



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

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Under the news from the secretariat section, we continue with the innovative idea of a feature article addressing a topical issue of interest to GFAR stakeholders and others. This time we present to you an article on *Policies for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development*.

Other items you will find in this section are:

A short description of some important and interesting meetings attended by the Secretariat with links to the papers presented at those meetings.

Information on the GFAR Stakeholder Committee of the Generation Challenge Programme (GCP). This committee was created and mandated to provide advice the Program Steering Committee (PSC) of the CP so that the views, experience and perspectives of various stakeholders are reflected in the overall policies guiding the CP. You will find some information on the committee including its membership, mandate and immediate future plans in this section.

An update on the GLOBAL.RAIS initiative facilitated by the Secretariat over the last two years, with information on the achievements to date, and next steps.

An invitation to all stakeholders to participate in a competitive funding initiative – the DURAS competitive grant scheme. The DURAS Project is a three-year project supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The competitive grant is open to all stakeholders especially from Africa, Near East and some parts of Asia.

Some very interesting and informative news from various stakeholder groups take up the middle part of the newsletter. Contributing stakeholders in this issue are: EFARD, EARD-InfoSys+, APAARI, CACAARI and AARINENA. We invite you to take a moment to enjoy the informative articles.

Bringing up the rear is a special report on the recent 36th World Farmers Congress that brought together some 400 farmers from different parts of the globe. Organized by IFAP, this Congress constituted one of the important events of the year, and we synthesize for you in this issue, some of the major outputs of the congress, and recommendations from our farmers' group constituency. Also at the end, as usual, comes the profile article from the civil society constituency, which in this issue features Apex Farmers' Organizations' of Ghana (APFOG).

Bonne lecture!

O.S.

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Policies for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development: A Time for Action

The objective of this article is to identify strategic policy priorities and innovations for a possible action agenda for GFAR's consideration, aiming to accelerate sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) based on a brief review of the major challenges, future imperatives and positive developments for ARD in Developing Countries (DCs).

Major Challenges and Imperatives for ARD

From 1960 to 2000, the per capita income of the world's 20 poorest countries barely changed from US\$212 to US\$267, while that of the richest 20 nations almost tripled, from US\$11,400 to US\$32,300. The global poverty statistics are that 1.3 billion people live on less than US\$1/day; 70 to 80 percent depending on the region of world, live in the rural areas, and there are approximately 850 million people suffering from hunger. One spin-off is that millions of rural people, especially the youth, are migrating to cities and foreign countries, to escape poverty and a bleak future in rural areas.

In recent decades, developing countries have pursued policies that weakened government programmes and agricultural performance, thereby exacerbating rural poverty. Such policies include market liberalisation, submission of agriculture to macro-economic policy reforms (i.e. exchange rates, high interest rates and fluctuating market prices), and retrenchment of government budgets and staff for agriculture. It is noteworthy that today less than 1 percent of government's recurrent budget in many DCs goes to ARD. Such policy bias, coupled with unfavourable international markets due to constantly falling prices of agricultural export commodities, have weakened the sector's performance and its economic-political status as a

key engine of development. This has spelled disaster since agriculture is essentially the most important economic sector of rural communities in DCs. The poverty and hunger statistics are not surprising.

The current dialogue on international trade, a contentious issue for DCs, is primarily driven by free trade and competition objectives. Success in trade negotiations depends on governments' capacity, backed by their private/business sector, to impose their conditions on other governments. Free trade can lead to greater economic growth, efficiency and welfare, provided traders can compete, have access to key resources and are enabled by policy and institutional frameworks, as shown by the benefits of freer trade between Japan, North American and European countries. The DCs cannot bargain with the stronger countries, they cannot even influence the agenda for trade negotiations. If they could, DCs would prefer more attention to development issues, i.e. the prerequisites to participate effectively in trade (e.g. investment and technical assistance to develop human capital, markets, private sector, infrastructure, technology and financial institutions). Instead DCs are pressured into trade negotiations prematurely, indicated by a rather high-level donor support for capacity building for trade negotiation. To make matters worse, developed countries have agricultural and trade policies that damage the interests of DCs and in particular those of small, poor farmers. If developed countries are serious about free trade, they should modify their support policies that work against farmers from DCs.

HIV/AIDS is truly a global disease, now afflicting some 40 million people, 5 million more in the last year alone, and 3 million die every year (UN 2004 figures). HIV/AIDS is a major problem for Sub-Saharan Africa, but elsewhere too: one out of every four new infections is occurring in Asia today, and new infections are becoming of concern in Latin America, the Caribbean and USA. The impact of HIV/AIDS on ARD is devastating in terms of the attrition of professionals, decimation and weakening of the most productive groups and labour force (i.e. men, women and youth), plight of widows and orphaned children, the stigma surrounding the disease, increasing problem of chronic food insecurity and vulnerability of

rural communities, all as a result of HIV/AIDS.

A major constraint in dealing with these critical challenges is the limited national capacity to lead and manage policy and institutional strategies. Take a country like Vietnam, in 2002 there were 25 bilateral donors, 19 multilateral donors and some 350 international NGOs funding over 8,000 projects, one for every 10,000 Vietnamese. Here as elsewhere in DCs, the donor-funded projects are not well coordinated because each major donor has its own strategic plan for the country. The senior officials and skilled professionals of the country are occupied as counterparts on these donor-funded projects and spend an inordinate amount of time collaborating with foreign-managed projects and reporting to different donors and in different formats, instead of working on their *national* programmes. In this context, it is extremely difficult for national institutions to develop their long-term strategies; they are not coordinating, and thus are not likely to utilize all that available assistance to the best advantage of ARD in the country. In many DCs, there are no clear national visions and no national corporate identity, and absorptive capacity can be a serious issue for ARD.

