



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

In This Issue

GFAR Secretariat News

Feature article

GFAR Statutory Meetings

- [GFAR Retreat](#)
- [GFAR Management Team Meeting](#)

GFAR Business Plan

ICT

- [GLOBAL.RAIS](#)
- [Infoprix](#)

DURAS

News from the Regional Fora

Europe

Asia-Pacific

Central Asia & the Caucasus

Sub-Saharan Africa

- [FARA ICT](#)
- [2004 World Food Prize](#)

Latin America & Caribbean

News from the Stakeholders

Farmers' Organizations

- [CSOs survey](#)
- [IFAP](#)
- [RUN-CTA](#)

NGOs

IARCs

Agriculture is becoming more and more knowledge based and information technology driven. Therefore, there is an urgent need that development strategies in agriculture and rural sector to be more centred on information and experience sharing and knowledge management within and amongst all the stakeholder groups involved in agricultural research for sustainable development (ARSD).

Information and communication intensive practices require applying the above statement first to one's daily business, and GFAR-Secretariat is no exception. It is enhancing its Newsletter by featuring, on a regular basis in each issue, world-renowned leaders in the agriculture and development sector to contribute an article. These articles highlight NARS' points of view in a world where rapid globalisation brings both opportunities and threats. We are therefore very pleased to announce that Professor M. S. Swaminathan has graciously responded to this request and this issue is thus featuring his article about the Indian NARS. No doubt that a lot of lessons have to be learned from the Indian experience, particularly from its policy on agricultural research and development.

In an effort to share information on Farmers' Organizations (FOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) around the world, so that they can better know each other and stimulate networking and collaboration amongst themselves and with other stakeholder groups, EGFAR quarterly newsletter will now feature a Profile Article section. The article will provide information on a particular FO or NGO involved in agricultural research for development. Information provided will include the mission, activities, programmes and any other pertinent and relevant issues. To kick off this novel idea, in this issue we present an NGO stakeholder: *The Foundation for Participatory and Sustainable Development of Small Farmers (Foundation PBA)*.

In the next coming weeks, GFAR will publish its first 2003 Annual Report which will include a section from the GFAR-Secretariat and some highlights of activities carried out by the Regional Fora in 2003. Spotlights on Global Partnerships Programmes (GPPs) and inter-regional initiatives will also be featured to complete the *family picture*. As clearly underlined by the GFAR Management Team, which met in February this year in Florence, there is a need for GFAR and its Secretariat to better communicate on its activities. Thus, following the 2003 Annual Report, leaflets and other information materials on specific inter-regional activities facilitated by the GFAR Initiative will be published. These include, among others, projects such as GLOBAL.RAIS, DURAS (which has just started, as you will read below) and initiatives related to rural knowledge systems. GFAR decided to address these needs by an evolving policy for ICM, and by supporting champions for these changes throughout the Global Forum. Therefore any comments and suggestions are welcome for our shared future.

JF.G.

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Building Impact-oriented R&D Institutions: Lessons from the National Agricultural Research System of India

Basic principles

A dynamic and well managed National Agricultural Research System (NARS) is essential for deriving benefit from International Agricultural Research Centres (IARC) as well as Advanced Research Institutions (ARI) in industrialised countries and in other developing countries in Asia and Latin America. In fact, the benefits derived from IARCs and ARIs will be directly proportional to the strength and capability of NARS. A well-organised NARS should also bring together into working partnership institutions in the private sector, universities, women's universities and home science colleges and environmental groups into a cooperative national grid. Such an integrated research grid will ensure that although the individual strengths of the different partners may vary, their collective strength becomes considerable. Further, research, education and training, field-testing and evaluation and technology incubation and demonstration should all be integrated in the mandate of NARS. All links in the production-processing-marketing-consumption chain will have to receive equal attention so that the wheel of progress moves smoothly.

For building a dynamic and high impact NARS, political support and recognition of the importance of science and technology for agricultural transformation are essential. This will call for according high social prestige to agricultural research and extension workers. There should be a Principal Agricultural Science Advisor to the Head of Government and there should be a Scientific Advisory Committee to the Cabinet. Unless national scientists are given due recognition and respect and reward, the advice of international experts will be received with resentment and scepticism.

Vision and Mission

The political system should provide the vision. Obviously, the vision for any agriculture system will include happy farming families, sustainable farming systems and food for all and forever. The political vision of the nation will have to be converted by professionals into a doable mission and mandate. The vision and mission could be articulated in the form of a Policy Statement for Agricultural Science for Agrarian Prosperity by the government. The major aims of the mission mode approach (end to end) will be to ensure the productivity, profitability, quality and value addition and sustainability of the major farming systems. Since in most African countries, more than 70 percent of the population depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, it is essential that agricultural technologies should foster jobbed economic growth in rural areas and not jobless growth. Also, the strategy should build on the inherent strengths of African agriculture. For example, much of African agriculture can be classified as organic farming since the average use of fertilizer per hectare is very low. Also, in many areas, there is only minimum tillage. We have to build on these strengths and also respect the ecological prudence of local farming families and more particularly women farmers who are very close to earth.

Personnel Policies

Personnel policies should be conducive to attractive and retaining gifted and dedicated scientists. The management culture of research institutions should be a collegiate and not a hierarchical one. The system should be scientist-centred and not post-centred. There should be both monetary and non-monetary rewards to achievers. Not much time should be wasted on questions like brain drain. What is important is to nurture and care for the brains remaining in the country. Too much praise for those who are outside the country and too little recognition for those who are working under heavy odds within the country are not conducive to building up the morale of the national scientists. A system like the one I developed in India titled, 'Agricultural Research Service' (ARS) has many features worthy of emulation. I shall be happy to make available to any one interested the rules of ARS introduced by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in 1974. Also scientists have to be supported by technical staff, who also require

recognition and reward since they help to optimise the time and talent of scientists. Again, I can make available the Indian technical support service rules, which allow dedicated technical workers to receive monetary and non-monetary recognition. It is obvious that high morale and dedication have to be sustained through sensitive personnel policies. Such policies should also be gender sensitive and should make special provision to recognise the multiple burden on a woman's time.

Research Agenda and Strategies

It would be important to adopt a farming systems approach to the design of the research strategy since in Africa livestock farming is as important as crop farming. The research strategy should also take into account gender roles in agriculture. A critical mass of interdisciplinary research will have to be generated if the research is going to be based on a problem solving and not a discipline worshipping mode. This will call for recognition to team work. Group awards should be instituted. Commodity-specific and farming systems-specific coordinated projects should be promoted within every country to bring together scientists working in different disciplines and different institutions into a working partnership for solving specific field problems and for making new innovations and inventions. It is also important to ensure that the necessary research infrastructure is available for accomplishing the tasks undertaken. Maintenance staff should be given importance in order to ensure that costly equipment is well serviced and cared for.

The research-development linkages are exceedingly important. For this purpose, there should be concurrent attention to technology choice, incubation and dissemination, training and retraining, techno-infrastructure and home and external trade. Technology incubation and verification in farmers' fields are essential for assessing the cost-risk-return structure of the recommended technological package. It is the cost-risk-return structure which ultimately leads to farmers' decisions on investment and farming system.

Lab to lab, Lab to land, Land to lab and Land to Land linkages are essential for converting small government programmes into mass

movements. The following are the features of such linkages.

- Lab to Lab – This will involve organising a consortium of scientific institutions and data providers
- Lab to Land – This will involve symbiotic linkages between the providers of information and the users, so that the information disseminated is relevant to the life and work of rural families
- Land to Lab – There is considerable traditional knowledge and wisdom among rural and tribal families concerning sustainable management of natural resources, particularly water. Therefore, technical experts should not only learn from traditional knowledge and experience, but also take steps to conserve the posterity, the dying wisdom and the dying crops
- Land to Land – There is much scope for lateral learning among rural families; such learning has high credibility because the knowledge coming from fellow farm women or men would have been subjected to an impact analysis from the point of view of its economic and social relevance to the population

A consortium of distinguished farmers should be formed in every country to guide the research system on priorities. Farm women and men are the ultimate judges of the worth of new technologies.

