Second inter-regional Workshop
Cairo, 10-11 May 2005

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"Moving forward within the ICM4ARD Framework"

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Background of the second inter-regional workshop

1.   GLOBAL.RAIS Project

The GLOBal Alliance of the Regional Agricultural Information Systems (GLOBAL.RAIS) was a project funded by the European Commission. This project started in February 2003. The main goal of the GLOBAL.RAIS project was to assist the regional Fora to develop and implement their own regional agricultural information system. In order to harmonise activities at several levels, from the national to the regional and global, it was decided to hold a set of regional consultations initiated and supported by GFAR Secretariat and with the active participation of FAO, with the goal of enabling the five regional Fora to define their own strategy in the area of ICM for ARD[1]. These regional consultations culminated in June 2004 with an inter-regional consultation in FAO headquarters, Rome, the main purpose of which was to define a global agenda in the area of ICM for ARD, while achieving economies of scale and synergism to the RAIS.

2.   Lessons learned from the first inter-regional consultation

This first inter-regional meeting brought to the fore the significant inequality in availability, access and ability to use agricultural related information by GFAR Stakeholders. It has also highlighted that social appropriation rather than technology is the driving force for improving information systems. The meeting agreed that (1) Advocacy for sensitization, awareness and resources mobilization, (2) Capacity development, (3) Integration of ICT enabled information systems and services, and (4) Governance should be the four main pillars[2] to be addressed by

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[1] The time frame of these regional consultations was as follows:
1. AARINENA-RAIS workshop, Cairo February 2003
2. APARIS workshop, Bangkok, December 2003
3. CACAARI-RAIS workshop, Tashkent, January 2003
4. FARA-RAIS workshop, Accra, April 2004
5. Foragro-RAIS workshop, San-José, May 2004
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[2] For each pillar, their recommendations presented were as follows:
(1) Advocacy: Different needs of different stakeholders, highest priorities top managers and policy makers, mass media critical, demonstrate the impact;
(2) Capacity Building: Strong and effective NAIS enabled by RAIS, strong and effective RAIS enabled by inter-regional collaboration through a GPP, more effective ICM *enablers* at regional level and better managed RAIS, regional policy communities more informed about ICM and its added value and role of RAIS;

GFAR and its stakeholders in the Development of a Global Partnership Programme (GPP) for ICM for ARD (ICM4ARD). It was agreed that the governance of the GPP will require great flexibility in its operation due to the heterogeneity of information systems and services at national, regional and global levels. It will have to use mechanisms such as of Task Forces, Community of Practices (CoPs), Requests for Comments and many other mechanisms that govern information systems including the Internet.

This consultation process has also revealed the huge potential available in enhancing information systems and services for ARD through collaborative platforms and cooperative programs that can be utilized in its execution. This concept of collaborative platform was thoroughly kept in mind by the GFAR Secretariat.

The centrality of partnerships between the RAIS for a GPP to enable and enhance agricultural information systems and improve access to agricultural information has been also been realized.

Thus the main recommendation from the Inter-Regional Workshop was to move forward and initiate the development of the mechanisms that enables the establishment of a GPP on ICM for ARD that aims to achieve more impact for RAIS and NAIS through inter-regional collaboration and synergism.

3. The ICM4ARD Proposal

Consistently with the recommendations of the first regional consultation, a Global Partnership Programme, ICM4ARD, was defined and the project summary is as follows.

1	**Project Title:**	Global Partnership Project on Information and Communications for Agricultural Research and Development (IC4ARD)
2	**Project Proposed by:**	Global Forum on Agricultural Research (**GFAR**),The Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (**AARINENA**), the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (**APAARI**), the Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (**CACAARI**), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (**FARA**) - together with the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in East and Central Africa (**ASARECA**), the Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricoles (**CORAF**) and the Southern African Development Community (**SADC**) -, and the Foro Regional de Investigación y Desarollo Tecnológico Agropecuario (**FORAGRO**).
3	**Project Goal:**	Strengthen national, regional and global agricultural information systems to satisfy the needs of an emerging, more knowledge intensive agriculture that now needs information on a wider range of topics beyond that available within local communities.

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(3) GLOBAL.RAIS-Webring, and technical integration: jointly develop ICT collaborative platform to support Task Forces and CoPs, carry out Pilot Projects to initiate ICT services to share experiences and expertise and to reinforce ICM capacities delivered through the Webring (...)

