, a network of research centres that was developing projects with more of this market dynamic we were looking for. We decided that all three should join forces in a GPP format, with GFAR bridging the gap between them."

The trio decided to develop a strategic framework embracing all the priorities identified in the regions and some of the outcomes of GFAR's 2003 Dakar conference, which included a specific session on SMEs. Once a framework was drafted, a joint international workshop was convened in Rome in December 2003. GFAR's role was to try to attract as many different kinds of stakeholder as possible to attend and the main goal of the gathering was to review and revise the strategic framework in the light of participants' views on how the strategic framework fitted priorities in their own regions.

They agreed on the need to work around three main strategic areas: reform at policy level, at meso level (or at the level of institutions) and at micro level with a view to ensuring that smallholder farmers are linked equitably to agri-food supply chains. A fourth was



added: communications and networking to connect these levels. Each area now has a register of 'concept note' ideas on types of projects to be developed.

How does all this strategic planning and networking relate to the 'pro-poor' research and development principles enshrined in the UN Millennium Development Goals? "It comes down to identifying options for linking farmers to markets, that provide the basic opportunity to improve incomes and level of security, and in consequence their ability to access resources – healthcare, education, improved inputs and so on," explains Rupert Best of GFAR's Research Partnership Programme.

Where small-scale farming and other rural enterprise are concerned, Best highlights the need to balance food production for household consumption with income generation. As farmers become integrated into market and supply chains, so demand grows for services to production, transport and other services. As examples of innovative practice or problem-solving emerge they will be shared across the network and later cross-referenced between continents, or globally.

"What we have concentrated on since 2002, having got this up and running, was to start with regional consultations then go up to strategy level," explains Best. "Now we've got to get back down to earth again for action. That started in 2004 through a workshop we ran with APAARI in December. In 2005 we'll prioritize West Asia and North Africa as venues for going back to the regions to ground ideas in concrete outcomes." How, once all this architecture for innovative consultation is in place, can anyone be sure that innovative outcomes have resulted from it? "The first thing we can demonstrate is that we've got three different networks that were working apart, working together," Best points out. "We've also cut out some duplication. There's still a long way to go, getting everybody moving in the same direction at the same speed. And no strategy of any kind can work unless it has champions with the vision and drive to apply it to practical effect."

Leveraging partnership

DURAS stands for Promotion du développement durable dans les systèmes de recherche agricole du sud (Promoting Sustainable Development in Southern Agricultural Research Systems) and is financed at GFAR's request by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It takes the form of mechanisms that provide assistance to stakeholders in ARD. One is intended to bolster two of the GFAR Secretariat's regular functions – supporting the Regional Forums and enabling capacity-building for NGOs and farmer organizations. Another hinges on information, advocacy and communications management. All the regions are trying to come up with their own plans for a regional 'agro-information' system (RAIS). The idea is to make funds available through DURAS for follow-up activities. The first phase of developing RAIS is financed by the EC. Five or six regional conferences take these consultations forward



but funding will stop there. The DURAS input will augment financing for novel systems development. This component also includes support for monitoring, updating and improving the GFAR website, www.egfar.org.

The third programme component is a Competitive Grants scheme. “It’s about supporting stakeholder-led activities and initiatives by providing catalytic funding for projects – seed money – through competitive awards,” explains Oliver L. Oliveros, who coordinates the project on behalf of the GFAR Secretariat, working from a base in Montpellier, France. Grants are awarded under four thematic headings, namely:

- Agrobiodiversity and genetic resources management for food security
- Local knowledge in natural resources management
- Agro-ecology and other sustainable farming practices
- Linking farmers to market and support to agricultural SMEs.

Oliveros emphasises that this is a first attempt at managing such a scheme, a pilot activity. “If it works, it’s probably a good way to convince other donors to put in new funds to finance innovative projects, in other parts of the world that are currently not covered by DURAS,” he comments. Selection criteria include the quality of partnership (by which is meant the ‘degree of mixing’ between the partners involved) and the overall design (or how logically the objectives and expected outputs translate into key activities) as well as socio-economic gain and sustainability. At present grant applications are coming mainly from France’s Priority Solidarity Zone, in other words from countries or areas culturally linked to France – much of sub-Saharan Africa, three Asian countries (Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam) and several countries in the Near East and North Africa.



Oliver Oliveros (Coordinator, DURAS Project)

The DURAS shortlist

Of 300 proposals received so far for DURAS support, 24 have been shortlisted and out of those a maximum of 16 will eventually be financed, in the range of €100,000 to €150,000 per project. Short-listed projects also receive a €5,000 grant, which they can use as seed money to meet with their partners and jointly develop their full proposal, or to organize workshops. There is a high and growing percentage of proposals with NGOs or farmer organizations taking the lead. Without pre-empting the outcome of the final selection process, examples of short-listed proposals include an investigation of the intellectual property rights of indigenous resources, and a pest management project on nematode resistance spread over four Mediterranean countries. A scheme to develop a mechanism that will allow farmers to directly manage a research fund will look at how experiences in Cambodia and Uganda can be scaled out in other countries like Sudan and South Africa.



The DURAS project aims to promote R&D partnerships that are more effective in responding to the needs of small-scale farmers.

Photo: FAO/19710/G. Bizzari

“When GFAR launched the scheme we had proposals coming from outside this coverage, which demonstrated a more general demand,” notes Oliveros. He hopes other donors will be inspired to come up with similar initiatives and come forward and contribute to enable the scheme to be extended to other parts of the world in due course. “We’ve had more than 300 pre-proposals and, the quality of partnerships we’re getting is impressive. Under the scheme we’re requiring applicants to have at least three kinds of stakeholder involved, one of which should be either an NGO or a farmer organization. It’s not enough to have (say) one research institution and a university. We have had phone calls from some proponents asking, ‘must we have NGOs or farmers’ groups involved, we don’t level off with them?’ But that’s precisely the point GFAR is promoting – to facilitate the involvement of non-traditional actors in the research and development process. We’re looking to bridge the demand and supply sides of research with innovative partnerships.”

One of the objectives of the DURAS grants scheme is to link Southern partners with centres of excellence or research centres in the North, specifically in Europe. Southern partners are encouraged to identify an institution in Europe they would like to work with or already work with. About half the applications DURAS has received involve European institutions, predominantly French, and most of them are research organizations.