Public Policies

A symphony approach is necessary to introduce mutually reinforcing packages of technology, services (input supply, credit including the issue of credit cards to farmers) and input-output pricing, investment on market infrastructure, rural roads and irrigation and other forms of public support. In several African countries the agrarian reform package should include not only land reform but also livestock reform so as to restrict the number of animals to the population supporting capacity of the ecosystem. Simple methods of measuring ecological footprints and soil health should be popularised in villages. Public policies should include adequate and sustained financial support. National governments should provide the needed core budget.

Project support could be obtained with the help of suitable bilateral and multilateral donors. Unless a country itself commits its resources to agricultural research and education, the programme will become donor and not mission driven. It should also be ensured that there is a proper match between programme and budget. Within the budget, there should be a proper balance between expenditure on staff and research activities in the laboratory or field. A 40:60 ratio will be desirable in respect of expenditure on staff and research support.

Technology Mix

There should be an appropriate choice of conventional and molecular biotechnology, information and communication technology (internet, cable TV, community Radio and vernacular Press), space technology (GIS and remote sensing), renewable energy technology (solar, wind, biomass and biogas), and management technology (i.e., putting all the pieces together).

Agricultural Engineering

Many African nations provide opportunities for both area expansion and productivity improvement. Suitable farm implements and post harvest equipment hold the key to improving the efficiency and competitiveness of African agriculture. In particular, implements including small horsepower tractors are essential for minimising drudgery and improving the productivity of women farmers. Opportunities for area expansion depend largely upon farm power and water harvesting. Post-harvest technology needs greater attention, since there is currently a mismatch between production and post-harvest technologies in most developing countries. As a result, both producers and consumers do not derive the full benefit of production efforts.

Impact analysis - Monitoring and Evaluation

The impact analysis methodology should include the measurement of productivity, profitability and sustainability and should take into consideration the gender dimension. Impact on home and external trade based on WTO criteria like sanitary and phytosanitary measures and codex alimentarius standards are equally important. For this purpose, there is need for a quality and trade literacy movement. The evaluation

should be an inbuilt process so that timely corrective measures can be undertaken.

International Partnerships

This has to be organised in a symbiotic manner at different levels - within a country, within a region, with IARCs and ARIs, among NARS in developing countries and also with the private sector. Mission oriented cooperative networks among partners could be developed on the model of WARDA. Collaboration with IARCs and ARIs could be on the basis of mutual needs and strengths. Collaboration with the private sector should be on the basis of an agreed code of conduct and IPR agreements. The NARS of India has also the advantage of the integration of Agricultural Universities, Agricultural Research Institutes dealing with crop and animal husbandry, inland and marine fisheries, forestry and agro-forestry and agro-processing, within the purview of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. Thus, concurrent attention can be given to conservation, cultivation, consumption and commerce.

There is much developing countries can learn from each other in the development and nurturing of high impact R & D institutions in the field of agriculture. South – South collaboration in harnessing science and technology for improving the productivity, profitability and sustainability of agriculture will result in a win-win situation for all.

M.S. Swaminathan

GFAR Statutory Meetings



GFAR Retreat

GFAR Secretariat organized a Retreat, involving all categories of stakeholders, in order to define the new GFAR Business Plan for 2004-2006. This retreat took place in Florence, Italy on 2-3 February 2004, and was carefully prepared in close collaboration with a team of two facilitators over a two months period. On Sunday the 1st of February, the provisional agenda was finalised and a preliminary contact with all the participants was established, during a gettogether to know each other session followed by a dinner. The full report is

available at
[www.egfar.org/documents/meetings/
GFAR Retreat 2004 - Final Report.pdf](http://www.egfar.org/documents/meetings/GFAR_Retreat_2004_-_Final_Report.pdf)

GFAR Statutory Meetings

GFAR Management Team Meeting

The 9th GFAR Management Team meeting was held in Florence, Italy on 4-5 February 2004, right after the GFAR Retreat. The draft version of the minutes is available at [www.egfar.org/documents/meetings/
GFAR_Management_Team_meetings/
9th_GFAR-MT_-_Florence_4-
5_February_2004/9MTMminutes.pdf](http://www.egfar.org/documents/meetings/GFAR_Management_Team_meetings/9th_GFAR-MT_-_Florence_4-5_February_2004/9MTMminutes.pdf)

GFAR Business Plan

A new Business Plan for GFAR (2004-2006)

The GFAR Business Plan (BP) identifies and describes activities that GFAR as a group will focus on during a specified period of time. The first BP covered the period of 1999 to 2000, while the second one was for the period of 2001 to 2003. We now have a third BP for the period of 2004-2006. The First External Review Panel recommended that the BP should define the role each stakeholder will play in respect of the lines of action agreed upon, as well as the expected outputs and milestones to measure progress, and that this should be accompanied by a Secretariat Programme of Work designed to facilitate the implementation of the BP.

This third BP was developed with the recommendations of the review panel in mind, and in a manner that fully respected GFAR's the principle of participatory decision making, because the various GFAR stakeholders groups were consulted and contributed to the final product. The output of the various consultative processes, analyses and syntheses, is a three-part BP made up of: i) A Strategic Document that briefly describes some of the issues that shaped the vision of GFAR and which will guide the choice of its activities for the immediate and near future. ii) A comprehensive three-year rolling BP that responds to the

recommendations of the review panel. iii) An annual Programme of Work for the Secretariat that indicates what the Secretariat will do to facilitate the implementation of the 3-year rolling BP. Details of the BP will be published and disseminated in various forms including as a special EGFAR edition as soon as the draft is endorsed and approved by the GFAR Steering Committee. Meanwhile we summarize the highlights of the BP in this edition.

The recommended priority areas of activities to which GFAR will devote most of its energy and resources during the plan period comprise 4 pillars or main components, and 2 cross-cutting issues.

Inter-Regional Collaboration

GFAR stakeholders came to the collective realization that an important value adding niche of the Global Forum is the linkage it facilitates amongst the various regional fora, in order to promote exchange of ideas, knowledge, technologies and information across the regions. They therefore recommended that over the next little while, a special attention should be paid to promoting this special value adding activity, using a three-pronged approach. Firstly, to ensure through advocacy that all Regional and Sub-Regional Fora (RF/SRF) are true fora in the spirit of GFAR, with the various stakeholders adequately represented in governance structures and participating effectively in forum activities, including decision making processes, research partnerships and networking. Secondly, to develop capacity to address and implement the above where required, and thirdly to take appropriate actions that will facilitate and actively promote the exchange of expertise, knowledge, technologies, and information amongst the various RF/SRF. One of such activities that will be carried out to accomplish this third objective will be the identification of the strengths and opportunities in the various RF, followed by a matching of needs and resources to promote collaboration, including networking along south-south as well as north-south axes. RF will drive the initiative themselves with the support and participation of appropriate institutions and other GFAR stakeholder groups such as the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR). It was also suggested that the EMBRAPA LABEX model of south-north collaboration built on strengths and

opportunities of participating partners may serve as an interesting model that could be adapted and built on for this purpose.

Collaborative Research Partnerships

During the triennium of 2004-2006, GFAR will continue to use its preferred tool, the Global Partnership Programmes (GPPs) to promote and implement research partnerships which will be developed around the following four areas considered to be of global importance by GFAR stakeholders in 2000, and reaffirmed as still being relevant now and likely to remain so in the near future: genetic resources management and biotechnology, natural resources management and agro-ecology, commodity chains and policy management and institutional development. These areas were considered broad enough to accommodate any special and particular concerns of stakeholders. It was also suggested that with regards to policy management and institutional development, an area that has hitherto been neglected, a special effort should be made to promote national and regional partnerships between NARS and specialized policy research groups in order to establish policy research priorities and carryout appropriate policy research with the objectives of influencing decision makers. Such partnerships appear crucial because NARS usually do not have the capacity to accomplish this task alone. Finally, it was suggested that sometime during plan period, at a time when GFAR would have had a sufficient number of on-going or completed GPPs, an evaluation of this instrument in terms of its impact, appropriateness and continued relevance for promoting research partnerships should be carried out. Some of the expected outputs from the implementation of this pillar are: up to date and useful information on on-going and pipelined GPPs made available to all stakeholders via EGFAR and other appropriate communication media; implementation of phase 2 of on-going GPPs that have completed phase 1; the development and implementation of new GPPs on issues identified by concerned stakeholders; and some recommendation on the continued relevance and adequacy or otherwise of GPPs as a tool for partnership building.