Very influential people and decision makers may not know it, but ARD professionals are convinced that agriculture has a fundamental role to play in breaking the vicious circle of rural poverty. Agriculture is central to the livelihood strategies of the rural poor; sustainable development and productivity growth can benefit the poor enormously (i.e. provision of food, energy and construction materials, generation of income, and reduction of vulnerability), can benefit the whole economy (i.e. employment generation, affordable food for urban population, and generation of scarce foreign exchange) and also contribute to local, national and global protection of the environment and natural resources (e.g. watershed protection, bio-diversity, and other environmental services). In fact, if rural poverty is to be addressed, ARD must be placed at the core of national economic policy, which obviously is not what the decisions and actions of national leaders reflect.

Poverty, hunger and their effect on rural people are unacceptable on moral, social, economic and political grounds, because they threaten the

very foundation of democracy, peace and human welfare. The appropriate strategies and tools to defeat poverty and hunger are known and available, but political will, commitment and seriousness are conspicuously lacking.

Positive Developments for ARD

The good news is that there is hope of better times ahead for ARD in DCs. Some recent developments indicate a positive trend that the time is right to move forward towards sustainable ARD in the fight against rural poverty and hunger. The potential for major breakthroughs in the near future can be felt all around.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, in Chapter 14 of Agenda 21, to which most if not all countries are signatories, accepted the major challenge for sustainable ARD, that is, to improve the livelihoods and quality of life of the rural people, especially the rural poor. The World Food Summit-Five Years Later (WFS-fy/l) in 2002, agreed to 3 key objectives to tackle global hunger:

- a) promotion of sound policies and programmes for technology adoption and skills development;
- b) decisive action in cooperation with public and private sectors to strengthen and broaden research and scientific cooperation in agriculture, fisheries and forestry; and
- c) implementation of integrated rural development strategies in low and high potential areas of the developing world.

This WFS-fy/l established an international alliance to accelerate efforts and has created mechanisms to share expertise and knowledge to fight poverty and hunger. According to its 2000-2015 strategic framework, FAO cites unfavourable policies, weak support institutions and market imperfections, as key constraints to mobilising programmes and resources for ARD. Also, 5 of the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) directly or indirectly relate to ARD: No. 1 on poverty and hunger, No. 4 and No. 5 are related to family nutrition, No. 7 on environmental sustainability, and No. 8 on global partnership for development.

Important multilateral and bilateral cooperation organizations such as the

World Bank, IFAD, IDB, DFID, and others share essentially the same vision and recommend similar strategies to fight rural poverty and hunger, namely:

- a) improving governance by creating a more enabling policy, institutional and decentralized environment to address the needs and priorities of the poor;
- b) enhancing assets of the poor by increasing their access to education, health, water, land, appropriate technology, reliable markets, and protection from vulnerability;
- c) improving the quality of growth by promoting sound environmental management and protecting the environment, forests and biodiversity;
- d) reforming international and developed-country policies by eliminating trade-distorting agricultural subsidies; and
- e) supporting pro-poor investments in infrastructure, environmental goods and services, and addressing the socio-economic concerns of the poor.

For example, the World Bank, in its strategy *Reaching the Rural Poor* stated that it plans to allocate a greater focus and investment in ARD and to scale up programmes to fully engage its community of stakeholders. But such investments would be made for ARD, only if national governments include it in their list of top priorities and the proposed strategies and activities are bankable.

Regional development bodies or mechanisms (e.g. NEPAD, SADC, ASEAN, ACP, IFAP Regional Committees, SICA, and CARICOM) are also speaking the same language, indicating that ARD will have to play a more decisive role in solving the basic constraints to enhancing rural livelihoods and rural development by creating viable options and innovations for rural producers, rural workers, households and communities. Recently the Heads of State and Governments in Africa adopted a major policy for ARD, committing them to allocating within the next 5 years at least 10percent of the national budget to ARD implementation.

The CGIAR system wants to broaden the research agenda, by engaging a

broader spectrum of stakeholders to effectively tackle development issues of global significance. This system comprises 16 international research centers that have an illustrious track record in the development of improved production systems and technology innovations for crop, livestock, forestry, agroforestry, fisheries, aquaculture, integrated natural resource management, soil and water management, as well as for food policy and R&D institutional management systems. Through its *Challenge Programmes*, the CGIAR intends to attract additional financial, technical, and human resources, to mobilize quality science and research for reducing poverty and hunger and protecting the environment and natural resources. The mission of the new CGIAR system qualifies it as probably the single most essential and valuable partner for ARD in DCs.

Lack of investment and fresh resources may be a constraint in the short term, but in the long term it is not. Take the Vietnam example again, the donors and the resources are there, the question is how can they be deployed and invested and managed to build complementary synergies for maximum efficiency and sustainable ARD in the short, medium and long terms? A recent analysis shows that Overseas Development Assistance accounted for more than 50 percent of government expenditures in 17 Sub-Saharan countries in 1999. Another major source of investment for ARD is the rapidly increasing remittances worth billions of dollars per annum. In the last few years, remittances have become the second largest capital flow behind foreign direct investment. Latin America and the Caribbean received the lion share of remittances in nominal terms with US\$25 billion, South Asia was the region where receipts were the largest in relative terms, amounting to 2.5 percent of GDP, and for Africa, though the data is not available, the level of remittances is bound to be significant. Another development is the creation though the bond market of a first-ever private investment fund, specifically targeted for micro-finance institutions in DCs. The fund sponsored by the Grameen Bank, BlueOrchard Finance and Developing World Markets and the guarantee service being provided by JP Morgan Securities, will avail affordable loans for more than 40,000 micro-entrepreneurs, mainly women, in Latin America, Eastern Europe and

Southeast Asia. If this fund is successful, micro-finance will enter a new phase in becoming a major driving force towards poverty reduction and sustainable ARD.