The idea that there must be winners and losers can be difficult at times, says Oliveros. “We’ve had reactions like, ‘okay, we accept that our projects weren’t short-listed but how did you make the selection and what score did we get for each of the criteria?’ And so we had to explain that first and foremost, project financing is on a competitive basis and therefore



not everyone can win. We try to explain the selection criteria and evaluation process, and also that the choice is made partly on the basis of how closely the proposal matches DURAS objectives.”

DURAS is in its early days and the first projects supported by grant awards will not be up and running till the later part of 2005. “We will keep track of projects and assess their immediate benefits and hopefully their impacts,” says Oliveros, “as well as tracking those that don’t get funded but get picked up through our mechanism. More than just a funding channel, we want to provide other support mechanisms. We can, for instance, offer leads to help projects that were not funded to access other funding sources. What we do for the moment is to ask lead partners if they agree to publish the title of their project on our website, with a note to users of the site to contact us if they want further information about a particular proposal. We then contact the proposers and ask if they would like us to send their pre-proposal to the person who requested it, along with their contact details. “In some cases they agree and say – yes, that’s a good idea,” says Oliveros, “while others aren’t in agreement. We have received several queries and made a number of such links.”

Once the funded projects are being implemented the emphasis of DURAS will switch to monitoring and evaluation. Oliveros acknowledges the danger that these partnerships might turn out to be token pairings with no real synergy. “It’s hard to really gauge how functional these partnerships are!” he says. “The least we can do before disbursing the final instalment of the payment is to ask the lead proponent to submit a written report on how closely all the partners worked together to develop and implement the proposal.”

Partnership, governance and peer relations

Not least among stakeholder groups that enter the global partnership picture is the community of international institutions that includes donor bodies, development assistance agencies and IARCs and ARIs. GFAR’s role as a bridge-builder between stakeholders extends to these peer bodies, not only in the context of international relations and meetings but also in joining forces with them on matters of mutual concern where ethical or governance issues arise and the fullest possible spectrum of views needs to be canvassed. A recent instance of this role is GFAR’s move to convene a Stakeholder Committee to work with the Programme Steering Committee of the CGIAR Generation Challenge Programme (GCP).

The GCP seeks (in the words of its sponsor): “to apply advances in molecular biology and harness the rich global stocks of crop genetic resources to create and provide a new generation of plants that meet farmers’ needs.” GCP outputs are to be released as public goods, enabling scientists in developing countries to participate and exploit the resulting technology, products and concepts. The Stakeholder Committee acts as a link between the PSC of the GCP and the various stakeholder groups of GFAR and providing inputs and feedback on four issues:



- GCP governance structure, especially composition and functions of the GCP consortium
- Delivery of research products to farmers
- Partnership with the private sector
- Development of a robust communication strategy.

GFAR's Regional Forum for Africa (FARA) has earned itself a central role in another CGIAR Challenge Programme, on *Securing the Future for Africa's Children* (see page 44) that is closely linked to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Christian Hoste is International Organizations Coordinator for CIRAD and a serving member of the GFAR-SC. He sees the fact that the CGIAR is now incorporating elements of a GFAR-style partnership agenda in its new Challenge Programmes as a sign that GFAR can exert an influence on peer institutions, providing templates and models for 'grassroots-up' partnerships and innovation that others can emulate. But would they not have moved in that direction of their own accord? "Some are more sensitive than others to this approach," Hoste notes. "In the CGIAR's case, membership has changed over time and more than half the members are now from developing countries, which was not the case to begin with. This shift has also bred evolution and change from within the system. But when the CGIAR was reconsidering priorities, it turned to GFAR's Regional or Sub-regional Forums as a natural medium for stakeholders to affirm their own priorities."

"I think GFAR has forced the international ARD system to evolve and it has done this in a rather short period of time and with very limited resources. The best evidence is the recommendation made by the 2003 G8 Conference to support both GFAR and the CGIAR system. That's an endorsement at a level nobody would have dreamt of when GFAR started out eight years ago," Hoste asserts.



Farmers transplanting rice seedlings, Bangladesh.

Photo: FAO/22828/G. Diana



“GFAR has forced the international agricultural research for development system to evolve and it has done this in a rather short period of time and with very limited resources. The best evidence is the recommendation made by the 2003 G8 Conference to support both GFAR and the CGIAR system. That’s an endorsement at a level nobody would have dreamt of when GFAR started out eight years ago.”

Christian Hoste (left, Vice-Chair, EFARD)

One difficulty for GFAR that Hoste acknowledges is that it is a facilitating mechanism, not an implementing agency. “When GFAR initiated the Global Partnership Programmes idea the difficulty was to identify a stakeholder who’d take the lead from the off,” he recalls. “The information and communications system that GFAR is now building is the only exception for which the Secretariat has a mandate as an executor. The results are more than promising. Nothing quite like this has been done before.”

In his role as Vice-Chair of EFARD, which is the European member of the Global Forum, Hoste recognises that GFAR itself is also evolving in its governance. “The Asia Pacific Forum, APAARI, includes both developing and developed countries, which doesn’t happen in other Forums,” he notes. “Now for Europe we’re saying why should we only be represented through the ARIs, why can’t we also benefit from the multi-stakeholder approach? We have highly effective NARS but they’re driven by a science agenda and it’s quite hard to involve a range of stakeholders. We can make that happen using the Regional Forum model.”

Steps to expand GFAR’s Forums beyond developing regions complicate matters for GFAR but are an important move in the right direction. Another ongoing proposal is the creation of a new Forum for North America. Some within GFAR’s existing structure eye these proposals warily, in case they might diminish the voice of developing-country stakeholders or raise tricky issues of who owns the knowledge and information that arise from collaborations under the GFAR umbrella, or to what uses these insights are put. Others may worry lest ‘pushier’ Northern players upstage Southern concerns. Ola Smith acknowledges that levels of flair and talent for advocacy can vary greatly among stakeholder groups. “Some can speak up for themselves, while others have just as much to say perhaps, but are less good at saying it,” he observes. “This can be part of the capacity issue but it could also be a problem of protecting knowledge. Fixing that is a question of shoring up policies, so people feel free to share what they know. Some components of GFAR set a good example of this, some still lag behind. Some Regional Forums are taking a lead yet others are still too closed. It’s not just an issue of capacity.”

