



GFAR

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research

A statement to the FAO High-Level Conference from the Global Forum on Agricultural Research, on behalf of all those concerned with agricultural research for development

Linking science and society

Current global challenges of poverty and hunger require not just increases in production, but that these are made sustainable in economic, environmental and social terms. Agricultural research provides society with the knowledge required for sustainable agriculture. However, much past research has failed to benefit or meet the needs of the poor.

To address this need, the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) was established among all stakeholders in agricultural research for development in the 1990s. GFAR provides a key linkage between agricultural science and the societies it serves, bringing together the knowledge and innovation of local communities with that of science.

GFAR creates new partnerships, pathways and ways of working that help ensure that agricultural innovation puts the needs of poor communities at its centre and delivers the development outcomes we all seek.

The need to generate and use new knowledge to specifically benefit the poor was recognized at the FAO World Food Summit and its follow-up meeting, "The World Food Summit: Five Years Later." More recently, the World Development Report (2007) and the

International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology in Development (2008) have together provided further support for the direction, objectives and goals of GFAR.

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research mobilizes all stakeholders in agricultural research, including FAO and the CGIAR (at the international level) and farmer organizations, civil society, private sector and national agricultural research systems (at the regional and national levels).

GFAR is taking key messages from these international processes into action among all those involved in agricultural research for development.

Agriculture matters

Agriculture is fundamental to our existence and our futures. Recent food price rises have shown how fragile the balance is between supply and demand of food, even in a world of global trade. The World Development Report has highlighted the need to increase food production to meet increasing global demands and the need for investment in appropriate research to enable this to happen. The International Assessment has clearly shown that this global challenge is not just a matter of producing more food. Agriculture is also key to enabling the poor to escape from poverty and create the social fabric sustaining rural communities.

Shaping Tomorrow's Agriculture Today



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These reports are highly complementary and together form a global wake-up call that agriculture matters. New agricultural approaches are required that will simultaneously increase production and maintain or increase biodiversity and ecosystem function, while providing access to food for all and opportunities for the world's poor. These are major challenges in a world where, as a result of mankind's actions, production climates are themselves changing and natural resources being rapidly consumed.

Innovative approaches are required

Both reports recognize that both modern science and technologies and local innovation each have much to contribute that is essential to the future of our planet, but also emphasize that technologies and inputs need to be considered in a bigger context than increased production alone. It is now clear that there is no single universal model for success.

Needs and realities vary around the world, but knowledge and the power this brings people to change their own systems and lifestyles are key determinants of our agricultural futures. GFAR is helping to better connect modern science with local knowledge by strengthening the innovation pathways.

Specific solutions will depend on local circumstances and the part that each of us can play, as producers and consumers, in creating a sustainable future. Creating a sustainable future for generations to come requires the development and use of agricultural knowledge and technologies that recognize the economic, social and environmental implications of their use.

It requires those involved in agricultural production and markets to recognize and integrate the many functions of agriculture into both policies and practical decisions. To do so also requires appropriate education and research institutions that put societal needs, not just technologies, at the centre of change and that better link science with the societies it serves. This will require commitment from all the parties concerned: national

governments, public and private research and extension organizations, civil society organizations and farmers and consumers themselves.

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research is taking forward these processes into action. We provide the international platform for all those involved in agricultural research for development. We identify key global agendas, drawing from national and regional needs, and establish innovative partnerships and new ways of working that bring together diverse partners to address these global challenges.

We link their knowledge, their actions and their interactions to advance the generation, access and use of agricultural knowledge and rapidly share new learning to meet the world's food and rural income needs. In a world of rising food prices we all need to act now and to shape tomorrow's agriculture today.

The FAO High Level Conference: World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy, clearly shows the significance of these activities. We are already faced with the double challenge of production affected by a rapidly changing climate and competing demands for food and fuel. Agriculture counts, and agricultural research has a crucial role to play in meeting development goals.

GFAR: A call to action

On behalf of the global community for research for development, we call on all people of the world to take stock of the central importance of agriculture to their lives in the way they use and consume natural resources, and to redouble efforts to generate and make available technologies that meet the food needs of humanity, while minimizing damage to the environment and enabling the rural poor and disadvantaged to escape from poverty and live with dignity, both now and into the future.