

Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD)

**First Youth Forum at the CGIAR AGM05, INRA Menara Research
Station, Marrakech – *December 4, 2005***

Introduction:

At a recent very high standard meeting of EFARD (European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development, 27-29 April 2005) in Zurich, few young professionals present agreed to explore the possibilities for a Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD). Over the subsequent months, e-mail discussions and consultations with various stakeholders took place, and many more young scientists joined in.

This report summarizes the output of the roundtable discussion on (YPARD) that took place on December 4, 2005, at INRA Menara Research Station, Marrakech, during the CGIAR AGM 05. The creation of a forum for young professionals in ARD was discussed by more than 70 people from different stakeholder groups coming from over 20 nations, in particular from Morocco. Participants discussed problems faced by young professionals, and how these issues could be addressed by a global, multi-stakeholder forum as proposed following the European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD) 2005 conference. The meeting was supported by Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), and other agencies committed to ARD, and was opened by the Director General of Moroccan Institut National de Recherche (INRA) Dr. Hamid Narjisse and the Director of CGIAR Dr. Francisco Reifschneider and chaired by Director General designate of International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) Dr. Coosje Hoogendoorn. Its objective was to assess the need for such a forum and to define its focus.

Presentations:

An overview of the YPARD was given by Dr. Balasubramanian Ramani from the University of Hannover, Germany followed by "Prospects of Agricultural Research in Morocco, a view from young scientists" by Dr. Keltoum Rh'rib (INRA) and Salma Daoud (Universite IBN ZOHR, Agadir).

Working group discussions:

To work in a participatory way, the audience was split in 4 groups to discuss the following questions:

1) What are the problems faced by young professionals in agricultural research for development (ARD)?

2) What could YPARD contribute to solve these problems and raise the voice of young professionals?

Every one of the four working groups followed the same process of brainstorming on main challenges/problems faced by young professionals. Every participant wrote his/her opinion in cards, which were subsequently clustered. In a second step, the groups chose two of the clustered issues, and indicated potential roles YPARD could play contributing to solve these problems.

For every problem mentioned more than once, the report brings a brief explanatory summary. This is followed by a table containing all the cards written by participants. In the case of the issues which were further discussed by the groups, the table also brings the cards referring to suggestions for YPARD activities and potential role.

Results of working group discussions:

In a participatory approach, we learned that there is a uniformity of problems faced by young professionals in ARD regardless of their origin, discipline, or employment. The main issues raised were as follows: poor access to resources and funding for young professionals, lack of career opportunities, poor institutional support, insufficient communication between young and senior professionals, between different stakeholders, and a lack of opportunities for young professionals to contribute to strategic ARD debates.

Group 1

1. Main problems/challenges as prioritised by the participants

a. **PROBLEM 1 - Lack of opportunities for younger professionals**

The most common problem indicated by Group 1 was the lack of opportunities for young professionals to develop and pursue their careers. The causes of the problem are rooted in lack of funding for conducting research, lack of communication exchanges such as attending seminars, or practical stages, and not being exposed enough to the environment outside their own organisations.

The participants saw YPARD as a good platform for lobbying and advocacy for better opportunities for younger researchers, both at national and international levels. A website could be used to collate and channel information to young professionals. Some participants hoped for YPARD to be a funding agency aimed specifically at young professionals. YPARD could also act as organiser or facilitator of mentoring workshops, networks, and meetings.

Career structure	Suggestions for YPARD role/activity
Limited training in the field in Morocco	Lobby with donor structures to make available funds particularly for young researchers.

Lacking career structure/development path	Organise and facilitate meetings
Lack of practical stages and fellowships for young researchers	Web site with relevant information
Both career structure and infrastructure constraints are due to lack of funding	Network/advocate training
Lacking communication between farmers and young professionals	Import external experiences (consultants, in conferences, exchange professors etc.)
	Organising mentoring workshops and networking for young professionals to exchange with field agents, as well as to know how to develop a career path
	Mentoring workshops
	Funding (including infrastructure) and fellowships for doctorates
	Inclusive, multi-level approach
Limited training in the field in Morocco	Lobby with donor structures to make available funds particularly for young researchers.
Lacking career structure/development path	Organise and facilitate meetings

b. PROBLEM 2 – Infrastructure constraints

Another common problem experienced by Group 1 was infrastructure constraints, such as lack of facilities for conducting research, but also as lack of access to scientific information.

The participants saw in YPARD a good opportunity for creating a platform for lobbying for increased visibility of young professionals' problems, and representing them in major international/national/regional ARD stakeholder groups. YPARD could also advocate donors to follow funding schemes that ensure appropriate facilities for project participants. A website could be used to collate and channel information to young professionals on issues related to improving infrastructure and also exchanging scientific information.