(4) Governance of the GPP, first milestones: establishment of a Task Force at the inter-regional level to develop guidelines for the GPP, coordinate and monitor it (three pillars above), each pillar should have its own Task Force at the inter-regional level to give support to pilot project and CoPs at national and regional level, basic principles are: open, inclusive, decentralized, user-driven, process for Request for Comments (example: RAIS to RAIS capacity sharing mechanism concept notes).

4	**Purpose of the Project:**	To enable more equitable access to agricultural information globally for ARD stakeholders through improved ICM and more efficient use of ICT in National, Regional and Global agricultural information systems.
5	**Project Outputs:**	1. Improved Capacity in NARS, ROs/SROs [3], GFAR leaders for advocating development of ICT enabled AIS at their respective levels. 2. Capacity Development of ICT managers and staff of NAIS, Sub-RAIS (S-RAIS) and RAIS in further developing NAIS and RAIS 3. Integration of and equitable access to National, Regional and Global Agricultural Information through GLOBAL.RAIS Web Ring 4. New Governance structures for ICT enabled information systems at regional and global levels.
6	**Project Duration:**	3 Years
7	**Target Institutions and Beneficiaries:**	1.) NARS and ARD Stakeholders 2.) ROs/SROs including AARINENA, APAARI, CACAARI, FARA, ASARECA, CORAF, SADC and FORAGRO and their members and stakeholders.
8	**Collaborating Institutes:**	1. GFAR; 2. Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations; 3. NARS and ARD Institutions; 4. FAO and FAO WAICENT Outreach; 5. EARD-InfoSys+; 6. CGIAR and its 15 Centers; 7. Commonwealth of Learning; 8. CTA;

4.   Follow up activities

The ICM4ARD proposal was presented in Mexico, during the GFAR Steering Committee Meeting, on Sunday the 23rd of October. This proposal was positively received and unanimously endorsed by the GFAR S.C. Members. The set of regional consultations leading to an inter-regional consultation was clearly underlined as a relevant process to define such Global Partnership Programme (GPP). Following this endorsement, informal consultation was undertaken with potential donors, including European Commission (DG Research[4] and AIDCO[5]), IDRC, IFAD and World Bank. The total amount of the project, US$4M, was perceived as an obvious constraint and would require the establishment of a donor consortium. Therefore the idea to split the ICM4ARD project into a consistent set of "sub-projects" emerged and led to consider the ICM4ARD proposal as a framework for action. Consistently with this new approach, and keeping in mind the leadership of some regional fora in some specific areas, GFAR Secretariat launched in February 2005, in Bonn, Germany, a face to face meeting involving AARINENA-RAIS and InfoSys+ representatives in order to further elaborate on the possibility of implementing a collaborative platform pertaining to the

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[3] Sub-Regional Organizations
[4] The possibility to access to Specific Support Actions (SSA) was discussed in Brussels. SSA have replaced the previous Accompanying Measures, which were used for GLOBAL.RAIS project.
[5] AIDCO has a geographical coverage, including a special branch for CAC

development of a "Global Agricultural Information System" dealing with information on Institutions, Experts, Research activities and outputs of research, through a relational database system. This effort was fully consistent with the so-called component (3) of the ICM4ARD project, pertaining to regional integration and forthcoming development of the EGFAR web ring, and was based on the development of synergies with the development of the AGRIS network under the new vision coordinated by FAO.

It is also important to underline that in January 2005 FARA-RAIS launched in Accra its FARA-RAIS Task Force, which mainly led to the definition of the FARA activities in the area of ICM for ARD, and the establishment of a regional ICM Plan of Work (PoW) through a two way dialogue with the African sub-regional organisations (SROs), namely CORAF, ASARECA and SACCAR. This concept of vertical integration of the PoW in the area of ICM for ARD, from the national to the regional and global, was perceived as a major tool to be applied by the GFAR Secretariat, the global agenda having to take its roots in the various regional agenda.

The minutes of the Accra and Bonn Meetings have been widely distributed in the GFAR circular invitation sent on the 8th of March 2005.