Nor does GFAR have a monopoly on interactive development thinking. Effective partnerships can still come about through run-of-the-mill professional encounters, informal links – or sheer accident. But there are better ways to create fertile conditions for change. “In the business we are in we cannot be too structured, or follow a script,” agrees Smith.



“There are too many elements that can come in the way so we need to be flexible enough to deal with any situation, adapt to the circumstances, that’s definitely a concern. So it’s good of course to have a structure for reasoning out and organizing things but it’s not a good idea to be so rigid that you can’t change it along the way.” He also recognizes that innovation and partnership are not panaceas for all ills and that they count for little unless backed up by palpable outcomes. It is one thing to act as a matchmaker and bring appropriate partners together but it is up to them to take effective action based on shared insights. “I’m looking also for more tangible, physical and concrete outputs,” he says. “We’ve gone through the process of getting people to come together, talk together, work together. Now we hope that in the next two or three years we’ll really start seeing some more quantifiable results.”



Stakeholder Highlights

Regional Forums

Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa **AARINENA**

Further development of commodity networks came top of AARINENA's agenda in 2004. The established date palm and cotton networks acquired an inter-regional and (in date palm's case) a global dimension. Progress was made towards linking the fledgling olive network to important allies and a new network was launched for medicinal and herbal plants. The latter arose from an expert consultation in Cairo in September, where it was acknowledged such plants are a valuable but neglected resource. The region is rich in unusual dryland plants and foreign plant collectors frequently visit parts of it to look for plants with economic qualities. Plant materials tend to be exported in bulk for extraction of essences, which normally takes place overseas. One of the goals of the new network is to make appropriate processing know-how available to neighbourhood plant collectors.



Olive tree propagation, Lebanon.

Photo: FAO/19012/R. Faidutti



In December 2004, partners in the olive network held a meeting in Marrakesh, the first formal encounter between olive producers from Northern and Southern Mediterranean countries, to draw up a workplan and pursue links with the European System of Cooperative Research Networks in Agriculture (SCORENA) and FAO's European network for olive producers. A formal meeting with SCORENA is planned during 2005.

Since 2004 the Date Palm Global Network (DPGN) has widened so it now includes virtually all the countries in the world that produce dates on any scale, accounting for over



*A traditional Falai irrigation system, Oman.
Photo: FAO/22371/R. Messori*

90 percent of world trade in this commodity. It is the most-developed of the AARINENA networks, thanks largely to sponsorship by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). During 2004, training and management courses in date palm processing were offered to trainees from overseas by one of the Emirates' main date palm processing enterprises, which is owned by UAE ruler H.H. Sheikh Zayed. A major international exhibition on date palm research was mounted in November in Al Ain City, UAE. It included knowledge on date palm cultivation's current status and the best date varieties (including rare varieties) for given conditions, together with steps to tackle problems facing date palm production and processing, as well as demonstrating the benefits of applied research to growers and investors alike.

A DPGN website details these and other initiatives at www.dpgn.uaeu.ac

Most of the AARINENA networks are structured similarly. Focal points in each member country represent research institutions, NGOs, the private sector, farmers' associations and so on. Each network has a bureau to coordinate activities in the sub-regions. For instance, circulation of cotton information is managed in Iran and information on olives is managed in Tunisia. For inter-regional and global networking there are regional coordinators in other parts of the world. Each network also has three or four technical working groups, for example, the date palm network has a post-harvest working group, a pest management group, a commercialization group and a marketing group. The focus of these groups can differ, depending on the specific commodity and its requirements.



In addition to its commodity-based networks, AARINENA has recently set up 'cross-cutting networks' on issues such as biotechnology and water use efficiency. These issue-based networks are very new but follow broadly the same pattern. Their work will be tracked in future GFAR Annual Reports and GFAR Newsletter updates at www.egfar.org.

The information management side of AARINENA's work progressed with the formation of a Steering Committee representing the sub-regions, along with representatives from regional and international organizations. This body meets once a year and the workplan for 2004 included two major projects that are now completed – a survey of the technical resources of the region's NARS and another on human resources available at national level in the context of GFAR's plans for a GLOBAL.RAIS (see page 28). A proposed framework for strengthening ICT resources, intended for submission to donors, was discussed at the AARINENA Ninth General Assembly in April, held in Oman, and a strengthened AARINENA.RAIS Steering Committee was formed to advance activities within the framework. AARINENA also presented its new-look website (www.aarinena.org) to a gathering that included delegates from other Regional Forums. A second meeting of Steering Committee took place in Tehran, Iran in September to review and (in places) modify the strategic framework in the light of survey results on the status of NAIS and human ICM resources.

Spotlight on cotton

Over the past 15 years the average yield of cotton has declined, following a decade (1980–1991) when it rose steadily by 10 kg/ha a year. The search is now on for new and improved technologies to realise to the utmost the cotton plant's genetic potential. The Inter-Regional Network for Research Collaboration on Sustainable Cotton Production in Asia and North Africa (INCANA) set up through AARINENA seeks to keep this quest on track.

INCANA now operates on an inter-regional scale thanks the partnerships with CACAARI and APAARI, initiated in 2002. Based in Iran, INCANA now also counts among its members Azerbaijan, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and others (Algeria, Sudan and Turkey) have agreed to join in future. INCANA has cultivated close links with other research centres and institutions, including the International Center for Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), CIRAD and Iran's own Agricultural Research and Education Organization (AREO).

Research to this end is focused on (among other things) water use efficiency, short-season and drought-tolerant varieties, growth regulators, nutrient and weed management, and hybrid and transgenic cotton strains, as well as farm management and mechanization. A second Annual Meeting of the network took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in September under the auspices of CACAARI. The INCANA website (www.irnc.net) was launched, featuring more detailed information on the network's current and future programmes.



Cotton ready for harvest.

Photo: FAO/17720/A. Conti



Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions APAARI

APAARI is an alliance of member and associate member organizations with a vast geographical coverage. Finding a basis for joint research and common interests is a constant endeavour. In recent years the spotlight of this endeavour has shifted beyond the setting of common research priorities to finding better ways to communicate ideas and start partnerships. Certain lines of enquiry connect both fronts and on one of them – biotechnology – significant advances were made in 2004. Biotechnology is a hi-tech and high-cost research area where the region as a whole has not had a strong record of research achievement in the past. The formation of the Asia-Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology (AP-CoAB) (see box, page 41) should help to lift this work to a world-class level.