Infrastructure	Suggestions for YPARD role/activity
Both career structure and infrastructure constraints are due to lack of funding	Website
Research in Africa, at least SSA, at post-graduate level, i.e. MSc, PhD, without adequate facilities can be frustrating	Advocate better funding for young professionals, in particular young researchers.
Lack of exchange of knowledge	
Lack of laboratory equipment (e.g. molecular biology).	Open institutional archives and electronic resources for consultation (databases, websites etc)
	YPARD to influence donors to follow through process of how projects are executed eg: that institutions do have the actual facilities to do the work, and that the merit of work done is attributed to those who did it (i.e. often the young researchers)
Researchers and teachers need easy access to scientific information (e.g. electronic reviews)	Increase visibility and representation of young professionals views, needs, and beliefs.
Lacking access to newsletters and journals	

Lack of resources for young researchers	
Continuity of projects	

2. Other problems/challenges indicated, which were not further explored in the second part of the exercise

a. **PROBLEM 3 - Generation conflict**

Generation conflict
Tapping knowledge from older scientists and networking with them without appearing as a threat to them

b. **PROBLEM 4 - Interface personal – professional life**

Interface personal-professional life
Family bindings makes research work abroad difficult

Group 2

After combining all answers to the first question, the group listed a number of problems, which include, in decreasing order of importance:

Career structure	Suggestions for YPARD role/activity
Lack of opportunities/resources (in terms of funds, materials and institutional support), which leads to difficulties in career development for young ARD professionals	YPARD could raise awareness – at national, regional and international levels – on the problems encountered by young professionals in ARD
Isolation of young professionals	YPARD could network with established agricultural research institutions (e.g. GFAR, CGIAR, EFARD, etc.) to strengthen the participation of young professionals from all around the world in ARD
Poor policy/strategy for young professionals	YPARD could provide a platform for young professionals from different countries to share and exchange their experiences
Poor links between research and development	
Lack of technical support by experienced agricultural researchers	
Insufficient access to information	
Poor representation of young professionals in international networks	
Poor North-South cooperation in ARD	
No platform for young professionals to share and exchange experiences, between Northern and Southern countries	
Poor coordination between research institutions, universities and media	

At the end of the discussion, participants recommended that the results of this brainstorming session be circulated widely

Group 3

Financial and communication problems	Suggestions for YPARD role/activity
Financial problems for research support as well as means of work and financial resources	Help to develop a program or a strategy with objectives and defined activities to find funds.
there is a lack of supervising young scientists to involve them in research policy, there are difficulties to access to information,	Facilitate contacts and exchange with international experts and researchers
relationship between universities and agriculture companies is not well established,	Help to create collaboration between institutions. Farmers and all people contributing in ARD would benefit.
Scientists are sometimes converted to administrative staff and get far from research	

YPARD should have regional representatives and organize regular meetings to raise the voice of young professionals challenges and addressing solutions

Group 4

1. Main problems/challenges as prioritized by the participants

a. Lack of funds, resources and opportunities

The most common problem indicated by the members of group 4 was the lack of opportunities for young professionals to pursue their study and develop their career in the field of ARD. The main causes can be referred mainly to (i) to the lack of funding opportunities to carry out research projects, either as part of PhD studies or working activities, attending conference; (ii) the lack of laboratories.

The YPARD assistance envisaged by the group is given by the assistance in raising funds for research, by lobbying with organisations and governments, by organising events, creating a dialogue platform.

Lack of funds, resources and opportunities	Suggestions for YPARD role/activity
lack of motivation due to lack of financial support and laboratories	dedicate a reasonable budget for the scientific research
the budget is not enough so the research carried out can not give good results to be presented at international meeting	Encourage financial support for the young researchers' projects
lack of access to PhD formation and training courses	search for funding linked to a well identified objective

lack of training and studies opportunities	Foster the policy makers to consider the importance of agricultural research
limited financial opportunities for research projects	organise events to raise awareness in the governments
laboratories miss technical staff who can take care of the equipment	solving problems in collecting funds through networking (in the CG system and beyond)
no role models: professors are “poor”: why should I do the same?	train people in fundraising
	awake financial genius of Ups and expose them to solutions that work, for ex. Outgrowing of wood and carbon production

b. Image of agriculture is loosing appeal

According to the participants of group 4, the image of agriculture is loosing appeal to young people that need to be more motivated to go for ARD career. This is due to the lack of awareness of the importance of agricultural research and of the interaction of agricultural research with many other disciplines.

Participants suggested that YPARD should have a main role in developing a communication strategy to: (i) highlight the importance of agriculture through PA tools, such as meetings, press, TV, etc.