There are valuable lessons and principles for sustainable ARD policies and institutional strategies that can be drawn from: past policy reforms; ARD strategies and innovations; technology development and farm experimentation with new approaches; governments working with emerging NGOs, peasant organizations, and other actors in the field. FAO, IFAP, the Third World Network in Malaysia and others are discovering in various DCs a wealth of policies, management systems and innovations based on local experiences and indigenous knowledge which are very relevant for poverty reduction and sustainable development. These can be rapidly systematized, validated and adapted to other regions and DCs.

In its new Business Plan 2004-2006, GFAR stakeholders have decided to start a new programme combining strategic thinking, policy advocacy and public awareness, which aims to add voice and GFAR perspectives to the global debate and initiatives on policy and institutional issues of critical importance to ARD. Specifically, GFAR expects to achieve 4 main outcomes:

- a) More participation, empowerment and ownership of key stakeholders at regional and national levels, e.g. farmers, NGOs and private sector;
- b) Definition of policy directions, institutional priorities and enhanced support for ARD from policy makers at national, regional and global levels;
- c) Strengthening of regional and national institutional capacity for planning, implementing and evaluating policy, institutional strategies and performance; and
- d) Emergence of functional National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) and demand-driven research, inclusive of the participation of its stakeholders, particularly the rural poor.

To accomplish these, GFAR is determined to assist ministries responsible for ARD to mobilize effective collaboration from their counterparts in finance, economic development, education, trade, environment and others, and to make

the case for ARD's role in national development. One positive factor is that there is at present enough technology on the shelf to cause a significant boost to ARD in the short and medium terms.

After the collapse of the Cancun talks of WTO, there is talk of a *remarkable turn-around* on the concessions to DCs that developed countries are willing to make on sensitive issues (31/07/04 WTO release) such as market access, domestic support and export competition. Although only a framework agreement was signed, these are encouraging signs for the detailed negotiations to follow among WTO members over the next few months.

Policy Analysis, Action and Mobilization

Policy is about governments, organizations or individuals selecting advantageous, expedient and effective directions or course of action to achieve desirable goals and targets. Policies drive the work of institutions and organizations which establish laws, norms, principles and practices to achieve such goals. Policy without capacity and resources to implement programmes will have no effect. Conversely, institutions and organizations cannot function efficiently or effectively without clear policies. To assess the success of policy, one must judge its effects on sustainable ARD objectives, including poverty and hunger reduction. Quite often, policy is more important than technology and other factors when farmers must decide what, how, when and whether to produce.

To address the future challenges and take advantage of new development opportunities outlined above, ARD stakeholders must focus on policy, which requires them to think strategically in visioning, be proactive in seizing opportunities, pragmatic in operations, and effective in mobilizing political support where and when it counts. This is no time for more discussions or for hesitation; it is a time for action. The following provides a synthesis of key policy priorities and innovations suggested for an action agenda.

- *Strategic visioning* - ARD needs a long-term vision and strategy based on the analysis of plausible

future scenarios and expectations. As Dr Swaminathan pointed in the previous GFAR Newsletter (April 2004), this is the responsibility of the political directorate, however the vision must reflect the cultural values, social priorities, economic potentials and environmental concerns of the society. ARD stakeholders that can guide the design and execution of action programmes articulate a vision into a holistic, integrated and coherent strategy. Vision and strategy should be providing directions for achieving food security, human nutrition, how to address gender and youth issues, etc. Also crucial in terms of globalization and international trade, the vision and strategy should be explicit, *inter alia*, on the potentials and targets for developing competitive products, trade and market development, technology generation and transfer (e.g. biotechnology and GMOs), role of small farmers and family farming, provision of services, and linkages and interactions with the urban, manufacturing and services sectors (e.g. health, education, water), particularly to address poverty and hunger.

- *Appropriate, favourable policies for ARD* - Policies can affect ARD indirectly, such as macroeconomic, social and governance policies. There are others that affect ARD directly such as those related to agriculture, rural development, natural resources and environment. A practical approach is to identify and analyze them in terms of the following key objectives, i.e.:
 - a) policies to enhance access and security to land and other natural resources;
 - b) policies to create opportunities for production, processing and marketing;
 - c) policies to conserve resources and safeguard the environment; and
 - d) policies to enhance capacity for preparing for, managing and mitigating natural hazards and man-made emergencies.

The analysis of existing policies and priority reforms should be focused on understanding more

precisely how they affect the poor, Indigenous Peoples, women and children (food and nutrition issues), small farmers and entrepreneurs, and understanding how to integrate or mainstream poverty and hunger related issues into national development policy.