Advocacy, Public Awareness and Strategic Thinking

One of the issues on which there was some consensus during the 2003 GFAR general meeting was that GFAR should pay a special attention to, and step up its advocacy and strategic thinking role. The current BP therefore features a number of activities that will implement this recommendation. For example, GFAR stakeholders will identify issues of importance and relevance to agriculture and agricultural research, organize high level debates and discussions on them, and produce outputs in terms of a basket of options for solutions targeted towards appropriate decision makers at different levels - national, regional and global. Appropriate stakeholders will contribute to on-going efforts to demonstrate the contribution of the sector to economic growth and human well being and therefore sensitize and convince policy makers of the need for increased and sustained investment in agricultural research in developing countries. Since charity begins at home, GFAR stakeholders will engage in what has been described as reciprocal advocacy activities which, on one hand, will ensure that all Regional Fora are true fora, open to the active participation of all stakeholders with equal opportunities to participate in decision making processes, and, on the other hand, will ensure that GFAR is better known through stakeholders promoting the GFAR concept. It was felt that if these and other activities described in details in the full document were diligently carried out, the following outputs would be achieved: an increased recognition of the contribution of agriculture and agricultural research to poverty alleviation and food security, which should lead to increased policy and financial support; important issues of global concern identified and discussed leading to informed and updated stakeholders, capable of making enabling policy decisions and/or taking appropriate actions; a reinforcement of stakeholder ownership of GFAR.

Management Information System for Agricultural research for sustainable development (ARSD)

The role that the new Information Communication Technologies (ICT) could play in promoting the concept of partnership on which GFAR is founded was recognized very early in the life of GFAR. Such roles include facilitating

access to, and the processing of information, the development and operation of networking activities, the promotion of participatory forms of research, and the provision of a convenient forum for the exchange of views and positions either on focused research themes or on more general topical debates. Stakeholders recently reaffirmed the continued importance and relevance of information sharing and knowledge exchange to their activities now and for the coming decade. The development and utilization of a Management Information System (MIS) for ARSD was therefore identified as one of the essential pillars of the new Business Plan. Stakeholders decided to collectively pursue the following objectives under this pillar. Improve, regularly update the GFAR website EGFAR (www.egfar.org) and establish it as a medium of information exchange and knowledge sharing amongst GFAR stakeholder groups and with others; establish a global MIS on ARSD stakeholders, their expertise and activities; and complement these e-media of exchange with other appropriate media. In terms of activities to be carried out to address these objectives, the plan provides for the establishment of an EGFAR Advisory Group composed of persons with appropriate expertise, and charged with providing guidance and input into the continuous development of EGFAR, in terms of technical tools to be used, content, monitoring and follow up activities.

Two additional and novel activities featured in the BP are: firstly, to use EGFAR as a medium for e-conferences and debates on topical issues of global concern in order to address the advocacy and strategic thinking components of the plan. The outputs of such debates and conferences will be packaged and disseminated to enrich available pool of knowledge and add the voice and perspectives of GFAR to the relevant global issues; secondly to complement EGFAR with a variety of other appropriate communication tools such as printed annual reports, workshop proceedings, flyers, policy briefs, rural radio and television programmes, in order to increase stakeholder access to GFAR generated information.

Cross Cutting Activities

In spite of the efforts deployed to date, there is still limited private sector investment in ARSD in

developing countries, hence the need to make renewed efforts and develop new strategies to engage the private sector in GFAR stakeholders' activities. Furthermore a central part of our vision is to make the farmer-producer the central piece of all GFAR activities. A special effort will therefore be made to ensure the active involvement and participation of CSOs in GFAR's affairs. It was strongly recommended therefore that these two areas of activity, i.e., private sector engagement and CSOs full involvement and participation in the ARSD process, will be reflected across all of the priority areas of activity, as cross-cutting issues. In addition, the BP contains a number of specific activities that will address the issues raised above. One of such activity is the plan to develop a model approach to functionally link Civil Society Organizations to National Agricultural Research Institutions, through a hand on project initially focused on sub-Saharan Africa, and subsequently replicated elsewhere.

Concluding Remarks

The full implementation of the BP during the next one or two triennium will make GFAR a relevant initiative because it will lead to several of the following outputs:

- A well known, and recognized GFAR whose concept is more universally acknowledged, accepted and practised, and whose voice and perspectives are reflected in global events
- A GFAR whose stakeholders actively promote and practice the concept of working together, and giving a voice, space and opportunity to hitherto marginalized groups to actively participate in all activities, including decision making processes
- Emergence of functional NARS inclusive of relevant stakeholders
- GFAR driven activities, projects and programmes founded on cost-effective partnerships which are repeatedly replicated, scaled out and up by others
- Concrete, visible, and demonstrable impact of GFAR stakeholder activities on food security, poverty reduction and

responsible natural resources utilization and conservation.

ICT



GLOBAL.RAIS: Towards the end of phase one

The GLOBAL.RAIS project is now in its final phase!

The Central Asia and the Caucasus workshop was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, during the period 27-28 January 2004 and the final report is available at [www.egfar.org/documents/4_lines/Information_Systems/CACAARI_Information_Systems/Workshop_Report_-_Final.pdf](http://www.egfar.org/documents/4_lines/Information_Systems/CACAARI_Information_Systems/CACAARI_Information_Systems/Workshop_Report_-_Final.pdf)

FARA's workshop is planned to take place from the 27 to the 28 of April 2004 in Accra, Ghana (for details, please see the related article).

FORAGRO is working on the organization of its ICT consultation in San José, Costa Rica from May 25 to 27 2004, and finally GFAR Secretariat will hold the Inter-Regional Workshop, engaging all RAIS managers and key persons, on 10-11 June 2004, in Rome, Italy, in order to set up a global agenda for ICT and get ready to launch the second operational phase of the GLOBAL.RAIS project.

If you wish to receive more information on the project, workshops and future activities, please contact Fulvia Bonaiuti (Fulvia.Bonaiuti@fao.org).

ICT

InfoPrix Benin/Local market prices via SMS and on the Internet

In collaboration with the German Centre for Documentation and

Information for Agriculture (ZADI) and private company TERRESTRIS the National Office for Food Security (ONASA) in Benin has developed and information system that provides actual market information via SMS and the Internet. Enumerators on 64 local markets collect prices of 25 agricultural products. Prices are evaluated every 4 to 7 days. Data are entered by a network of internet cafés throughout the country and send to ONASA at the end of each market day. At ONASA the information is verified and made available on an SMS server and the internet. Prices are also broadcast in local language on rural radio and published in a monthly journal.

Each morning a SMS message is sent to registered users with the latest price information on the 7 most important products from the 6 most important markets. Registration is for free. Users also have the opportunity to make special queries for more detailed information by sending a simple SMS message to ONASA (An SMS message *D DNT MAI* will return the latest price information on maize *MAI* from the market *Dantokpa DNT* for consumers *D*. Send message to 970007, 038151 or 429494. From abroad send message to +229970007). Prices can also be viewed at www.terrestris.de/run. In collaboration with ZADI, ONASA is also preparing a web site with additional information on trade related issues in Benin such as legislation, description of agricultural products, information for conflict management in agricultural trade, a market price calendar, official procedures and a detailed address list of actors involved in agricultural trade.

Benin is a member of RESIMAO the West African Network of Market Price Information Systems. RESIMAO is about to develop a regional information system. It is envisaged that regional system will capitalize on the Benin experience. For more information please contact ONASA (onasamdr@intnet.bj) at or ZADI (bernard@isicad.org).

F.B.

Marc Bernard
EIARD-Infosys+ and RUN Manager

DURAS

DURAS Project, launched

In an effort to contribute to strengthening the involvement and enhancing the scientific potential of southern stakeholders in agricultural research for sustainable development (ARSD), GFAR in cooperation with Platform Agropolis and with the support of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched Project DURAS this April.