Objectives and expected outputs of the second inter-regional workshop

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Considering the ICM4ARD proposal as a global framework for action, and the main outcomes of the Accra and Bonn Meeting, a second inter-regional consultation would enable the RAIS stakeholders of the Regional Fora to achieve the following objectives:

(1) To further discuss on their respective regional Plan of Work and Budget (PoW&B) for 2005 in the area of ICM for ARD and the development of their RAIS;

(2) To take stock on existing initiatives involving all principal stakeholders, and to stimulate other initiatives from the Regional Fora in the area of ICM for ARD in order to launch collaborative platforms between and amongst RAIS;

(3) To define priorities for GFAR financial support accordingly to (i) regional activities or (ii) inter-regional activities within collaborative platforms;

(4) To define a consistent output oriented list of activities and related budget for each of these collaborative platforms that either GFAR Secretariat can support within its own 2005 PoW&B or define complementary proposals, consistent with the ICM4ARD proposals leading to fund raising activities where GFAR Secretariat could play a leading role.

The following are the expected outcomes of the Meeting:

(1) Shared vision on the 2005 activities conducted by the various RFs in the area of ICM for ARD;

(2) GFAR Secretariat and FAO support to RAIS initiatives defined through a bottom up process;

(3) Collaborative platforms and their related PoW&B well defined, and follow up mechanisms of these collaborative platforms defined and/or put in place in the 2005 within the GFAR Secretariat budget.

Tentative Agenda of the second inter-regional workshop

Tuesday 10 May 2005

08.15-08.45   Departure from the Hotel and Registration in CLAES

Opening Session
Chairman: Prof. Ahmed Rafea

08.45-09.00   Welcome Address (Dr. Sayed El Azhari, Director of CLAES)
09.00-09.15   Official opening of the Workshop (Dr. Ibrahim Hamdan, AARINENA Executive Secretary)
09.15-09.30   Architecture of the workshop and expected outputs (Jean-François Giovannetti) Comments and proposals in plenary

Session I: Regional Views
Chairman: Dr Ibrahim Hamdan

09.30-10.00   AARINENA-RAIS 2005 PoW&B
Presentation (Prof. Ahmed Rafea)
Discussion
10.00-10.30   APARIS 2005 PoW&B
Presentation (APAARI Representative)
Discussion

10.30-11.0   Coffee break and group picture

11.00-11.30   CACAARI-RAIS 2005 PoW&B
Presentation (CACAARI Representative)
Discussion
11.30-12.00   EARD-InfoSys+ 2005 PoW&B
Presentation (Mr. Henning Knipschild)
Discussion
12.00-12.30   FARA-RAIS 2005 PoW&B
Presentation (Ms. Myra Wopereis-Pura, Jacqueline Nyagahima, Mr Dady Demby)
Discussion
12.30-13.00   INFOTEC
Presentation (Ms. Viviana Palmieri)

Discussion

13.00-14.00   Lunch break

Session II: Global Views

Chairman: :Dr. Jean-François Giovannetti

14.00-14.20   FAO contribution to activities within the ICM4ARD framework (Stephen Rudgard)
14.20-14.40   Study on existing information tools dealing with Institutions / Experts / activities and research outputs (Ajit Maru)
14.40-15.00   General discussion
15.00-15.20   Presentation of the collaborative platform on a "Global AIS" and GFAR web ring (Prof Ahmed Rafea)
15.20-16.00   General discussion on vision, strategy and main collaborative platforms to be discussed in the working groups

16.00-16-30   Coffee break and Formation of working groups

Session III: Working Groups

16.30-18.30   Participants will be divided into three to four working groups. The expected working groups are as follows: a) Global AIS platform and GFAR web ring; b) Capacity building with a case study from the CAC region; c) Databases on agricultural technologies with a case study on collaboration from Western Africa and Latin America; d) NARS leaders training programme in ICT/ICM for ARD

19.00-19.30   Cocktail hosted by CLAES

Wednesday 11 May 2005

Session III: Working Group (contd.)

8.30-10.00   Parallel working groups

10.00-10.30   Coffee break

10.30-10.50   Report of Working group 1 (15 minutes presentation + 5 minutes discussion)
10.50-11.10   Report of Working group 2 (15 minutes presentation + 5 minutes discussion)
11.10-11.30   Report of Working group 3 (15 minutes presentation + 5 minutes discussion)
11.30-11.50   Report of Working group 4 (15 minutes presentation + 5 minutes discussion)

11.50- 12.30   General discussion

12.30-13.30   Lunch break

14.00-15.30   Drafting Committees for the various collaborative platforms, programmes, etc.

15.30-16.00   Coffee break

Closing Session
Chairman: Dr. Sayed El Azhari, Director of CLAES

16.00-16.20   Recommendations
16.20-16.30   Closing speech by the Chair