Image of agriculture is not appealing	Suggestions for YPARD role/activity
Image of agriculture among other disciplines	Establish working groups to develop strategies to improve the image: flyers, internet, events
Lack of awareness on importance of agriculture for cities	Strong communication strategy in action on present and future importance of agriculture for all (in rural and urban areas)
Agriculture is not attractive	Produce a TV movie highlighting the importance of ARD
Lack of reality check in ARD	Stress the role of the press
	Organisation of meetings to valorise the agricultural research
	Motivate the young people to get involved in the agricultural research
	Revalorizing the importance of agriculture
	Link to existing resources to improve the image

c. Lack of coordination and communication on this issue

During the group discussion it was highlighted that the link between the research and the reality is often missing. There is a lack of communication among the young and old generation involved in ARD, and among stakeholders involved in the research (for examples the researchers and the farmers, the government and the private sector).

Participants suggested that YPARD could prompt a closer communication and collaboration among various stakeholders (governments, farmers, industry, research) and increase and improve the dialogue between senior and junior ARD stakeholders to improve young professionals' skill and guarantee the continuation and the improvement of the research for development.

Lack of coordination and communication on this issue	Suggestions for YPARD role/activity
Lack of information networks	Revalorizing the importance of agriculture
Lack of coordination among the various stakeholders	Collaboration between national institutions and farmers (participatory approach)
No communication between old and young generations to ensure continuity	Establishment of networks and website
Lack of communication between the professors in ARD	Collaboration between northern and southern countries
Difficult relations between industry and research	Give the chance to young people to gain knowledge and skills
Industrialized countries don't understand properly the importance of agriculture in developing countries	Prompt the education institutes to develop internships, and diplomas (under and post graduate) linked to provincial, local and national research plans

2. Other problems/challenges indicated, which were not further explored in the second part of the exercise

a. **PROBLEM 1 - Lack of clear strategies and priorities**

Some participants felt that a problem that young professionals in ARD are facing is the lack of clear strategies and priorities in ARD in their countries. This is due by a lack of definition of research policies resulting in a loss of time, energy and funds.

Lack of clear strategies and priorities
Lack of coordination of research strategies
Research policies are not well defined by the State in some countries, implying loss of time, energy and money

b. A problem that was mentioned once was the problem in combining career in this field with family life (with a particular example of Sweden).

Conclusion:

The meeting agreed that there is a need for a platform for young professionals, YPARD, composed by members who advocate and voice young professionals' needs and beliefs. The focus of YPARD will be to work for 1) Opportunities to contribute to strategic ARD debates, 2) Increased communication between young and senior professionals, and 3) Broaden career opportunities. YPARD should be present at international level meetings, organise information, and forge a strong learning-network. Several institutions are strongly supporting the establishment of YPARD. GFAR is particularly encouraging this process as it looks to provide the official launch platform during its General Conference in New Delhi, India in November 2006. We will move forward and assert YPARD's role within the ARD system.

The next steps leading to the official YPARD launch were discussed at the end of the meeting on the basis of the group discussions and are being worked out to be debated and finalised at the spring 2006 strategy planning meeting of YPARD.

Working group of YPARD

The young multi-stakeholder working group is coordinated by
Mr. Dr. Balasubramanian Ramani (University of Hannover, Germany; Indian) - University

The working group (alphabetical order) comprises of,

Mr. Nur Abdi (GFAR/Italy: SomaliLand) – Multi-stakeholder forum

Mr. Enrico Baccioni (IAO, Italy; Italian) – Government

Mr. Issaka Hanif Bazunu (National vice president of the Ghanaian students association, Morocco, Ghanaian)

Ms. Anne Chetaille (GRET, France; French) - NGO

Ms. Dr. Salma Daoud (University IBN Zohr, Faculty of Sciences, Agroforesterie Laboratory, Agadir, Morocco; Moroccan) – University

Ms. Fabienne Derrien (International Federation of Agricultural Producers, France; French)

Mr. Otto Garcia (IFCN, Germany)

Ms. Alessandra Giuliani (IPGRI, Italy; Italian) – IARC (CGIAR)

Mr. Nkosi Theo Mzileni (NEPAD Council, South Africa; South African) – NGO and active Farmer

Ms. Dr. Martine Ngobo (IITA, Cameroon; Cameroonian) – IARC (CGIAR)

Mr. Oliver Oliveros (GFAR, France; Philippine) – Multi-stakeholder forum

Ms. Keltoum Rh'rib (INRA, Morocco; Moroccan) - NARS

Ms. Dr. Kristina Roing (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden, Swedish) – University

Ms. Dr. Alexandrina Sirbu ("Constantin Brancoveanu" U. of Pitesti, Romania; Romanian) – University

Mr. Levan Topuridze (Georgian Farmer's association, Georgia; Georgian) – Farmers' group

Mr. Dr. Andres Tschannen (Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques, Côte d'Ivoire; Swiss) - IARC

Ms. Sandra Velarde (ICRAF, Nairobi, Kenya, Peruvian) – IARC, CGIAR

Ms. Eleonore Wall (University of Hannover, Germany, German) – University

Ms. Mariana Wongtschowski (ETC, The Netherlands; Brazilian) – NGO

NGO = Non Governmental Organization

IARC = International Agricultural Research Centre

NARS = National Agricultural Research Systems