The Project DURAS (*Promotion du Développement Durable dans les systèmes de Recherche Agricole du Sud*) is composed of three components, namely:

- **Support to regional and sub-regional fora** to enable them to function as a real forum where relevant stakeholders actively participate. This activity may focus on revisiting/updating regional priorities with full participation of all stakeholders, with a special emphasis on facilitating the involvement and strengthening of civil society organizations (CSOs) so that they can meaningfully participate in the process
- **Develop and reinforce a functional information communication management (ICM) system** through an improvement of the Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research (EGFAR) and the development of Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS) for the regional fora
- **Competitive grants** that will fund proposals in key priority areas consistent with the GFAR Business Plan - (a) agroecology and other sustainable farming practices, e.g. direct sowing agriculture; (b) local knowledge in natural resources management; (c) rural innovation and linking farmers to market; and (d) agrobiodiversity and genetic resources management for food security.

The third component is to be managed by Agropolis International (www.agropolis.fr), an international platform of research organizations and institutions of higher learning in agriculture, based in Montpellier, France. To date, the competitive grants is being developed. It is

expected that the first Call for Proposals will be launched during the GFAR Statutory Meetings in late **October 2004**.

This three-year project will cover countries in Africa, Near East and some parts of Asia. For further information, please contact Mr. Oliver Oliveros (Oliveros@agropolis.fr), DURAS Project Coordinator, at Agropolis International, Avenue Agropolis, F-34394 Montpellier Cedex 5, France.

mail alert news service. They can define a profile of interest and will receive an e-mail with a direct link to new data sets as soon as information in their field of interest has been fed into the database.

By publishing information on EARD-InfoSys+ users can easily spread their news in the ARD community. Their information will be sent out via the e-mail alert news service to registered alert-users with a matching profile of interest.

O.O. For more information please go to www.infosysplus.org.

Marlene Horstmann
GARDEN-InfoSys+

Europe



Asia-Pacific



Mapping the European ARD landscape

EARD-InfoSys+ launches its renewed website - new database open for entries now

EARD-InfoSys+ the web-based information system on European Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) launches its renewed website. At www.infosysplus.org new services and tools are provided to foster communication and facilitate research partnerships in the European ARD community.

The restructured database permits to explore the ARD landscape and offers an advanced search for organisations, projects, experts and funding opportunities in ARD. To increase ARD visibility the database also maps the relationship between organisations, their projects and activities and the involved experts. Important news and events in the field of ARD are displayed in the *news & events* section.

EARD-InfoSys+ is based on the contributions of its users. All stakeholders in ARD are welcome to present their expertise, promote their organisation and inform about their projects and activities.

Communicate within the European ARD community

To stay informed on latest news users can register for the EARD-InfoSys+ e-

The First Steering Committee Meeting of Asia-Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology (APCoAB)

Background

In the Seventh APAARI Executive Committee meeting held on 4th December 2003 at the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand, the members expressed their satisfaction relating to the efforts made by APAARI Executive Secretary to accelerate the process of establishing APCoAB. In view of general endorsement in the special session on APCoAB organized on 3rd December afternoon, it was decided to move ahead and establish APCoAB with effect from 1st January 2004. In this regard, the following specific decisions were taken:

1. To start APCoAB through APAARI office in Bangkok and explore the possibilities of having a Secretariat located either with some member NARS or with some CG Centers
2. APAARI to contribute a matching support of US\$ 30,000 for the year 2004
3. Establish a regular member-driven Steering Committee of APCoAB

which includes APAARI chairperson and two other regular members and have its meeting convened during 1st half of 2004

4. Initiate some selected activities based on a well-planned Road Map and Work Plan to be finalized in consultation with APAARI members themselves.

As a follow up of above decisions, the APAARI Executive Secretary, in close consultation with the APCoAB steering committee members, developed a draft road map and work plan for 2004. The steering committee members also decided to have the first meeting to modify the composition of steering committee; finalize the APCoAB secretariat establishment, workplan and budget for 2004; develop ToR for APCoAB Coordinator; and appoint a consultant for the first six months of APCoAB operation.

Accordingly, the steering committee members held a one-day meeting on 8th April 2004 in Bangkok, Thailand under the chairmanship of Dr. Mutsuo Iwamoto. The meeting participants included the present APCoAB steering committee members, NARS representatives from Thailand, and the APAARI secretariat staff.

Dr. Mutsuo Iwamoto delivered the Chairman's address and welcomed the participants to the meeting. Dr. R. S. Paroda presented a brief account of the earlier APCoAB related expert consultation and meetings. The meeting deliberated on following items.

Composition of Steering Committee

As per the decisions of the Seventh APAARI Executive Committee meeting, the composition of the steering committee was modified to increase NARS representation. Dr. William Dar, ICRISAT DG, proposed ICAR, India and DOA, Thailand to be included in the steering committee. Dr. Ola Smith, GFAR Executive Secretary, suggested that NGOs and farmers organizations should be represented separately as is done by GFAR. Dr. Malee Suwana-Adth of SVITA Foundation, representing NGOs, suggested that ANGOC, being a regional coalition of NGOs, is better suited as an APCoAB steering committee member. These three proposals were adopted unanimously. Hence the steering committee

strength has increased to 11 and the current composition is as follows:

1. Chairperson (APAARI Chair)
2. Southeast NARS (DOA, Thailand)
3. South Asia NARS (ICAR, India)
4. FAO
5. CG Centers (ICRISAT, IRRI or ISNAR)
6. GFAR
7. ISAAA
8. Private Sector (Monsanto)
9. NGOs (ANGOC)
10. Farmers' Organizations
11. Member Secretary, APCoAB Coordinator

Finalization of Workplan and Budget for 2004

Based on the draft work plan, APCoAB activities were grouped into two categories: immediate and regular activities. The immediate activities were those that need to be taken up before the end of the year 2004 so that APCoAB starts functioning and becomes visible to a wider group of potential stakeholders. These activities include:

1. Establishment of Secretariat
2. Organizing National Workshops on Initiatives in Selected NARS
3. Building of NARS activity database
4. Establishment of APCoAB Website
5. Preparation of a marketable project proposal
6. Popularizing APCoAB among all Stakeholders

It was felt that some of these activities could not be completed before the end of 2004, however, preparatory work on these should be started immediately.

The second group of activities defines the regular work program of APCoAB as proposed in the draft work plan prepared by APAARI Executive Secretary in close consultation with the steering committee members.

These activities are further categorized under three main thrust areas of APCoAB as follows:

1. Policy Advocacy
 - o Minister Level Dialogue by mid 2005
2. Public Awareness and Capacity Building
 - o Success story dissemination
 - o Translation of Public Awareness Documents
 - o Scientific awareness and capacity building programs
 - o Curriculum development for biosafety
 - o Organizing Public Fora Meetings for Better Awareness
3. Research Partnership and Information Dissemination
 - o Public - Private Partnership Consultations
 - o Research Partnerships among Institutions

It was suggested that APCoAB should embark upon its regular work program as early as possible. A general budget of USD128,000 for the year 2004 was approved with specific allocations for various activities.

Establishment of APCoAB Secretariat
The formal offers from ICRISAT and ABRII, Iran to host the APCoAB secretariat were discussed and it was decided that ICRISAT, working in close cooperation with several of APAARI member NARS, be given this opportunity.

ToR for APCoAB Coordinator
The ToR of the APCoAB Coordinator was discussed and the following terms emerged as essential to achieve the objectives of APCoAB:

- Assist in identifying the priority action program elements in line with the objectives of APCoAB in cooperation with all stakeholders and partners
- Coordinate and implement various activities of APCoAB, as per approved Workplan and establish close liaison with national,

regional, international, FAO, Private Sector, NGO and other stakeholders

- Initiate development support activities through meeting with collaborating Biotech Centers and organizations in the participating countries
- Represent APCoAB in related Fora: Workshops, Seminars, Expert Consultations, or Conferences as considered necessary to pursue APCoAB objectives
- Assist in organizing APCoAB Expert Consultations, Training Program related to HRD, and organize regularly the Steering Committee Meetings and serve as its Member Secretary
- Bring out status reports, reviews, meeting reports, training guidelines, and synthesis reports in line with APCoAB objectives and work program
- Identify and develop research partnerships, information dissemination channels such as APCoAB Website, and also generate required resources
- Emphasize on the documentation of the APCoAB program of work accomplishments and Progress Report and disseminate the achievements widely
- Perform other duties as assigned by the APCoAB Executive Committee and APAARI Executive Secretary.