- *Stakeholders' participation* - Following on the GFAR model, GFAR is by definition the multiple stakeholders it represents (e.g. farmer and cooperative organizations, NGOs, research institutions, CGIAR centers, agri-business private sector, and the donors). To this list, key government ministries, universities and consumer groups, where they apply, should also be included and invited to participate as key stakeholders in policy analysis. It is essential to involve all these stakeholders in policy analysis for several reasons:
 - a) They each possess a particular comparative advantage in terms of knowledge, skills and potential contributions they can make;
 - b) They each have a different perspective in analysing policy issues at local, provincial and/or national scales (even at global level), and then in assisting to understand policy effects and implications in its totality, synergies or contradictions at different scales; and
 - c) They each have a vital role to play in promoting, implementing and/or monitoring and evaluating future policy performance in their spheres of influence and operation.

Because of the interests and benefits for each stakeholder, it is important for them to jointly identify and agree on a core set of indicators relevant to ARD which can be used to monitor and assess the performance of policies, particularly as they relate to priority objectives and target groups. In this respect, GFAR is very keen on promoting and supporting stakeholder groups to work together to clarify their positions, develop a coherent visions and strategies, and plan and implement them based on the principles of comparative

advantage, complementarity and subsidiarity.

- *Institutional capacity building* - Given the current level of expertise, capacity building is high priority for policy planning, implementation and evaluation. A first priority is policy analysis methodology, e.g. tools for effective participation of stakeholders at the local, territorial and national levels; policy constraints analysis in ARD; analysis of future scenarios; design and implementation of sustainable ARD policies; policy analysis matrix; and M&E indicators for sustainable ARD. As second priority are relevant policy guidelines and innovations (e.g. policies to achieve specific objectives, strategies to promote and create productive/income-generating options, for social protection and vulnerability reduction of the poor, and governance options for participation of the poor and smallholders). Another priority area deals with skills for communication and mobilization of support for policy action. Depending on resources and opportunities, a combination of capacity building and good management options could be employed, in order to create highly committed and performing teams and individuals for policy analysis and execution.
- *Partnerships among international and regional actors* - Most external donors (multilateral and bilateral) and cooperation agencies are keen on greater collaboration among them and supporting the national actors to assume leadership and management roles, provided those actors can implement programmes with efficiency, effectiveness and transparency. Partnerships offer a very high pay-off because they can enable stakeholders to take a comprehensive, multisectoral and integrated strategy for sustainable ARD. Partnerships, however, are complex and thus require careful nurturing and management. Recent experience suggests that the secrets for their success include the following key requirements, for example: enabling policies, institutional frameworks and legal regulations; impartial, legitimate and credible brokers; capable and committed

partners with realistic expectations; operational processes with clear responsibilities, code of conduct, transparency and social accountability, particularly for mobilizing, allocating and managing financial resources; functional and meaningful M&E and reward systems; and continuous capacity building and technical assistance to ensure effective organization, management and mutual learning among partners.

- *Mobilization of political commitment and support* - The key task here is how to grab the attention and influence those who make decisions on national priorities and financial investments. The ARD vision and strategy can be very helpful for mobilizing political and public support, and ARD stakeholders should study and learn to quote international conventions, declarations and commitments for their cause. More pointedly, ARD stakeholders must put themselves in the shoes of, the Minister of Finance (or those in the higher echelons of power) and figure out what type of evidence the Minister needs to know, or whom the Minister should hear from, to be convinced of ARD. Probably for the Minister, the case must be made in the context of national economic growth, employment and income generation, and public revenue and foreign exchange generation. Since multilateral financial institutions and donor agencies cannot put ARD on the priority list unless instructed by their boards of directors, made up of government representatives, ARD stakeholders must know who represents the country on such bodies and when national positions are crafted for such fora. Here DCs have to borrow a page from developed countries, which have the best expertise (e.g. street demonstration, organized letter-writing and phone-calling to elected representatives, commercial boycott, poster campaigns, etc) for mobilizing political and public support for ARD, even though less than 3 percent of the population is directly involved in agriculture.

- **Policy leadership and management** - All of the above in policy analysis and action requires able leadership and management. Leadership development must be supported solidly and continuously. The main task of leaders is to engage the various stakeholders to work together to guide policy choices and to deal with inherently conflicting demands, and to make good judgment in terms of future expectations and possibilities. Leaders and managers make it happen; they form a competent and committed team who champions and carries out the required tasks to successful completion. This means that criteria and capacities must be put in place to develop and motivate leaders and managers. Some capacities to consider should include these:

- Developing, articulating and communicating shared, long-term visions and strategic plans;
- Leading change in terms of anticipating/preparing for change, developing creative solutions to ARD challenges, and enabling staff to learn, be innovative and take initiative;
- Focused on timely delivery of results and achievement of objectives;
- Focused on building staff capacity and mobilizing resources; and
- Motivating and managing stakeholders and partnerships in the process.

Books and courses are readily available on good practices of exemplary leadership (i.e. how to model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and *encourage the heart*), the key characteristics of admired leaders (i.e. honesty, forward-looking, competence, inspiring, broad- and fair-minded, straight-forward, team player, etc.), and the foundations of leadership (i.e. mission-oriented, credibility and stability). Their application to ARD is high priority.

On the key question of which institution or institutions should take the lead in national policy analysis and action for ARD, it is

suggested that appropriate multi-institutional partnerships be established that can:

- Ensure effective participation of key stakeholders, as mentioned above, particularly those responsible for making, analyzing and implementing policy, as well as those who are affected by policy; and
- Promote a favourable environment and incentives for open policy dialogue among stakeholders, particularly those at the local and provincial levels.

These policy-related initiatives would usually depend on the NARS, NGOs and universities, with the support of interested international and regional stakeholders, e.g. FAO, who can then entice government participation.