Another significant area of progress has been the Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS). A programme of advocacy for boosting ICM use and capacity at national and regional levels was agreed by APAARI members in August, together with plans to integrate national systems with global systems such as GFAR's emerging GLOBAL RAIS (see page 28), and to assist information trainees from seven of the region's least-developed countries by helping them develop adequate skills to manage NAIS facilities and to contribute to information sharing activities region-wide.

The APAARI website (www.apaari.org) was given more user-friendly home page features and added gateway functions. The general range of APARIS features was expanded to include information on – and links to – NARS databases and a searchable register of the region's researchers. All APAARI's recent publications have now been published electronically in CD-ROM format. The content includes the latest in an established 'success stories' series, highlighting examples from around the region of the practical gains of agricultural practice and planning based on participatory interactions.

APAARI's keen and growing interest in post-harvest concerns was reflected in an Expert Consultation on *Post-harvest Technologies for Ensuring Food Security and Value Addition for Enhanced Income*, held in Bangkok, Thailand, in December. Linkages were also established during 2004 with PhAction, a global alliance of 12 organizations dedicated to 'capturing the benefits of investment in post-harvest research' which includes APAARI members and associate members from Australia, Japan, New Zealand and elsewhere.

With a view to pursuing GFAR's strategic objective of more and better collaboration between regions, plans were laid during 2004 for an International Symposium on *Perspectives of R&D for Improving Agricultural Productivity in Africa – What and How can Japan Contribute to Africa?* Organized jointly by the Japan Forum on International Agricultural Research for Sustainable Development (J-FARD) and the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS), the symposium will take place on the United Nations University (UNU) Tokyo campus next July and it will be reviewed in the 2005 Annual Report.



Biofertilization of vegetables at the Centre for Biotechnology, Bogor Agricultural University, Indonesia.

Photo: FAO/22354/J. Micaud

Asia-Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology (APCoAB)

APCoAB was established in 2003 to help ensure that benefits of agricultural biotechnology reach small-scale and marginal farmers in the Asia-Pacific region. FAO was, with APAARI, a founding force behind the programme and initial support came from the Rockefeller Foundation, Monsanto, Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company (Mahyco). Countries throughout the region and their NARS are being canvassed to become members of APCoAB. During 2004, APAARI conferred with a broad range of stakeholders on a long-term plan and strategies in six key areas:

- Agricultural productivity and environmental safety
- Ethics and biosafety
- Intellectual property rights and access
- Capacity building
- Partnership (public and private)
- Public awareness.

APAARI convened APCoAB's first Steering Committee meeting in April 2004 to finalize a road map and workplan for the period 2004–2006. In May Dr Vibha Dhawan, Director of the Bioresources and Biotechnology Division at India's Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), was engaged as a consultant for six months and subsequently took over as coordinator of the Consortium, whose Secretariat was established in the Delhi office of the International Crops Research Institute of the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in the National Agriculture Science Complex. A website (www.apaari.org/APCoAB/) has been set up to share information on agricultural biotechnology and to publicise the Consortium's activities. It provides useful links and databases on institutions and experts involved in agricultural biotechnology in the Asia-Pacific region and offers an introductory round up of scientific information. The Second Steering Committee meeting was held on 30 November 2004 in Bangkok to discuss progress on the work plan and activities undertaken.



Central Asian and Caucasian Association of Agricultural Research Institutes **CACAARI**

Formed in late 2003, this new regional grouping in the GFAR family consolidated its foundations during 2004 by establishing a charter and by taking initial steps to create a regional agricultural information system for Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC-RAIS) in association with ICARDA, at a meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan attended by delegates from the eight countries that form the alliance, along with representatives of AARINENA and APAARI. A follow-up meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan in June showcased CACAARI's future plans. In September, CACAARI hosted a meeting of INCANA (see page 39), the cotton research network that began as part of the AARINENA array of commodity networks but now has inter-regional scope. CACAARI's involvement brings several new countries into the network.



Farm boys collecting water, Georgia.

Photo: FAO/22631/J. Spull

Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa **FARA**

FARA has been designated as the technical arm of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Linking environmental security to food security, NEPAD was created within Africa and arose partly from preparatory work for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. It sets the continent the goal of increasing annual agricultural output by six percent for the next 20 years, a steep curve for agricultural R&D.

The Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme (SSA-CP) is a response to NEPAD initiated by the CGIAR that hinges on countering three key constraints to agriculture in Africa,



namely: failures of agricultural markets, inappropriate policies and natural resources degradation. By applying an innovative integrated agricultural research for development (IAR4D) approach, involving a comprehensive partnership of stakeholders, the SSA-CP seeks to apply research to reviving agriculture in Africa, and to strike up fresh synergies between disciplines and institutions and a renewed commitment to change at all levels. Of the five major programme activities that FARA tackled in 2004, the most significant and testing was a leading role in the SSA-CP but this agenda meshes with other FARA activities geared to enhancing the impact of research on livelihoods for Africa's farmers and pastoralists, namely:

- Building African Scientific and Institutional Capacity (BASIC), a series of initiatives designed to help teaching and training institutions build the human capacity to adopt and implement new approaches to agricultural research for development and to implement agricultural development strategies. In 2004 FARA convened a workshop on BASIC, hosted by the Commission of the African Union.
- Dissemination of New Agricultural Technologies in Africa (DONATA), a strategy aimed at speeding up the delivery of technologies that can restore momentum to agricultural development.

FARA and NEPAD have jointly formulated a programme that consists of a growing portfolio of crop-specific technologies for rapid dissemination, beginning with technologies affecting rice, banana, maize and cassava.

- Multi-country Agricultural Productivity Programme for Africa (MAPP), which aims to help African NARS gain the resources they need for vital reforms and investment
- RAIS activities, designed to promote access to new knowledge and information exchange using modern information technology tools (page 28).

The total estimated budget for the SSA-CP is around US\$70 million, of which about five million has been secured for the first 18 months of the preliminary phase,



Urban market place, Kabwe, Zambia.