It was suggested that since ICRISAT will be hosting APCoAB, the recruitment procedure for hiring the APCoAB coordinator should be in accordance with those of the ICRISAT. In this regard, the ICRISAT DG was requested to guide the recruitment. The APAARI Executive Secretary suggested that a Vacancy Announcement advertisement could be circulated through APAARI contacts and the prospective candidates could be asked send their applications directly to ICRISAT DG.

Appointment of a Consultant
To accelerate the process of APCoAB functioning, it was considered necessary to hire a short-term consultant who could get the

preparatory activities started before a regular APCoAB Coordinator is appointed. The participants were invited to propose suitable candidates for this consultancy assignment. Dr. William Dar and Dr. R. S. Paroda were requested to identify and appoint a suitable consultant.

Date and Venue for the next meeting
It was decided that the next APCoAB steering committee be held on the sidelines of the Eighth General Assembly of APAARI, which is planned to be organized from 1-4 December 2004 along with an expert consultation on post-harvest technologies in the Asia-Pacific region.

Raj Paroda
APAARI Executive Secretary

Central
Asia & the
Caucasus



Regional Agricultural Information System For Central Asia and Caucasus Region Workshop

The Regional Agricultural Information System For Central Asia and Caucasus Region Workshop was sponsored by GFAR in the framework of the GLOBAL.RAIS project, and managed by CACAARI, with backstopping and effective support of CGIAR PFU in Tashkent. The meeting was held in Uzbekistan on 27-28 January 2004. The workshop report is available at www.egfar.org/documents/4_lines/Information_Systems/CACAARI ICT Workshop Report - Final.pdf

West Asia & North
Africa



AARINENA 9th General Assembly

The AARINENA 9th General Conference was held at Sultanate of Oman

between 11 and 13 April 2004 and was inaugurated by H.E. the Special Advisor to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Sayed who welcomed the participants. About 25 persons from 18 members participated in this biannual meeting.

Representatives from regional and International Organizations, other Regional Fora and Regional Networks participated in this conference and shared information on policies and future activities and programmes which they will implement to strengthen AARINENA. The RAIS and GLOBAL.RAIS initiative was extensively discussed during the meeting. The new version of AARINENA website developed with strong support from the GFAR Secretariat, was presented to the Conference. With regards to on-going activities on databases development, the Conference was informed that the AARINENA -RAIS Steering Committee will lead and drive the development of NARIs database.

Finally, the Conference was informed that the following activities will be carried out by AARINENA during the period 2004-2005:

- 1) AARINENA-RAIS will be strengthened
- 2) Current and on-going regional networks will be strengthened, these are: i) Global Date palm Network, and ii) INCANA
- 3) New regional networks will be established, including: i) Biotechnology Network in close relationship with AGERI (Egypt), and ii) Medicinal and Herbal Plants Network.

All of these activities are consistent with GFAR business plan for 2004-2006, which identified inter-regional collaboration as one of its main pillars. A new Executive Committee was elected at the end of the Conference and comprises the following members:

- Dr. Abdel Nabi Fardous (Mashreq, President)
- Dr. A. Al Bakri (Arabian Peninsula, Vice President)
- Dr. Hamid Narjisse (Maghreb, Member)

- Dr. Ismael Muharam (Nile Valley and Red Sea, Member)
- Dr. Mohammed Roozitalab (Western Asian, Member)

The 10th General Conference of AARINENA will be held in Yemen in April 2006.

For more information related to the Conference and documents and representations please refer to the AARINENA web site (www.aarinena.org).

Taraneh Ebrahimi
AARINENA-RAIS Secretariat

Sub-Saharan Africa



FARA ICT workshop

One of the major functions of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) is sharing and dissemination of agricultural information and knowledge within and amongst all the agricultural research for development (AR4D) stakeholder groups. FARA believes that AR4D in Africa could only advance if its major players have access to new technologies and information.

Several institutions/organizations have been working in Africa to implement Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Knowledge Management (KM) the sub regional organizations have also initiated their own information and communication programs such as ASARECA's Regional Agricultural Information and Communication Network (RAIN). The other SROs (CORAF and SADC/FANR) are in the process of setting up similar networks. Other international organizations have their own initiatives such as the FAO's WAICENT and its iMARK initiative, USAID's Africa Link, CGIAR, IDRC, CTA, GFAR, etc.

But there is still a need to assess and further develop the capacities of African NARS to access these

information and knowledge servers, as well as effectively contribute to the building up of pools of knowledge in AR4D. Some NARS are advanced enough to have their own website and their scientists can access these servers but others are way behind that there is only one computer in the institution with access to internet. FARA is therefore proposing to work with institutions such as GFAR, SROs and FAO who have their own programs on ICT and KM to work towards facilitating and/or strengthening NARS access to information system.

As part of collaboration between GFAR and FARA, a regional workshop will be held on 27-28 April 2004 at the FARA Secretariat conference room in Accra, Ghana. This is part of the GLOBAL.RAIS project of GFAR in the Africa region. The objective is to develop a regional strategy on agricultural information system for FARA, and specifically for identifying its entry point, gaps that it could fill in and added value to what exist in the region. Activities will be prioritized according to the needs identified by its stakeholders. Implementation plans will be made by stakeholders and would include roles and responsibilities, operation plans and budget requirements. Expected participants are FARA's major stakeholders such as the SROs, NARS, NGOs, International Agricultural Research Centers and Advanced Research Institutes.

Myra Wopereis-Pura
FARA Secretariat

Sub-Saharan Africa



Monty Jones won the 2004 World Food Prize

The announcement of the co-winners of the \$250,000 World Food Prize took place during a U.S. State Department ceremony with Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman, and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization Director-

General Jacques Diouf on Monday, March 29, hosted by Under Secretary of State Alan Larson. The 2004 World Food Prize Laureates are:

Professor **Yuan Longping** of China, Director-General of the China National Hybrid Rice Research and Development Center in Changsha, Hunan, China.

Dr. **Monty Jones** of Sierra Leone, former senior rice breeder at the West Africa Rice Development Center (WARDA), presently Executive Secretary, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), in Accra, Ghana.

In announcing these recipients, World Food Prize President, Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, lauded both scientists for their *breakthrough scientific achievements which have significantly increased food security for millions of people from Asia to Africa*. The Ambassador added that it was particularly fitting that these two pioneering rice breeders be honored during the United Nations International Year of Rice, the crop identified as the staple diet of more than three billion people around the world.

Professor Yuan has been selected a co-recipient of The World Food Prize for his breakthrough achievement in the early 1970s in developing the genetic tools necessary for hybrid rice breeding, known as a three-line system. His achievement led to the world's first successful and widely grown high-yielding hybrid rice varieties with yields 20 percent above conventional varieties. His altering of the self-pollinating characteristic of rice made large-scale farming of hybrid rice possible. These achievements dramatically increased rice yields and grain output in China, providing food to feed an additional 60 million people each year. His approach is now being adapted to many other countries in Asia and around the world.

Dr. Jones has been selected a co-recipient of The World Food Prize for developing in the 1990s the *New Rice for Africa* (NERICA), uniquely adapted to the growing conditions of West Africa, by successfully crossing the Asian *O. sativa* with the African *O. glaberrima* strains to produce drought and pest resistant, high yielding new rice varieties, a feat which had not been achieved before in the history of

rice breeding. His accomplishment is already producing enhanced harvests for thousands and thousands of poor farmers, most of them women, with potential benefit for 20 million farmers in West Africa alone.

Source: Press Release World Food Prize
(www.worldfoodprize.org/04laureates/prelude.htm)

Latin America & Caribbean



IV International meeting of FORAGRO - Panama 2004: Agribusiness, Technological Innovation and Small Agriculture: Institutional Transformations

The Forum for the Americas on Agricultural Research and Technology Development, as a mechanism that promotes the hemispheric dialogue and the development of a regional research agenda through articulation and partnerships between various public and private institutional actors, will hold its IV International Meeting in Panama, from August 11 to 13 2004.