Concluding comment

This article argues strongly and cogently for a national policy framework, strategy and action agenda for ARD, which is the single most conspicuous weakness of DCs in the drive towards sustainable ARD. This must change, otherwise: DCs will not be able to influence global, multilateral and bilateral stakeholders that could invest in ARD; national institutional capacity will not develop to lead decision making; those well intentioned, externally funded projects will not amount to much impact for long term ARD objectives; and as for GFAR, R&D systems will never be able demonstrate the potential pay-off of technology in terms of reducing rural poverty and hunger and improving the social and economic well-being of rural people.

That effective policy, institutions and stakeholder empowerment in policy making are indisputable for sustainable ARD, including rural poverty and hunger, means that the time is perfect to move forward. There is strong support on the part of most international stakeholders, but the high echelons of national power need some convincing and prodding to make ARD investments.

Over the last 50 years, the international discourse on poverty, unfortunately, has shifted from *eradication*, to *reduction*, and now to *alleviation*. What's next, *coping* or *acceptance*? This paper is optimistic,

using poverty reduction, though realizing that poverty eradication is within reach, hopefully in the life of this generation!

(The contents of this paper reflect the views of the author and do not represent FAO's official position. The author is grateful to Dr. Ola Smith, Executive Secretary of GFAR, for his constructive suggestions)

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GLOBAL.RAIS



Results of the GLOBAL.RAIS Inter-Regional Workshop: Towards a Global Agenda for ICM in ARD

The GLOBAl ALLiance of the Regional Agricultural Information Systems (GLOBAL.RAIS) is a project by GFAR. It is funded by the European Commission (EC) and aims at strengthening GFAR's information and communication system, EGFAR, and improving the relationships of EGFAR with the Regional Agricultural Information System (RAIS) of the various Regional Fora (RF), members of the GFAR Steering Committee. As a global platform of communication for ARD, EGFAR aims to promote cooperation in sharing and exchanging ARD information and knowledge internationally.

The main goal of the GLOBAL.RAIS project is to bring consistency at several levels to achieve economies of scale and synergism to the RAIS of:

- West Asia and North Africa (AARINENA-RAIS) managed by AARINENA;
- Asia-Pacific (APARIS) managed by APAARI;
- Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC-RAIS) managed by CACAARI;
- Sub-Saharan Africa (FARA-RAIS) managed by FARA and the three Sub-Regional Organizations (SROs) CORAF, RAIN/ASARECA and SADC;

- Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC-RAIS) managed by FORAGRO;
- Europe (EARD-InfoSys+) managed by EIARD.

Through a bottom-up participatory approach spread over a period of 16 months, GFAR has through its member RF, supported and enabled a series of consultations with its stakeholders in various regions on a global agenda for ICM in ARD to enable and enhance agricultural information system and services. An Inter-Regional Workshop was held on 10th-11th June 2004 in Rome as a culmination of this consultation process.

This meeting brought to the fore the significant inequity in availability, access and ability to use agricultural related information by GFAR Stakeholders. It has also highlighted that social appropriation rather than technology is the driving force for improving information systems. The meeting agreed that 1. Advocacy for sensitization, awareness and resources mobilization, 2. Capacity development and 3. Integration of ICT enabled information systems and services are the three main pillars for attention by GFAR and its stakeholders in the Agenda and Development of a Global Partnership Programme (GPP) for ICM in ARD. This consultation process has also revealed the huge potential available in enhancing information systems and services for ARD through collaborative and cooperative programs that can be utilized in its execution.

Download the [full report](#) (draft version) of the workshop.

GLOBAL.RAIS Working Group

Past Events

Meetings and Seminars participated by GFAR Secretariat

The Secretariat participated in a number international workshops and meetings over the last several months. Two of these addressed the theme of how to improve the contribution of agricultural research to sustainable development through partnerships and alliances amongst stakeholders - an issue that is central to the raison d'être of GFAR.

The first meeting was a symposium organized by the Association of Applied Biologists to celebrate its Centenary. The theme of the symposium was: *Increasing the effectiveness of world public sector agricultural research through partnerships – bases for novel paradigms*. The organizers recognized the GFAR initiative as one of the novel systems of collaboration and partnership, which because it favors the pooling of relevant resources that are becoming increasingly scarce, will improve the effectiveness of agricultural research. They therefore invited the Secretariat to share the GFAR experience with others. The full text of the paper presented at this symposium by the Executive Secretary: *Strategic partnership in agricultural research for development: the global forum on agricultural research model* is available on [EGFAR](#).

The second meeting was a research workshop organized by the Agriculture and Rural Development Department (ARD) of the World Bank on: *Development of Research Systems to Support the Changing Agricultural Sector*. The organizers suggested that the current pace of globalization of agriculture, as well as rapid changes in the science supporting the sector and the regional features of the research systems, there is an urgent need to take stock of recent experience and re-think strategies for the future development of national agricultural research and innovation systems, while recognizing the wide diversity of country situations. The workshop focused on six different sub-themes each introduced by an overview presentation followed by in-depth discussion of the issues raised. The Secretariat was invited to make an overview presentation on the theme: *Promotion of regional and international research alliances and technology spill-ins from a country-perspective (with emphasis of the role of biotechnology, global science, and IPR)*, available on [EGFAR](#).