Photo: FAO/17848/A. Conti



Advocating change for Africa

Building Sustainable Livelihoods through Integrated Agricultural Research for Development is a Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme (SSA-CP) championed by FARA and one of four Challenge Programmes (CP) approved and funded by the CGIAR. Extensive consultation revealed three major constraints to reviving agriculture in Africa; failures of agricultural markets, inappropriate policies and natural resource degradation. The new SSA-CP sets out to tackle these constraints by fostering synergies between professional groups and institutions and by encouraging renewed commitment to change at all levels, from farmers to national politicians and international legislators. To this end it sets out with four main objectives:

- Develop sustainable technologies for intensifying subsistence-oriented farming
- Reconcile smallholder production systems with sound natural resource management
- Improve access to and efficiency of markets for smallholders' and pastoral products
- Catalyse the design and adoption of policies that encourage innovation to improve the livelihoods of smallholders and pastoralists.

The philosophy behind the SSA-CP is to develop new research that has an immediate and strong impact. In this complex task FARA is turning for support to the three sub-regional organizations – CORAF for West Africa, ASARECA for East Africa and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) – to which programme implementation will be delegated. In each sub-region, a pilot learning site (PLS) has been selected according to such criteria as how representative it is, how degraded it has become and how conspicuous the impact of research should therefore be in the shortest time possible. The first PLS for West Africa (for instance) is the territory connecting southern Mali, southern Niger and northern Nigeria, centred on a triangle between the town of Maradi in the Republic of Niger and Kano and Katsina in Nigeria. In Southern Africa the PLS is the corridor connecting northern Zimbabwe, southern Malawi and central Mozambique.

In each of these PLSs work begins with a call for expressions of interest from all the local stakeholders who might show an interest in becoming part of a pilot learning team. Within that team, a lead institution is designated and different institutions that form the team can group according to their scope for tackling a particular problem. A competitive element can be introduced if different consortia bid to tackle the same problem, in which case a selection process determines which has an edge.

By the end of 2004 preparatory steps were in place and the first call for project proposals in at least two PLS was due to be announced in the early months of 2005.

coming mainly from the Netherlands, the World Bank, Italy and the EC. Partners in the collaborative research effort include NARS, farmers' organizations, NGOs and other CSOs as well as CGIAR centres, ARIs and policy makers. A recurring problem of financing a CP based on the more time-consuming participatory approach is how to satisfy donors' expectations by showing swift results on the ground while making sure a full array of participants has applied a 'reality check' to every scheme that might affect them.

FARA is conferring closely with CG centres and ARIs operating in each sub-region. Where NARSs are relatively weak, efforts are being made to strengthen them, an important intended side-effect of the Challenge Programme if it enables them to sustain an inclusive and dynamic approach to problem-solving in future.



Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technological Development FORAGRO

During 2004 FORAGRO continued to follow up steps to implement activities that advance regional research in five priority areas identified by the Grupo Técnico Asesor de Apoyo al FORAGRO (GTAF), namely genetic resources, new technologies (agro-biotechnology), natural resource management and agribusiness, innovation and small-scale agriculture.

Across Latin America and the Caribbean, production of cereals, meat, fruit and legumes, among others, runs to millions of hectares. In an increasingly globalised marketplace the amount of produce moving around in the region and leaving it as exports is enormous. Research organizations bear a heavy responsibility to maintain productivity. At the same time, the problems of small farming systems affect all the region's countries. Small-scale farms are associated with poverty and with low productivity and low competitiveness in the open market. The problems are as much social and cultural as technological or economic. Yet, the region's millions of small-scale farmers contribute much of the continent's overall production, including goods coming onto the export market, especially in the form of speciality products such as tropical fruit.

The problem for research is that the thinking coming from conventional national research has been slanted towards the needs of more developed systems with more capital and other inputs, and has not proved appropriate for small-scale farming systems. Some national and regional research institutes and universities have lately begun to offer advice that is more



Pineapples for sale at Heredia market, Costa Rica.

Photo: FAO/16581/G. Bizzarri



attuned to small-scale farmers' needs, and continue to look for new ways and means to manage information directly about and for the small-scale farmer. One of the five main lines of FORAGRO's work is to help build such bridges between researchers and small-scale farmers.

At the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IBA) session, held in Panama in November, FORAGRO's President pursued the Regional Forum's mission of pushing research and technology development higher up national and regional political agendas. He presented to the Ministers of Agriculture of 34 countries the conclusions of the Third International Meeting of FORAGRO, held in Brasilia, and suggested ways in which FORAGRO could contribute to the AGRO 2003–2015 Plan of Action. IABA issued a resolution in support of the Forum, in which ministers welcomed these suggestions and encouraged country delegations and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) to strengthen their participation in FORAGRO.

As FORAGRO grows and evolves and as greater integration between stakeholders leads to more knowledge and ideas being shared across orthodox boundaries, such exchanges will have a growing influence on political and policy decisions. An interesting dynamic has developed between the Secretariats of FORAGRO and the Parlamento Latinoamericano (PARLATINO). The President of FORAGRO was invited to the meeting on *Trade and Agriculture of the Agricultural Commissions of Legislators* in Sao Paolo in April. It was an excellent opportunity to discuss the PARLATINO–FORAGRO agreement, on the basis of a proposal put forth by parliamentarians from PARLATINO to the Third International Meeting of FORAGRO, held in Brasilia in 2003.



Merchants buy bananas, clothes and other goods in bulk from indigenous producers at this market in Ecuador and transport them to coastal areas.

Photo: FAO/19278/R. Jones



The Secretariats of the Commissions of the Latin America Parliament and of FORAGRO are working on a PARLATINO–FORAGRO agreement, to be signed in 2005 on the occasion of the IV International Meeting of FORAGRO in Panama, which will enable these two regional organizations to strengthen ties and carry out joint activities.