The meeting is sponsored by IICA, as responsible for the Technical Secretariat of the Forum, and by the Government of Panama, through MIDA and IDIAP. The Regional Cooperative Research Programs - PROCIS-, FONTAGRO, and GFAR - Global Forum for Agricultural Research- will also contribute to the development of the meeting. GFAR will participate through its Executive Secretary and will also facilitate the presence of Executive Secretaries of the Continental Forums *brothers of FORAGRO*, such as FARA from Sub-Saharan Africa, APAARI from the Asia Pacific Region, AARINENA from West Asia and North Africa, and EFARD, from Europe.

The IV Meeting will promote the discussion, among Forum stakeholders - NARS/NARIs, private

sector, NGOs, universities sector, producer organizations and the sector of international cooperation - on the subjects of *Agribusiness, Technological Innovation and Small Agriculture: Institutional Transformations*. Furthermore, the advances in four of the 11 priority topics established by the Forum stakeholders will be discussed, namely: Agribusiness and Innovation, Genetic Resources, New Biotechnologies, and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources. It is also expected to devote a module of the meeting to analyze how to strengthen and improve the impact of multinational efforts on technological research and development.

Panama is a country that presents multiple advances in various fields of social and economic development. An initiative of Panama, very important and related to the subjects of FORAGRO, which will be of great interest to the participants of the IV Meeting, is the development of the *Ciudad del Saber* (City of Knowledge) and their programs and projects. Furthermore, the country presents a great wealth of tourist attractions. The Meeting will be a valuable opportunity for the participants to visit that wonder of the world that is the Panama Canal, among other sites of interest.

Soon we will be giving more details (www.iica.int/foragro/Noticias/noticia32.asp) about the IV Meeting regarding the agenda and logistical aspects.

David Berroa
President of FORAGRO
Jorge Ardila and Enrique Alarcón
FORAGRO Technical Secretariat

Farmers' Organizations

Civil Society Organizations' Survey

The Secretariat will soon launch a CSOs interactive database on EGFAR which we hope will contribute to the efforts of networking the stakeholders. To participate in our CSOs survey, please choose your preferred language on EGFAR at <http://www.egfar.org/action/stakeholders/rubric-6.shtml>

To be regularly updated on GFAR's activities and programs regarding CSOs, please subscribe to our CSOs mailing list by sending an e-mail to: mailserv@mailserv.fao.org.

Please leave the **subject blank** and write in the first line of the message: **subscribe GFAR-CSOs-L**

N.A.

Farmers' Organizations



For a better recognition of the contribution of women farmers to development

The majority of the world's poor live in rural areas. Most of them are women and agriculture is their main source of income. To achieve the objectives set by the United Nations to reduce the number of people living in poverty by half by 2015, priority must clearly be given to taking the concerns and needs of women farmers into consideration in rural development, sustainable agriculture and agricultural research. Hampering the potential of this key player in society is tantamount to delaying the reduction of poverty and achievement of sustainable food security for all. Even though the international community now recognises the important contribution made by women to food security and the fight against poverty, women farmers continue to be a marginalised group within the agricultural sector.

And yet, women farmers play a vital role in supporting the family unit and community by providing food for their families and ensuring their well being. In addition, they are key players in day-to-day agricultural tasks, the instigators of activities that generate non-agricultural income and the custodians of natural and productive resources. International decision-makers frequently make reference to these facts when addressing international conferences on the issue.

Gender inequality: an impediment to development

Women farmers still suffer from a number of gender-based inequalities in areas that are essential for agricultural production. Gender inequalities affect access to, and management of, natural resources (land and water) and productive resources (credit and agricultural inputs), opportunities for education and training, as well as access to agricultural services, technologies and markets.

These inequalities are due to the numerous obstacles confronting women farmers every day. These can be economic (lack of personal liquidity), legal (lack of a professional status, which restricts their access to agricultural services), or social and cultural (certain traditions, norms and social rules impede the autonomy of women). Such obstacles hamper development considerably, especially in view of the fact that the number of farms run by women is constantly rising.

This shortage of means prevents women farmers from achieving the same levels of profitability as their male counterparts. In consequence, to ensure adequate income for their families, some women are obliged to change their farming operating system and/or the selection of the crops. These adjustments can have significant repercussions, for instance a rise in food insecurity, production of crops with a lower nutritional value, adoption of environmentally harmful farming techniques, and a decline in activities that generate off-farm income resulting in the impoverishment of the family, just to mention a few.

Supporting women farmers

Removing these barriers would enable women farmers to exploit agricultural land more efficiently, adapt plans to farming operations more effectively, manage the environment better, ensure regular food production throughout the year, and motivate them to invest in land that is their own.

Recognising women farmers as agricultural professionals can take the form of regulations and a legislative framework giving them equal access to resources, services and jobs in the agricultural sector. However, the introduction of laws is not sufficient because their application depends on

institutional, political and social factors that differ widely from one continent to another. Special attention should therefore be paid to the concrete implementation of such legislation and its practical consequences on the ground in order to remove these obstacles.

If women farmers are to play their full role in the agricultural sector, they need policies designed to protect their interests in addition of legislation to cover specific gender problems. Governments and farmers' organisations have considerable responsibility in this matter.

First of all, a political and financial commitment by governments expressed through concrete action that reflects women farmers' concerns has become a pressing issue. It is the duty of governments to fulfill the commitments they made in Beijing in 1995. They undertook to ensure that all national and international policies would be gender-balanced and that participation of women farmers in every stage of the formulation and implementation of government policies and positions. This kind of a commitment generates faster development, a higher level of food security and an improvement of social well-being and health. Governments should set up the framework required to strengthen the processes of participatory decision-making and foster the creation of genuine partnerships between all stakeholders.

Second, farmers' organisations should serve as spokespersons to convey the recommendations of their women members to national and international bodies. Agricultural organisations and their elected leaders should therefore make political decision-makers aware of the valuable role played by women farmers in rural areas and take into account women specific concerns in the elaboration of agricultural policies. At present, the power of decision and the ability of women farmers to influence national and international policies are negligible compared with their contribution to agriculture. Greater involvement on the part of women farmers in formulating the political positions of the farmers' organisations representing them, as well as a more active participation in national and international debates and programmes, should lead to a better understanding of their specific requirements in the policies advocated.

Although the creation of groups of women farmers is a way of facilitating their participation in political and social discussions where their claims can be heard, this is not an end in itself. The main objective of these groups is the effective integration of women farmers in mixed structures so that they can defend their interests at all decision-making levels in the agricultural sector.

Furthermore, the specific needs of women farmers would be better understood if women in rural areas were not so frequently the invisible partners of development. Visibility in the media is a major component in the recognition and appreciation of the role women play in the agricultural world. With a view to promoting their contribution to society, it is necessary to introduce gender disaggregated statistics to illustrate the extent of their involvement in the development process and in the fight against poverty, and to introduce concrete measures adapted to the needs of women farmers. Setting up observatories on women farmers within national governments could be a first step towards studying their specific situation.

This being said, it should not be forgotten that major efforts also have to be made by the women farmers themselves. They must be prepared to discuss their situation and give their views on national and international policies. Only sound and regularly updated training can enable them to promote their interests at working sessions with decision-makers.

With this in mind, facilitating the access of women farmers to knowledge, training, and general and technical information is necessary not only to improve their productive activities and optimise their use of natural resources, but also to raise their personal awareness as to their potential, contribution and needs. Furthermore, improving the general skills of women would have the additional advantage of transmitting knowledge to the next generation. This would be an invaluable asset for the rural community as a whole.

Thus, in order to ensure sustainable agricultural development at world level, it has now become indispensable for women farmers to understand the ins and outs of the

policies governing them. They should also be able to rely on a basic institutional framework and political incentives to help them overcome obstacles to the economic survival of family farms run by women.

The purpose of agriculture is not only to produce food, it is also an essential component in the social, environmental and educational context. Women farmers have an important role to play at all these levels, whether it is to produce food, protect traditional forms of cultivation or help to develop rural areas.

A tool for international representation
Women farmers can count on support from the International Federation of Agricultural Producers – IFAP (www.ifap.org) to help them obtain recognition of their views and recommendations by top world leaders. Through its Standing Committee on Women in Agriculture, the goal of IFAP is to make the conditions and recommendations of women farmers known throughout the world, defend their interests at international level and strengthen their capacities by a more active participation at all levels of decision-making and representation. In addition to the points mentioned above, IFAP women farmers recommend increasing the investments allocated to integrated plans for rural development, in partnership with local authorities, farmers' organisations, and the private and public sectors. The Committee also encourages more public funding for research that could ultimately provide solutions to the current problems of women farmers. This should be undertaken in co-operation with the local populations in order to use appropriate technologies that are in keeping with their traditional knowledge.