A third meeting we would like to report on was a consultative meeting of the ISNAR-IFPRI Program Advisory Committee. One of the objectives of the meeting was to brainstorm on future research and capacity strengthening strategies and priorities for the ISNAR Division. Participants were requested to make suggestions on what the new ISNAR Division should do and how it should go about doing it within the context of three broad strategic themes decided upon

in earlier consultations and discussion within the CGIAR. The themes are: *Institutional Change, Organization and Management and Agricultural Science Policy*. The Secretariat was invited to tackle the issue of Agricultural Science Policy. The presentation made can be downloaded from [EGFAR](#).

O.S.

GFAR Statutory Meetings



2nd Regional For a Executive Secretaries Meeting, 17-18 May 2004, Rome, Italy

GFAR Chair Dr. Mohammad Roozitalab welcomed the participants to Rome and to the second Regional Fora Executive Secretaries meeting held on 17-18 May in Rome.

The meeting served as a venue to share and discuss updates related to on-going and future GFAR activities, including implications for inter-regional collaboration. They were also apprised on the on-going GFAR Charter Review where their inputs were also solicited.

Download the full text of the [minutes](#) (draft version).

A.S.

GFAR Statutory Meetings

10th Management Team Meeting, 17 May 2004, Rome, Italy

GFAR Chair Dr. Mohammad Roozitalab welcomed participants to the meeting and expressed satisfaction at the outputs of the 2nd Executive Secretaries Meeting which was held the previous day.

The GFAR Management Team, composed of FAO, IFAD and the GFAR Chair, Vice-Chair and Executive Secretary, reviewed the final draft of the GFAR Business Plan 2004-2006 and discussed the on-going GFAR Charter Review process, among others. They were also updated on the on-going and future activities of the Secretariat and were briefed on the

results of the RF Executive Secretaries meeting held the previous day.

Download the full text of the [minutes](#) (draft version).

A.S.

DURAS



The DURAS Project: Call for Proposals

The DURAS Project (Promoting Sustainable Development in Agricultural Research Systems) is a three-year project of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) and Agropolis, and is being supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It aims to contribute to strengthening the involvement and enhancing the scientific potential of southern stakeholders in agricultural research for sustainable development (ARSD), particularly in Africa, Near East and some parts of Asia.

Go to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs [website](#).

Go to the DURAS on Agropolis [website](#).

The DURAS Competitive Grants

It is among the Type 2 Initiatives (Partnerships for Sustainable Development) under the *World Summit for Sustainable Development* (WSSD) and is a voluntary multi-stakeholder partnerships which contribute to the implementation of inter-governmental commitments in Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The project takes part in enabling all stakeholders in agricultural research to make a concrete contribution to the outcomes of the WSSD and other international agreements in furthering sustainable development (SD).

One of Project DURAS' components is a **Competitive Grants** that will fund proposals in key priority areas consistent with the GFAR Business

Plan. The DURAS Competitive Grants is established to encourage innovation, allow scaling-up of successful innovations and/or best practices developed in the South, and to further develop and explore scientific potentials.

It also aims to create opportunities for historically disadvantaged stakeholder groups in the South to develop and enhance their scientific capacities through the provision of start-up funds, via a competitive process, that will bridge funding gap that usually exist between the initial stages of research/innovation process and the early stages of implementation or scaling-up. The funds are expected to allow Southern partners who have developed interesting and innovative proposals but have not received donor support to access and attract additional funding.

This is the first of the two Calls for Proposals that will be carried out under the DURAS Project.

The thematic focus of this first call are:

Theme 1: Agrobiodiversity and genetic resources management for food security;

Theme 2: Local knowledge in natural resources management.

Application is open to all stakeholders involved in ARSD.

Deadline for submission of pre-proposals is on **8 October 2004**.

Download the [Project DURAS Competitive Grant Scheme Guidelines](#) (also in [French](#)) for further reference.

Download the [Regional Priorities and Emerging Global Programmes: A Preliminary Report on a Stakeholder Dialogue](#) (GFAR, September 2001).

For further queries, please contact:

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GFAR Stakeholder Committee of the GCP



GFAR Stakeholder Committee for the Generation Challenge Program (GCP) of the CGIAR

As you read in our [April newsletter](#), the Secretariat has been involved in facilitating the establishment of a GFAR Stakeholder Committee of the Generation Challenge Programme *Cultivating Plant Diversity for the Resource-Poor* Challenge Programme (GCP) of the CGIAR. In mid June, after a two-month consultation process, the Secretariat submitted the results of the selection and screening process it carried out to CP Director Dr. Robert Zeigler. In late July, the GCP Programme Steering Committee (PSC), following the GCP recommendation approved the composition of the Committee which comprises 15 representatives from GFAR stakeholder groups: three (3) from Farmers' Organizations, two (2) from the NGOs, two (2) from the private sector group and seven (7) representatives from Regional Fora i.e., one per region.