FORAGRO's Scientific and Technological Information System for the Agricultural Sector in the Americas (INFOTEC), continued to improve information flow to a list of over 3000 subscribers. This list grew by more than 20 percent between January and September 2004. A full-text online library was developed, as well as new or improved news services, an events board and registers of institutions, experts and technology markets. Weekly e-mail bulletins and e-lists (there are 10 so far, hosting three e-discussions in 2004) extended the interactive side of INFOTEC. The Forum's Technical Secretariat, hosted in Costa Rica at IICA, participated in a Rome meeting of all the Regional Forums to prepare the second stage of GFAR's GLOBAL.RAIS project, plans for which were further debated in November at GFAR's Mexico round of meetings. It emerged from surveys of technical and human resource capacity in all the regions that Latin America as a whole is significantly better prepared and equipped in these respects than other regions and that this advantage extends to sub-regional level (see box, below).

Spotlight on PROCISUR

Within FORAGRO, Programa Cooperativo para el Desarrollo Tecnológico Agropecuario del Cono Sur (PROCISUR) is the cooperative programme for technological development in agriculture and agro-industry in Latin America's 'southern cone' sub-region. It links the national research institutes for agriculture in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, plus IICA. PROCISUR is 35 years old and has weathered many changes of government and policy. In the last five years it has been involved in five main strands of activity: sustainable agriculture; the quality of the agri-food chain; new technologies (biotechnology, genetic resources, etc.) and two very important production systems, organic agriculture and small farming systems. Most of this work centres on constructing technological platforms that open the programme to a wider range of participants, from the private sector, public bodies, agro-industry, farmers' cooperatives, universities and so on, in pursuit of two main outcomes – cooperative projects and cooperation networks.

As an example of cooperative projects, PROCISUR launched an initiative, financially backed by the EC, to improve the genetic heritage of forage legumes, a quest involving institutes, industry, universities and many other interest groups. Previously, the EC funded a project on mycotoxins in cereal chains on the same basis. PROCISUR's role is to connect people on one platform, concentrate their capacities, then negotiate with another partner to finance the work. An example of cooperative networks is PROCISUR's genetic resource network, connecting the genetic resource programmes of many organizations, especially the germplasm and gene banks they maintain. It makes sure that information more widely known over an IT network through the PROCISUR website at <http://www.procisur.org.uy>. More about PROCISUR's ICM work appears on page 28.



Civil Society Perspectives

Farmers' organizations

Pressure for growth in world agriculture continues to intensify, responding not only to market and domestic demand for food but also to demand for pharmaceutical, textile and (in the future) biomass products. Delivering new growth on such a scale will require highly effective policies and well-targeted assistance. Farmers' organizations have a crucial role to play by coming up with suggestions and advice on agricultural policy, trade and international investment. Farmers' organizations within the GFAR spectrum can be categorized in two blocks, the peasant farmer movement (Via Campesina) and IFAP, which includes everything from peasant groups to highly organized commercial farming lobbies in almost two-thirds of the world's developing countries as well as nearly all its industrialized countries.

Via Campesina represents mainly peasant and landless groups and also advocates 'slow food'. At its Dresden conference in 2000, GFAR needed to define a common global vision of ARD. Consensus was difficult to reach and Via Campesina felt left out of the defined global vision. Talks are now underway to persuade Via Campesina to rejoin the debate and voice the concerns of the landless and peasant farmers at global, regional and sub-regional levels. Other potentially divisive issues are patent protection and fees under Intellectual Property Rights legislation and fears over the continuing availability to developing-country farmers of 'public' varieties of crop as seed or in other forms. Private sector interventions are catering to small-scale and disadvantaged farmers in isolated cases but direct links between farmers and researchers are less likely to be distorted by self-interest.

Many governments are no longer providing agricultural extension services to support and advise small-scale farmers. IFAP has argued that one of GFAR's obligations is to urge its members, through regional and national forums, to raise new resources for extension. The situation is not helped by the fact that many eligible governments have failed to include agriculture and rural development in national Poverty Reduction Strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (see page 17) and some have not drawn up a PRS at all. Major donors are unlikely to assist those that have not taken this step. A fuller survey of policy issues affecting farmer organizations appears elsewhere in this report.



Consensus between researchers and NGOs has been hard to reach in the past partly because of disagreements over such issues as GM crops.

Photo: FAO/22353JJ. Micaud

Non-governmental organizations

At GFAR and CGIAR's Mexico round of meetings, the idea arose that GFAR should set up a global consortium to mobilize NGO inputs to research at all levels. This idea was prompted partly by a stalemate between the CG system and its existing NGO Committee over perceived clashes between the CG mandate and local knowledge systems, which some NGOs felt had been undervalued. Consensus has proved hard to reach in the past, partly because of policy disagreements over issues like GM crops but also on account of financial obstacles, seeing that NGOs would have to fund such a body themselves.

One proposed way around this quandary is to work through NGOs that are quasi-regional in scope, such as the Asian Non-governmental Organizations Coalition (ANGOC) in the Asia-Pacific region, Movimiento Agroecológico de América Latina y Caribe (MAELA) in Latin America and the Caribbean or the Arab Network for Sustainable Agricultural Development (ANSAD) in the West Asia and North Africa region, to broker an agreement on forming an overall consortium with a generalized brief to influence new technology development and advocate policy reforms.

Some NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa are currently lobbying for a consortium at the regional level on very different lines, starting with national working groups to provide a clearing-house for knowledge about which NGOs are doing what, and where. Once NGOs that are interested have come together and formed country working groups, each country group would nominate two people to represent them at sub-regional level, and that group would constitute a sub-regional working group, from each of which two could again be nominated to constitute a regional working group. GFAR's Regional and Sub-regional Forums could



Definitions and directions

During its statutory meetings in Mexico at the end of 2004, GFAR called a meeting of civil society organizations (CSOs) to help plan how to participate in implementation of the Business Plan for 2004 through 2006, finalized in May 2004. The concept of a CSO is flexible, including both farmers' and non-governmental organizations. Some definitions include private sector organizations and some farmers prefer to define themselves as private sector operators. In spite of these 'grey areas' of definition and some differences of opinion, notably over GM and other biotechnology issues, the meeting came up with a unified range of strategies for delivering the Business Plan's objectives (see page 2).

then forge working relations with these NGOs under the consortium. In return for this 'matchmaking' service, the consortium could hold the selected NGOs accountable for what they do and require a report on their activities, so that good practice and cautionary lessons could be documented and more widely shared.