Given the importance of their involvement in the agricultural and rural sector, women should be recognised as precious assets for rural communities, and we should all be aware of the countless results that could be achieved by investing in women farmers.

Fabienne Derrien
IFAP



CTA joints forces with ZADI to further develop web-based question and answer services for the rural population

In the frame of the RUN project (www.runetwork.de), ZADI has developed the prototype of a web-based question and answer service. The rural population uses it to raise agricultural questions that are answered by ARD experts. The decentralised service capitalises on the RUN e-Journal system that is used by rural population and experts to publish requests and information on the web. To switch demand from donors to the target group vouchers are handed out to the rural population. As a result the service is oriented towards demand. The rural population uses the vouchers to *pay* for the service. The demand driven system proved to be an efficient mechanism to promote the publication of local relevant information on the web and to assure equitable access to information. Moreover it permitted through networking the mapping of local expertise.

CTA and ZADI are now launching two pilot projects in Benin and Uganda to further develop the system by adding an online evaluation and controlling facilities. For further information please contact Marc Bernard (bernard@isicad.org).

Marc Bernard
RUN Manager

NGOs

The Foundation for the Participatory and Sustainable Development of the Small Farmers (Foundation PBA)

The Foundation for the Participatory and Sustainable Development of Small Farmers of Colombia (PBA Foundation; PBA stands for its acronym in Spanish) is a not for profit entity, whose main objective is to

contribute to the improvement of the living standard and to overcome the poverty conditions of the small farmers in Colombia, based on the development and application of sustainable technologies. Members of the Foundation include: some Colombian public entities such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as the National Planning Department; international research centers such as CIAT; national research institutions such as CORPOICA and CONIF; national and regional universities such as Universidad Nacional, Universidad de Córdoba and Universidad de Sucre; and Local Participatory Groups of small farmers in many locations in the Colombian Atlantic Coast.

With resources coming from the Netherlands government and national counterpart contributions, the Foundation leads and carries out the Program of Agricultural Biotechnology for Small Producers. This program was started more than five years ago with the objectives of supporting farmers from the seven departments of the Colombian Atlantic Coast region in order to improve of their standard of living and quality of life, through access to modern technological tools that provide them with more sustainable, competitive and productive activities. The program's goal is to reach and benefit about 50.000 farm families that live on 155.000 hectares of land. The first phase was concluded in 2002 and the second phase which will last for four years, started in January 2003.

The small farmers of the Atlantic Coast are the soul of the Foundation, and they have an active and vital participation in all phases and aspects of the PBA, beginning with the selection of the problems that they want to overcome, to the follow up and assessment of the program and all of the projects. In the different zones where the program works, the small farmers form the Local Participatory Groups, which are responsible for carrying out the research, development and training activities within their own locations, and for the promotion and the creation of small farmers' enterprises that produce clean seeds and biological and organic inputs (Technology Based Enterprises or TBEs), as well as associative enterprises for crops transformation

and commercialization. Women actively participate in all of these enterprises.

More than 50 Local Participatory Groups (LPGs) have been formed and operate throughout the 7 departments of the Atlantic Coast so far. They comprise 153 municipalities, 300 communities of small producers and six women groups. Representatives of the small producers in the Regional Committee are elected to these LPGs, with 14 representatives of the farmers sitting in this Committee (2 from each coastal department) as researchers responsible for the main projects. The LPG's proposals and actions are presented at the Regional Committee, where the program's activities in the region are coordinated and the working priorities are defined. Likewise, the farmers that will represent them in the National Steering Committee are elected by the Regional Committee.

The Foundation does not directly carry out research activities, it contracts them out to groups that are better trained and equipped to develop and implement them, with the specific requirements that the projects developed develop, implemented, assessed and followed up in a participatory manner. The main implementers are CORPOICA, CIAT, the Biotechnology Institute of the Universidad Nacional and the Universidad de Córdoba and Sucre.

The program works mainly on participatory methodology development, development and promotion of cleaner and more sustainable production technologies, such as production and planting of clean seeds for plantain, cassava and yam, as well as the production and application of biological and organic inputs. The Foundation recently started work on organic farming, integrated management of soils and water, including preservation plowing and green fertilizers utilization, and the development of agro forestry production systems. These activities are briefly described as follows:

Production of clean plantain, cassava and yam seeds

The first projects started were the production of clean plantain, cassava and yam seeds, given the fact that the small farmers determined that

one of the most severe problems that they had was the poor quality of the planting materials. A participatory assessment of local and introduced varieties was made at the beginning. Based on that, eight varieties of each one of the three crops were selected to start with the clean seeds production projects through the meristem culture and in vitro propagation. Special emphasis was placed on the development of technologies that would allow local multiplication of these initial materials, in such a way that the work in the laboratory could be combined with that in the local nurseries and the horticultural techniques in order to increase production reduce costs and enhance small farmers' participation in the process.

The Foundation has already developed the participatory methodologies and protocols required to produce clean and high quality plantain, cassava and yam seeds, having as a basis, tissue culture (initial materials) methods, multiplication processes under insect-proof nucleus greenhouses with controlled environmental conditions (super elite seeds) and mass local multiplication for the production of elite and basic seeds. These last stages are carried out in Technology Based Enterprises owned by organized small producers and in local mesh-houses and nurseries of the Local Participatory Groups. These seeds are for sale and distribution among the small farmers. It is thanks to these seeds that the small farmers can get rid of their dependency on infected seeds, plant seeds that are free of pests and diseases and substantially reduce or eliminate the use of agricultural chemicals. This way they do not only obtain higher yielding and better quality crops, but preserve the environment and promote the farmers' entrepreneurial activity by producing and selling clean and competitive seeds at the same or lower prices than those of the traditional seeds that are infected and have low productivity. These projects that have already started in different locations of the Atlantic Coast are being enlarged to cover all the small producers that plant these crops.

In the case of yams, which are orphan crops in the technological field, the Foundation started a genetic improvement program. Part of this program includes the strengthening of

the existing germplasm banks, molecular characterization of numerous varieties through an agreement with the University of Frankfurt that enabled a Colombian researcher to work at that Institution for a year learning the relevant methodology which he and a Colombian small producer later used to select at IITA in Nigeria, 41 yam varieties resistant to anthracnose that are being introduced to Colombia. They both seized the opportunity to learn about the technical progress that IITA has made with that particular crop.

The results obtained with the clean seed are significant. In plantain, for example, yield increases of 52.3% have been achieved in common plantain (Hartón Común), going from 12.8 to 19.5 tons per hectare. Nevertheless, if the comparison is made between the Hartón Común planted by the producers with the introduced varieties, the increases are much higher, because with the Africa variety, yields of 23 ton/ha have been achieved, and with the FHIA 21, 43 ton/ha. With regards to cassava, the yields in the most important varieties increases between 32 and 88% with the use of clean seeds.

Biological and Organic Inputs Production

The Foundation has developed and/or adapted organic fertilizers production techniques such as mycorrhizae and biofertilizers based on Efficient Microorganisms (Bioles), organic fertilizers such as Vermicompost and Bokashi fertilizers, biological pesticides such as *Bauveria bassiana*, according to the characteristics and needs of the different ecosystems and of the different crops. The aim of this activity is to have an integrated crops management (ICM) as well as of the pests and diseases that affect them, in order to reduce or eliminate the use of chemically synthesized fertilizers and other agricultural chemicals. The results obtained are satisfactory because they showed increased yields and decreased production costs. The Foundation is working on scaling these projects up and out throughout the Caribbean Region, in such a way that they may reach all the existing Local Participatory Groups (LPG), and those that will be created during the Program's expansion phase.

Organic Production

The PBA Foundation has recently started works in organic agriculture, which tend to create one first cluster of organic plantain production in one of the LPG's and to carry out a training activity throughout the Atlantic Coast to allow replication of the first cluster's experience. The aim is to reproduce projects, infrastructures and organic agriculture methodologies in many locations of the Atlantic Coast, for plantain as well as other crops. The first training courses have already been given in the region, and some farmers and researchers associated with the program attended courses in Ecuador.