Committee members who will serve on for the next two years are:

Farmers' Organizations Representatives:

- Mr. Raul MONTEMEYOR (Philippines)
- Mr. Philip KIRIRO (Kenya)
- Mr. Esa HARMALA (Finland)

NGOs Representatives:

- Mr. Mamadou GOITA (Mali)
- Mr. Omar Jofré FUENTES (Chile)

Regional Fora Representatives:

- Dr. Mutsuo IWAMOTO (Japan) – [APAARI](#)
- Dr. Charles NKHOMA (Zambia) – [FARA](#)
- Dr. Hamid NARJISSEE (Morocco) – [AARINENA](#)
- Dr. Victor M. ARAMBULA (Mexico) – [FORAGRO](#)
- Dr. Anthony HALL (USA) – [NAFAR](#)
- Dr. Aleksidze GURAM (Georgia) – CACAARI

- Ms. Anne Chetaille (France) – [EFARD](#)

Private Sector Representatives:

- Dr. Arvin KAPUR (India)
- Mr. Manuel Ruiz (Peru)

The Committee will hold its first meeting in Rome during the period November 28-1 December 2004, in conjunction with the CP's PSC meeting. The Stakeholder Committee serves as a neutral platform for inter-stakeholder dialogue on issues related to the implementation of the GCP. It acts in an advisory capacity, and is expected to serve as a link between the GCP and the various stakeholder groups. Thus, it is expected to facilitate the articulation, promotion and presentation of the views of various stakeholders to the [GCP governance and management structure](#) in order to contribute to the policies, strategies, research priorities, and program activities of the GCP.

More specifically, the Stakeholder Committee will:

- Advise the GCP PSC so that it could appropriately take into account the views, experience and perspectives of various stakeholders in formulating the overall policies guiding the GCP;
- Recommend measures to improve multi-stakeholder involvement, especially those from the South and from the civil society organizations (CSOs), in the GCP implementation and review, through such mechanisms as: broad-based consultative processes, workshops and information sharing strategies; and
- Provide feedback to various stakeholders on the CP implementation and outputs.

Europe



EARD-InfoSys+: achievements and future plans

The development phase of [EARD-InfoSys+](#) the Information System on European Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) will end in September 2004. The system has been restructured completely in this phase and was launched in April 2004. The German Centre for Documentation and Information in Agriculture ZADI will continue to host EARD-InfoSys+ in the future. EARD-InfoSys+ is mapping the European ARD landscape and pioneers in displaying the relations between organisations, projects, funding, experts and events in European ARD. In addition EARD-InfoSys+ offers an e-mail Alert service and the use of an online groupware for project management. Latest features are the implementation of an advanced search and concise news & events listings. Furthermore the first *country view* on EARD-InfoSys+ has been implemented for [GARDEN-InfoSys](#), the German partner of EARD-InfoSys+.

Close collaboration with other regional agricultural information systems has been established and will be expanded in the future. During the development phase of the new system consultations with GFAR assured that the system is adaptable to other regional or national agricultural research landscapes. Using Open Source Software products for the programming of the information system guarantees, that additional costs for software licensing will not arise for those countries or regions deciding to capitalise on the system. The system has been presented at various occasions on international conferences and has attracted attention from the international agricultural research community. Stakeholders of ARD and rural development are invited to contact EARD-InfoSys+ if technical support is needed.

In the frame of an ERA-ARD proposal (FP6 of the EU) EARD-InfoSys+ is expected to support ERA-ARD by the mapping of programs and provide ICM support for improved coordination of

investments into ARD. The proposal will be submitted in October 2004.

Marlene Horstmann
GARDEN-InfoSys+

Europe



EFARD 2005

We are pleased to remind you of EFARD 2005 - the triennial meeting of the European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development. EFARD 2005 will take place from 27-29 April 2005 at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Zurich and will be organised by the Swiss Forum for International Agricultural Research (SFIAR).

The Mission of EFARD is to strengthen the contribution of European Agricultural Research for Development to poverty alleviation, food security and sustainable development in developing countries. EFARD conferences provide a platform for information exchange and development of joint activities to interested stakeholders in ARD, such as researchers, policy makers, NGO's, farmer organisations and others.

The title of the EFARD 2005 conference is: *Agricultural Research for Development: European Responses to Changing Global Needs*. The Conference will encompass the following themes:

1 Agricultural research for development in a globalised world economy

- Agricultural market integration, subsidies, and world trade,
- Agricultural research in Europe responding to the new member countries,
- Agricultural reorientation in countries in transition,
- Food security for developing and newly industrialised countries.

2 Agriculture and food as a challenge for developing countries

- Rural development and agriculture for poverty alleviation,
- Plant genetic resources and biotechnology,

- Improved food quality and safety,
- Land and water management for sustainable agriculture.

Asia-Pacific



3 European experiences in agricultural research and development

- Experiences in fostering sustainable agriculture in the European Union,
- Swiss experiences in promoting sustainable agriculture,
- The strengthened role of agricultural research for international cooperation,
- Public private partnerships in agricultural research for development.

Inputs to the conference can be as presentations, posters, workshop proposals, booth exhibitions or as a side event. A large number of conference fellowships will be available for participants from developing countries and from countries in transition.

The deadline for submission of conference inputs (abstracts of oral and poster presentations or proposals for workshops and side events) as well as for applications for financial support is **30 September 2004**.

You can find more information on the EFARD 2005 conference in the attached conference announcement. For registration and for submission of contributions, please use the online form on the [conference website](#).

Download the [brochure](#) of EFARD 2005.

In case you have any questions do not hesitate to contact the conference secretariat:

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EFARD2005 Conference Manager

Training Workshop on Capacity Building for Developing National Agricultural Information Systems (NAIS) and AFITA 2004

The Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), with the membership of 20 National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) from the Asia-Pacific region and several regional and international organizations, has been actively promoting ICM in ARD. Over the last few years, APAARI has organized several expert consultations dealing with the subject by bringing together diverse stakeholder groups on a common platform. The most recent expert consultation in December 2003 was the third organized by APAARI with the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) as co-sponsor and it assessed the progress made by various NARS since the last such consultation in 2002; explored the existing opportunities for enhancing the role of ICM in ARD; and discussed potential improvements in the Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS), an APAARI initiative, by focusing on potential user-groups and their information needs. APARIS serves as a portal to information resources of member NARS and other regional and international ARD organizations. It also acts as an information link between NARS and the international ARD organizations. APAARI is committed to bridge digital divide by assisting NARS of developing countries to effectively use ICM in their common goal of providing food security and poverty reduction through agricultural development.