This proposed mechanism would not invent new NGO coalitions where they already existed, in which case those coalitions would be invited to become the country working group of NGOs for agricultural research for development (ARD NGOs). A condition in cases where membership of the existing group required a subscription fee that some needier NGOs might not be able to afford, would be that membership should be opened to all would-be ARD NGOs for that aspect of their work. Alternatively the consortium might offer to enable them to participate by paying their fees from a dedicated trust fund.



IFAP has argued that one of GFAR's obligations is to urge its members, through regional and national forums, to raise new resources for extension.

Photo: Ron Gilling/Still Pictures



The PROLINNOVA programme (see page 20), facilitated by NGOs in nine countries, provides significant examples of novel partnerships between research organizations and CSOs where the latter select the former as allies, rather than the other way around. Established research providers are likely to find more and more that the tables have been turned in this unconventional manner. The mission-driven mandate of many NGOs can inhibit such alliances, as can ‘ivory tower’ attitudes to fact-finding on the part of researchers.

A perceived bias on the NGO side in favour of organic agriculture and against GM technologies and restrictive patents often set NGOs and research institutes at odds in the past. But complementarities between these communities are – in the view of most observers – “more substantial than the differences.”

Private sector linkages

Arvind Kapur, Managing Director of Nunhems Seeds Pvt. Ltd, based in Gurgaon, India, was nominated during 2004 as private sector representative of GFAR. His company’s work on public–private partnerships to combat pest problems in vegetable production casts a promising light on the way forward for such linkages. Vegetables such as cabbages and cauliflowers are widely regarded as ‘orphan crops’, important to diet and nutrition but not grown on a scale big enough to attract new investment into pest management and crop improvement technologies. Cauliflowers and cabbage are crops grown and consumed all over Asia, both as cooked and as salad vegetables. Wherever they are grown the main pest problem is diamond back moth (DBM) infestation. This insect is resistant to most chemical control measures and farmers invest heavily in systemic pesticides that leave a heavy residue on the crop that consumers can ingest unknowingly.



Arvind Kapur, Nunhems Seed Pvt. Ltd (Private sector representative, GFAR-SC)

Nunhems has set itself the task of finding ways to fix the problem in harness with the public sector and a ‘full house’ of direct stakeholders, beginning with steps to identify the technology that is needed. Having helped analyse the problem the company will develop a solution in partnership with the public sector. A workshop will be convened in early 2005, involving government officials, universities, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the Federation of Andhra Pradesh Farmers’ Organisations, NGOs, the M.S. Swaminathan Foundation, AVRDC, FAO and many others. Entomologists from Indian research institutes and Cornell University in the USA will



join forces with these partners to settle on solutions that seek long-term resistance to DBM attack, on the assumption that only a permanent solution to the problem will justify the cost involved which is likely to amount to €2.5 million for the company and €6.5 million from public funds.

The aim will be to combine public and private sector expertise and consider socio-economic along with technical aspects. Results of an NGO-led process of public consultation have already highlighted the need for integrated pest and crop management measures in addition to technical 'fixes', which could entail GM varieties with built-in resistance linked to more than a single gene. Some continuing insecticide use is expected but at lower volumes and using less-persistent formulations, bearing in mind that DBM is not the only insect pest of brassicas. Conditions will be set on biosafety and environmental impact and any improved varieties will be globally registered and distributed free as a public good. The company will waive royalty fees so that farmers can keep their own seed. Fuller reports on this initiative will appear in the 2005 Annual Report and in intervening issues of GFAR Newsletter at www.egfar.org.



Donor contributions to the GFAR Secretariat for budget year 2004 (US dollars)

Cash contributions for GFAR Secretariat's activities

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Canada (Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA) | 760 000 |
| France (Ministere des affaires étrangères, MAE) | 450 000 |
| Italy | 200 000 |
| European Commission | 145 000 |
| The Netherlands | 80 000 |
| FAO | 45 000 |
| DFID | 31 000 |
| Total income | 1 711 000 |

In-kind contributions for staffing the GFAR Secretariat

| | |
|---|--|
| France (secondment from CIRAD) | Senior Officer (12 months) |
| CIAT | Senior Officer (shared position, 3.5 months total) |
| Italy | Research Fellow (six months) |
| Canada (Canadian Federation of Agriculture) | Intern (three months) |
| Germany | Consultant for GFAR Business Plan Retreat |
| IFAD | Consultant for GFAR Charter Review |



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Afterword

In last year's concluding remarks, I noted that the 2003 Annual Report was the first in GFAR's history, and therefore was necessarily a modest effort to which not all of our stakeholders contributed, and in which we deliberately left out a number of items of unfinished business. We promised, however, that future reports would be made more inclusive and would comprehensively document processes, products, outputs and demonstrated impact. I believe we have made good on our promise in this report.

Firstly, contributions from farmer organizations, NGOs, the private sector and donors that were missing last year now complement reports from the Regional Forums. Secondly, the reports highlight not only processes which form a large part of our activities as we pursue our mandate of facilitating partnerships and collaboration among the various stakeholders, but also some innovative products and outputs featured in the year in review section and other editorial sections. The central theme feature on partnership, innovation and change, an innovation in itself, tackles such thorny issues as giving justly measured attention to agriculture within the rural development context, giving a voice and space to civil society within the global agricultural research system, building on and promoting local innovation, leveraging partnership and bridging the digital divide.

The prospectus for next year's Annual Report includes a theme feature on stakeholder inclusiveness in decision making, a progress report on implementation of the rolling three-year Business Plan 2004–2006 and the outcome of an external review of the GPP mechanism for promoting partnerships for ARD.

Let me seize this opportunity to thank all our partners who contributed to the document in hand. We look forward to your continued support in future years, as we tackle various themes of relevance to agricultural research for development. We ask you to rendezvous with us next year for a stimulating exchange and information sharing on the keynote issue of inclusiveness in research management and implementation.

