



GFAR

GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
FORUM MONDIAL DE LA RECHERCHE AGRICOLE
FORO GLOBAL DE INVESTIGACION AGROPECUARIA

The establishment of Global Programmes for Commodity Chains

Discussion Paper¹ for the GFAR Steering Committee meeting of 23 May 1999

Preamble

One of the five high priority areas identified by the GFAR Steering Committee in May 1998 was defined as “non-CG mandated crops”. In order to define it in positive terms, and to better reflect the results of the discussions which took place over the last couple of months among the GFAR Stakeholders on the possible content of such a programme, the name of “Commodity Chains” has recently been adopted.

To contribute to the formulation of this GFAR priority programme, a paper prepared by the ESDAR group of the World Bank on : “Crops outside the CGIAR mandate – Institutional and operational frameworks for international cooperation” was circulated, but not discussed in-depth, at the GFAR Steering Committee meeting of October 1998. As a follow-up, a number of discussions have taken place which involved IPGRI, the NARS secretariat, CIRAD and other ARIs and as a result of these discussions, IPGRI kindly accepted to prepare this discussion paper for consideration by the GFAR Steering Committee.

Introduction

Many crops that are currently not fully covered by the CGIAR-mandate are very important to humankind. Some of these crops are essential for direct contribution to food security at the local and regional levels, while others also play a significant role in poverty alleviation and rural economies. In addition these crops contribute to the sustainability of agro-ecosystems and in some cases play an important role in the preservation of biodiversity.

These crops fall into two main groups:

- Major commodity crops, eg coffee, cocoa, rubber, oil palm, sugar cane, cotton;
- Neglected crops which are of importance at the local/regional level, but not of global importance.

Strategies to provide support for research and development on these two groups of crops differ greatly. The first group may be considered as globally important commodity crops and can therefore best be addressed at the global level. The second group however are mainly of local or regional importance and therefore action at the regional level rather than a global level would be most appropriate and effective. Further discussion on this second group of crops is not included here but some of the principles and the methodology which will have to be developed for the first group may also benefit the crops of the second group.

¹ This discussion paper has been prepared by Emile Frison, IPGRI/INIBAP.

Major commodity crops

Research on such crops is carried out to some extent by NARIs, but in many cases responsibility has traditionally rested with commodity boards or other organisations. In spite of their importance for the national economies, donor support has been small as the main emphasis for most donors has been food security rather than business agriculture. Many commodity crops were previously grown as plantation crops, but are now increasingly cultivated as smallholder crops produced in mixed farming systems. Previous research is therefore inappropriate and a gap exists in support for smallholders growing these crops as part of mixed economies.

Many of the crops in question are tree-crops and play a potentially important role in biodiversity conservation and sustainability of agro-ecosystems. In addition, the long-term nature of research on such crops must be recognised and taken into account when developing support programmes.

The development of environmentally sustainable production systems for these crops and the availability of long-term incentives for smallholder producers will require a concerted effort on the part of the international agricultural community.

The paper prepared by ESDAR reviewed the current status of existing institutional and cooperative arrangements for nine “major” commodities: coffee, cocoa, coconut, rubber, oil palm, citrus and tropical fruits, pineapple, sugar and cotton. However, the document clearly stated that the list of commodities is not exhaustive and should be prioritized based on the indications expressed by the NARS Regional Fora.

In the framework of GFAR, certain steps are required. These include:

- The inclusion of these commodity crops in research initiatives on agricultural production systems;
- The development of new and innovative partnerships between the public and private sector;
- The development of global commodity programmes/networks for these crops in which all stakeholders can play a role.

New models/mechanisms for action are obviously required and should be developed in the context of the Global Forum. The aim would be to build on and coordinate already existing private and public sector activities in order to produce more “public goods”.

The proposed Approach

The concept of Global Programmes

One innovative model, which allows diverse partnerships to be established in order to address specific research agenda is that of the ‘Global Programme’². One Global Programme that has been recently developed is in the area of *Musa* genetic improvement (PROMUSA). Within the framework of this programme, south-south and north-south linkages are fostered and a wide range of partners, including NARS, IARCs and ARIs, are brought together with other, less traditional partners, such as NGOs and farmers groups, etc. PROMUSA has also attracted the attention of the private sector who have expressed an interest in participating in the programme.

Global programmes should build on existing achievements and be based on ongoing activities, thus in the case of those commodities where initiatives have already been taken and work is ongoing, they would provide an ideal mechanism for broadening partnerships and creating the desired synergies. In sugarcane for example,

² For more information about Global Programmes please refer to Frison, E.A., W. Collins and S. L. Sharrock, 1997. Global Programs: A new vision in agricultural research. Issues in Agriculture 12, CGIAR Washington.

the International Society of Sugarcane Technologists (ISSCT) includes most of the public institutions, cooperatives and private concerns involved in research affecting the sugarcane industry worldwide. However, research investment is mainly through the private sector. The public sector has identified a need for additional involvement, through partnerships, in order to focus attention on technologies more affordable and appropriate for small-holders. Cocoa on the other hand, is an example of a commodity where very little international collaboration previously existed, but where the private sector has recently taken the initiative in the development of the International Sustainable Cocoa Programme (ISCP). This is a global initiative, but at this stage involvement is very much biased towards the cocoa industry, with little representation of other stakeholders. This was noted during a meeting held recently in Paris and it was agreed that, in the spirit of the Global Forum, efforts should be made to broaden participation.

The concept of commodity chain

The second dimension which is proposed to add in defining the global programmes for these commodity crops is the concept of “commodity chain”³. This means that for a given crop, research is not limited to the conventional agricultural components related to yield increases but that the crop is considered “globally” in all aspects of a chain from its production to its consumption or use by the consumers. This approach adds new important dimensions to the traditional agricultural research agenda and implies the involvement of a full range of new partners, usually not involved in agricultural research.

It is therefore suggested that GFAR assists its stakeholders in developing global programmes on a few commodity chains which will be jointly identified, based on the priorities expressed by the NARS Regional Fora.

Next Steps

1. Discussion of this concept paper on “The establishment of global programmes for commodity chains”, and recommendations for further action, including the commission of a drafting group. Action: GFAR Steering Committee. Deadline: 23 May 1999.
2. Writing-up of a plan of action on how to launch global programmes on commodity chains. Action: Drafting committee commissioned that could include IPGRI, in collaboration with CIRAD⁴ who have already indicated their interest, as well as other stakeholders who may indicate their interest in Beijing. Deadline: 15 September 1999.
3. Electronic consultation of GFAR Stakeholders on the plan of action and identification by the NARS Regional Fora of their commodity chain priorities. Action: GFAR Secretariats and Regional/Sub-Regional Fora. Deadline: 15 October 1999.
4. Endorsement of the plan of action and identification of 1 to 3 commodity chains for which the development of a global programme will be undertaken. Nomination of lead organisation(s) to develop program proposal for each commodity chain chosen. Action: GFAR Steering Committee. Deadline: end of October 1999.
5. Establishment of global programme(s) identified in step 4, identification and commitment of all partners in the implementation secured and funding identified. Action: Lead organisation(s) mandated Deadline: 31 March 2000.

³ “Approche filière” (in French)

⁴ Considering the wide experience of IPGRI (e.g. coordination of PROMUSA, of a 10-country project on cocoa, of the coconut genetic resources network, COGENT) and of CIRAD (long history of research on commodity chains), both institutions have agreed to contribute their expertise to the GFAR in this area.

6. Presentation of the model(s) to the participants at GFAR-2000. Action: GFAR-2000 Committee.
Deadline: 21-23 May 2000.