

## **Some Remarks to the Three Project Ideas**

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Most of the plants which are cultivated worldwide have healthy effects and have been increasingly used by people suffering from various diseases. Therefore these plants can be considered as medicinal ones. Olives and date palms have similar effects. With regard to cotton and post harvest products of the textile industry, especially organically cultivated plants, there is a growing international market because of the spread of allergic and other diseases which may be used as protection from health hazards.

It is important to know that organic farming is free from chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The three project ideas mentioned in AARINENA Global Post-harvest Initiative have common basis, mainly the future organic farming trends in the AARINENA region. Marketing orientation is a must, and there must be a background for our global activities.

According to the marketing orientation of the national, regional and global activities, the requirements of date palm, cotton, olives as well as medicinal and aromatic plants will increase and add value which will enable stake holders and farmers to make money and to develop the private sector. The level of financing and socio economic development will be raised and this is going to be of great benefit for the whole AARINENA region. The current situation concentrates for 55 – 60 % on the agro-industrial sector and is expected to rise to 75 % in the future, especially for medicinal and aromatic plants, through post harvest processing technology for the production of drugs from national products as cosmetics, oil extraction and food staff additives as well as food industry.

Marketing and industry of good quality and safe products will be required for global marketing. The trend of organic farming is increasing at all levels. There will be priorities for cotton, date palm, olives as well as medicinal and herbal plants, in order to concentrate on the production, processing technology and marketing orientation. Innovations are going to be made by stakeholders through research development, education and training. Appropriate technology can be developed as well as technology transfer and experience belonging to the institutions working in these fields.

Although the use of medicinal and aromatic plants has increased worldwide there is also an increase in the numbers of patients who have experienced negative health consequences caused by the use of medicinal plants. This is linked to the poor quality of medicinal and aromatic plants caused by insufficient attention to the quality assurance and control of medicinal and aromatic plants. Farmers, producers and industrial processors have to be trained in order to meet the requirements for the quality control of medicinal and aromatic plants and to adopt good agricultural and manufacturing practices. The safety and efficacy of medicinal and aromatic plants have to be guaranteed by quality control of both, production and post-harvest processing technology. Using organic farming systems will help reach this goal.

In order to reach our objectives, we cannot only depend on the activities of each member country but have to device a strategic plan which includes cooperation and linkage between

governments and nongovernmental organizations working in the fields of agriculture, industry, food safety, health care and commerce.

Concerning the current farmers-extensionists' relationship, the inherited features mentioned in the Project Concept Introduction can be found in most AARINENA member countries. We should, however, collect more information and governmental as well as nongovernmental data bases because there are also some successful cases in some areas and enterprises which have been able to overcome the problems mentioned. This is due to the use of organic farming systems which implement international regulations and establish sustainable connections which we should make use of. As a matter of fact, the output and principal activities of the project seem to be very promising. But they need more management and coordination in addition to a close follow up of each step in order to reach its goal.

Regarding the concept paper on the Organic Farming Project, the current situation in the AARINENA region has to be studied more intensively in order to obtain data on the organic farming production of dates, olives, cotton and medicinal and herbal plants. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of organic agriculture, mainly dates, olives, cotton as well as medicinal and aromatic plants have to be studied in order to make a strategic plan for the project while taking into consideration both, the production and the post-harvest processing technology and innovative extension and technology transfer systems.

The global linking of farmers to markets has to be given high priority. Moreover, the extension services between farmers, stakeholders and extensionists, both governmental and nongovernmental have to be realized in the frame of the organic farming development.

Training courses and workshops on quality management, certification and marketing of organically produced agricultural commodities have to be offered to farmers and private sector stakeholders. The three project ideas should be integrated because they are interconnected. Their basis is organic farming and good agricultural and manufacturing practices according to international requirements which are in need of market orientation and studies using innovative technology as e-commerce, etc.

To implement and organize the project to be effective and cooperative, AARINENA should select a person to act as project coordinator. Each member country will have to select one principal investigator. Every year and a half a meeting should be organized to follow up the measures taken, for output and evaluation.