Soil and Water Sustainable Management

The Foundation recently started working in the area of sustainable soils and water management. These activities will initially be concentrated on preservation plowing, cover crops and the utilization of green fertilizers. The first training activities for farmers' leaders, researchers and technicians have already started in three LPGs for demonstration purposes. The aim is to replicate this experience in many locations of the PBA that are interested in carrying out similar projects.

Development of agro forestry systems

The PBA Foundation is now carrying out research projects in the fields of adaptation and promotion of productive agro forestry systems, that contribute to the preservation of the environment, in order to preserve and use agricultural and forestry biodiversity available in the Atlantic Coast, and which provide the possibility to diversify farm incomes for the small farmers organized within the LPG. The agro forestry strategy of the PBA Foundation is an essential part of the Program's second phase and meets the needs and initiatives of the small farmers.

Training for producers, researchers and technicians

Besides the above-mentioned participatory research activities, the Foundation has carried out intensive training activities with the small farmers, researchers and technicians. This work has included training in technical and methodological aspects, entrepreneurial and organization issues as well as in personal growth (building values, self confidence,

leadership), whose objective is to assist in the farmers' education in order for them to be able to lead their own development processes. One hundred and twenty three (123) technological training events attended by more than four thousand producers one fourth of whom were women, have been carried out to date. See the following table.

	Events	Producers	Women
Plantain	63	1.923	215
Cassava	28	1.218	171
Yams	32	891	117
TOTAL	123	4.032	503

The joint work carried out by technicians and researchers with the small producers has demonstrated in the practice that research can indeed be oriented towards obtaining technological products that contribute to improve production, and as a consequence of that, also improve the living standards of the small producers, and that they, instead of being reluctant to changes, are eager to innovate when they know and understand the characteristics and advantages of the technologies with which they have been actively working. Thanks to their participation, the technologies generated and the technologically obtained products are rapidly adopted and no special results transfer and dissemination phase appear necessary.

Likewise, the participatory methodology and training have allowed the small farmers to gain confidence in their capacity to test, new technologies, and to contribute to solving specific problems, develop their own initiatives, and even initiate tests and experimentations on their own, thus enriching research processes and outputs.

Thanks to this approach, they have been able to reduce costs and increase the local efficiency and scaling up capacity in the following areas: production of clean plantain seeds and their multiplication, using technologies for breaking apical dominance. The LPG carried out this particular activity by mimicking the

damage produced in the plant by the screw worm; solving the problem of bare root the cassava through the utilization of super elite seeds coming from the nucleus greenhouses to obtain high levels of rooting, development and survival in the local mesh-houses; some other LPGs, through the use of mini sections, can now multiply Cassava super elite seeds, induce development in controlled rooting banks to obtain elite seeds and plant them in the field, with bare roots, obtaining high survival percentages; the development of methodologies for the production of organic fertilizers, using larvae as degraders and transformers of organic material for compost production.

Strengthening the regional research capacities has been a constant purpose of the Foundation. It invested a significant amount of resources of the PBA's phase 1 in the following activities: endowment and adaptation of Plant Tissues Culture Laboratories in the research centers of Caribia and Turipaná (CORPOICA) and in the Universities of Córdoba and Sucre; building of modern nucleus insect-proof greenhouses for plant hardening and controlled multiplication in the above-mentioned two research centers; building and endowing the Regional Diagnostic Center in the Universidad de Sucre for future certification of seeds and biological inputs; building two local plants (Dibulla and los Córdobas) and two regional plants for the production of Mycorrhiza as well as two local and two regional plants for the production of earth worms' manure; and in building a local plant for the production of formulated biofertilizers based on Efficient Microorganisms (Bioles), and on Bokashi organic fertilizers. Likewise, it has given a lot of importance to the consolidation, strengthening and training of the local and regional researchers' groups.

A main concern of the Foundation has been the establishment of a wide network of alliances, agreements and collaborative works that provide knowledge and skills in the most advanced technologies to make them available to the small producers. At the international level, the Foundation has cooperation activities with the GTZ, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), the Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL) in Ecuador, (Poli-technical Higher Education School of the

Coast), Instituto de Investigaciones Agroforestales (IDIAF) (the Institute for Agro forestry Research) and the Secretariat of Agriculture of the Dominican Republic, the International Network for the Improvement of Banana and Plantain (INIBAP), the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture ? IITA, The International Cooperation Center in Agronomical Research for Development (CIRAD), The International Research Center for Agro forestry (ICRAF), the International Agency of Atomic Energy (IAEA),The Honduras Foundation in Agricultural Research, (FHIA), University of Bath, University of Frankfurt, University of Louvaine, Cassava's Biotechnology Network (CBN) and the International Center for Sustainable Trade and Development (ICSTD).

At the national level, it has carried out joint activities with CORPOICA and the National Universities of Córdoba and Sucre, with the Colombian Agency for International Cooperation (ACCI), the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (National Service for Apprenticeship) (SENA), COLCIENCIAS, von Humboldt Institute, Corporación Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales (National Agency for Forestry Research (CONIF), Corporación Colombia Internacional (CCI), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Productive Alliances for Peace Program - APP), Horticulture and Fruit Culture Fund, and the Peace and Development Program of the Magdalena Medio Region (PDPMM).

The impact generated with the new technologies in terms of yield and quality of the crops leads us to foresee an important increase in the small farmers' production. To prevent this increase from leading to marketing problems, the Foundation began to support them in their work. This way, it has assisted in the establishment of strategic alliances of small producers' associations with traders and processors; in the improvement of their work and of the infrastructures for selection, dehydration and primary processing of their crops, and in the diversification of the commercialization channels, aiming to serve the different market segments.

With the above briefly described activities, the Foundation has started to have some impact on the economic, technological and social development of the small farmers of

the Colombian Caribbean Coast. Activities and approaches that are being carried out and used by the farmers themselves through the Local Participative Groups and the Foundation's Regional Committee. We strongly believe that these approaches are indispensable to advance social and economic plight of the farmers, and in the way, the Foundation is contributing within its means, to peace, poverty eradication, and preservation of biodiversity and the environment in Colombia.

Santiago Perry
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IARCs



Stakeholder Committee on CP on Unlocking Genetic Diversity in Crops for the Resource Poor

At the request of the consortium of the Challenge Program on Unlocking Genetic Diversity in Crops for the Resource Poor (www.generationcp.org), the GFAR Secretariat is coordinating the establishment of a GFAR Stakeholder Committee for the CP.

The Stakeholder Committee will serve as a neutral platform for inter-stakeholder dialogue on issues related to the various stages of CP development and implementation. Acting in an advisory capacity, it will serve as a link between the CP and the various stakeholder groups. Thus, it will facilitate the articulation, promotion and presentation of the views of various stakeholders to the CP management and governance structures in order to contribute to the policies, strategies, research priorities, and program activities of the CP.

In March 2004, the GFAR Secretariat launched a consultative process for nominations to the committee. Letters were sent to various GFAR stakeholders together with appropriate background information including the Terms of Reference (TORs) for the committee, and a request for multiple nominations from each stakeholder group. It is

expected that members of the committee will have a combination of the following expertise: genetic resources management, broad development perspective, down to earth practical farming experience, legal background with some expertise in access, benefit sharing, patent issues, property rights, as well as private-public sector collaboration. Nominations were to be accompanied by curriculum vitae.

The GFAR Secretariat and CP Director, Dr. Robert Zeigler (R.Zeigler@cgiar.org), will jointly screen the nominees. It is targeted that final selection will be made by 01 June 2004. Selected members will be informed, and the outcome widely shared. Following their selection, an orientation meeting during the CP's PSC meeting tentatively scheduled for the week of 11 October 2004 will be organized.

The idea to establish a Stakeholder Committee under this CP was endorsed by the participants to the CP Stakeholder Meeting in January 2003. This was further reaffirmed and during the CP Technical Planning Workshop and Program Steering Committee meeting held in August 2003. The European Commission pledged to provide resources for the functioning of this Committee, as part of its contribution to the CP.

O.O.

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