Ola Smith
Executive Secretary, GFAR



Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|--|
| AAB | Association of Applied Biologists |
| AARINENA | Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa |
| ACIAR | Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research |
| ACP | Asia, Caribbean, Pacific |
| ACTN | African Conservation Tillage Network |
| AGS | Agricultural Support Systems Division (FAO) |
| ANAPO | Asociacion de Productores de Oleaginosas (National Association of Oilseed Producers, Brazil) |
| ANGOC | Asian Non-governmental Organizations Coalition |
| ANSAD | Arab Network for Sustainable Agricultural Development |
| APAARI | Asia–Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions |
| APAFRI | Asia–Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions |
| APARIS | Asia–Pacific Agricultural Research Information System |
| APCoAB | Asia–Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology |
| ARD | agricultural research for development |
| AREO | Agricultural Research and Education Organization (Iran) |
| ARI | advanced research institutions |
| ASARECA | Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa |
| AVRDC | The World Vegetable Center |
| BASIC | Building African Scientific and Institutional Capacity |
| CAAS | Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences |
| CACAARI | Central Asian and Caucasian Association of Agricultural Research Institutes |
| CAZS | Centre for Arid Zone Studies (Wales) |
| CBO | community-based organization |
| CGIAR | Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research |



| | |
|---------------|--|
| CIAT | Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (International Center for Tropical Agriculture) |
| CIDA | Canadian International Development Agency |
| CIMMYT | Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maíz y Trigo (International Wheat and Maize Improvement Center) |
| CIRAD | Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement (Agricultural Research Centre for International Development, France) |
| CORAF | Centre Africain pour la recherche et le développement agricoles (African Centre for Agricultural Research and Development) |
| CP | Challenge Programme (CGIAR) |
| CSO | civil society organization |
| CTA | Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (the Netherlands) |
| DBM | diamond back moth |
| DFID | Department for International Development (UK) |
| DGIS | Directorate General for International Cooperation (the Netherlands) |
| DONATA | Dissemination of New Technologies in Africa |
| DPGN | Date Palm Global Network |
| DMC | Direct Sowing, Mulch-based Systems and Conservation Agriculture |
| DURAS | Promotion du développement durable dans les systèmes de recherche agricole du sud (Promoting Sustainable Development in Southern Agricultural Research Systems) |
| EARD-InfoSys+ | European Agricultural Research for Development Information System |
| EBO | EGFAR Back Office |
| EC | European Commission |
| EFARD | European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development |
| EGFAR | Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research |
| ESCORENA | European System of Cooperative Research Networks in Agriculture (FAO) |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FARA | Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa |
| FONTAGRO | Fondo Regional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (Regional Fund on Agricultural Technology) |
| FORAGRO | Foro de las Américas para la Investigación y Desarrollo Tecnológico Agropecuario (Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technological Development) |
| GCP | Generation Challenge Programme (CGIAR) |
| GFAR | Global Forum on Agricultural Research |



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| GFAR-SC | GFAR Steering Committee |
| GFU | Global Facilitation Unit for Underutilized Species |
| GIPhT | Global Initiative on Post-Harvest Technology |
| GPP | Global Partnership Programmes |
| GTAF | Grupo Técnico Asesor de Apoyo al FORAGRO (Technical Group in Support of the FORAGRO Secretariat) |
| IABA | Inter-American Board of Agriculture |
| IAPAR | Instituto Agronômico do Paraná (Agricultural Research Institute of the State of Parana, Brazil) |
| IARC | international agricultural research centre |
| IAR4D | integrated agricultural research for development |
| ICARDA | International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas |
| ICIMOD | International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (Nepal) |
| ICM | information communication management |
| ICM4ARD | Information and Communication Management for Agricultural Research and Development |
| ICRA | International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture (the Netherlands) |
| ICRAF | World Agroforestry Centre |
| ICRISAT | International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics |
| ICT | information and communication technology |
| IDRC | International Development Research Centre (Canada) |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| IFAP | International Federation of Agricultural Producers |
| IFPRI | International Food Policy Research Institute |
| IICA | Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture |
| IIRR | International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (the Philippines) |
| INBAR | International Network on Bamboo and Rattan |
| INCANA | Inter-Regional Network for Research Collaboration on Sustainable Cotton Production in Asia and North Africa |
| INFOTEC | Información Científica y Tecnológica del Sector Agropecuario en las Américas (Scientific and Technological Information System for the Agricultural Sector in the Americas) (FORAGRO) |
| IPGRI | International Plant Genetic Resources Institute |
| ISNAR | International Service for National Agricultural Research |
| J-FARD | Japan Forum on International Agricultural Research for Sustainable Development |
| JIRCAS | Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences |
| LI-BIRD | Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development |



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| Mahyco | Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Corporation (India) |
| MAPP | Multi-country Agricultural Productivity Programme for Africa |
| MAELA | Movimiento Agroecológico de América Latina y Caribe (Latin-American and Caribbean Agro-ecological Movement) |
| MIS | management information system |
| NAFAR | North American Forum for Agricultural Research |
| NAIS | national agricultural information system |
| NARS | national agricultural research system |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| NTFP | non-timber forest products |
| NSPL | Nunhems Seeds Pvt. Ltd |
| NWO | Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research) |
| PARLATINO | Parlamento Latinoamericano (Latin-American Parliament) |
| PhAction | Post-Harvest Forum |
| PROCISUR | Programa Cooperativo para el Desarrollo Tecnológico Agropecuario del Cono Sur (Cooperative Program for Agricultural and Agroindustrial Technology Development) |
| PROLINNOVA | Promoting Local Innovation in Ecologically Oriented Agriculture and Natural Resource Management |
| PRS | Poverty Reduction Strategies |
| PSC | Programme Steering Committee |
| PSP | Plant Sciences Programme (DFID) |
| RAIN | Regional Agricultural Information Network (ASARECA) |
| R&D | research and development |
| RAIS | regional agricultural information system |
| SADC | Southern Africa Development Community |
| SAS | social analysis system |
| SME | small to medium enterprise |
| SSA-CP | Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme |
| TERI | The Energy and Resources Institute (India) |
| UAE | United Arab Emirates |
| UNU | United Nations University |

ABOUT GFAR

Established in 1996 and operational since 1998, the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) was framed as an initiative to promote cost-effective partnerships and strategic alliances among all who hold a stake in agricultural research and know-how for development, from the grassroots up. It offers an arena where the ingenuity of many can outwit persistent problems that appear to defy conventional solutions.

The anti-poverty Millennium Development Goals have lent this challenging agenda fresh momentum, after a spell of economic upheaval that shrouded the future direction of world agriculture in uncertainty. This report sums up GFAR's contributions during 2004 to the universal cause of curbing food insecurity, the breakdown of vital natural resources and the social injustice and inequality that arise from rural poverty.



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