NARS of some countries of the region, including Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar and Timor-Leste are currently not members of APAARI and hence been unable to benefit from the above expert consultations that have helped several member NARS in developing frameworks of their National Agricultural Information Systems (NAIS). Vietnam has only recently become a member.

APAARI, in collaboration with GFAR, AIT, FAO-RAP, SDLEARN, UN-ESCAP, JIRCAS/NARO and AgriWatch, organized a training workshop on Capacity Building for Developing NAIS of Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Timor-Leste and Vietnam during 3-12 August 2004 at AIT Conference Center, AIT, Pathumthani, Thailand.

Workshop Objectives

The training Workshop had two specific objectives:

- Train appropriate officers in principles of ICM and in identifying essential components of their respective NAIS,
- Assist these officers in development of basic NARS web sites to disseminate NAIS keeping in view different user groups.

Workshop Participants

There were 9 training participants from the above 7 countries, representing the information divisions of their respective NARS. The training was facilitated by 14 Resource Speakers/Persons - from APAARI (4), FAO-RAP (1), AIT (2), JIRCAS/NARO (2), UN-ESCAP (2), SDLEARN (2) and AgriWatch (1).

Workshop Program

3 August (Day 1)

- Orientation, Country Status Presentations, and NAIS Framework.

4 August (Day 2)

- ICM Basics: information, provider, user, and technical aspects of ICM in ARD.

5 August (Day 3)

- Information Flow Models: information collection and processing,

- FAO Tools & Resources.

6 August (Day 4)

- ICM Implementation in ARD: essential components of a NAIS and basics of web site development and maintenance,
- Finalization of prototype NARS web sites to deliver NAIS.

7 August (Day 5)

- International and Regional Initiatives (SDLEARN, CABI, APAN, AgriWatch, etc.).

8 August (Day 6)

- Study tour to International ICT Expo.

9-12 August

- Participation in AFITA-WCCA 2004 in Bangkok to get an exposure to global, regional, and other national initiatives on ICM in ARD.

12-13 August

- Follow-up Action Plan for their regular upgrade and maintenance,
- Feedback Session and Departure.

Workshop Proceedings

The Workshop was designed, through use of generic frameworks, tools and techniques, to enable participants to analyze, understand and learn about information and communications management in organizations engaged in agriculture research for development, especially at the National level, through a participatory approach. The format of the training workshop was to have brief presentations followed by group and individual working sessions. A Workshop Manual including the presentations, guidelines for group and individual activities and background reading material was developed and made accessible through a simple, web based user interface as all participants had access to a networked computer and other peripheral equipment. All workshop material, including a large amount of background material, was included on a CD-ROM distributed to the participants. All the training material and outputs are also available on [APAARI web site](#) under the Training section. The following are the workshop proceedings in brief:

Day 1: Inauguration, Orientation, Country Status Presentations, and NAIS Framework.

There was a brief formal inauguration ceremony presided by Dr. Mario Tabucanon, Provost of AIT. Prof. Tabucanon congratulated APAARI for having developed a specific capacity building program to contribute in

bridging the *digital-divide* in the Asia-Pacific region by assisting the participating countries in developing their NAIS. Mr. P. K. Saha, APAARI Liaison Officer delivered the vote of thanks and highlighted the benefits of APAARI membership. This was followed by introduction of the Workshop and its objectives by the facilitators of the Workshop, Dr. Sahdev Singh and Dr. Ajit Maru. The participants, during the first workshop session, presented their country reports. Those countries that had two participants had a joint report by the participants. The country reports and presentations arranged country wise are available on the Workshop CD-ROM.

In the Second Workshop Session, Dr. Ajit Maru presented an overview of developing Information Systems for Agricultural Research and Development. He put forward several frameworks related to information systems, NAIS and each component of it such as systems for managing scientific and technical information, research data, research management, extension and outreach information and for agricultural learning.

Day 2: Need Assessment and Clientele Identification in NAIS Framework.

On the 2nd Day of the Workshop, the participants were briefed on needs assessment of clients of NAIS. Through a group exercise, the participants in two groups, identified the clients of a NAIS, their needs and prioritized their clients list on the basis of services they, as a NAIS, could provide. This session was facilitated by both Dr. Sahdev Singh and Dr. Ajit Maru. Following this session, Dr. Maru made a brief presentation on Institutions, Structures and Processes that are needed for a NAIS. The participants, using the services they had identified for their NAIS as a base for discussion, identified the Institutions, Structures and Processes they would need to provide services in their NAIS.

Day 3: Information Flow Analysis for NAIS and FAO Information Tools and Resources.

The 3rd day included Dr. Maru and Dr. Singh explaining the technique of process and information flow mapping and analysis as a problem solving technique for developing and

improving information systems. In a working session that followed, the participants used this technique to analyze and develop two separate information services and their information systems.

Mr. Michael Riggs of FAO-RAP, in the afternoon session, described FAO's Tools and Resources for ICM in ARD. He also distributed several CD-based information resources and self-learning modules such as IMARK Resource Kit and demonstrated their use through a hands-on practice session.

Day 4: Development of a Web-enabled NAIS.

Developing a web based information platform was the agenda on the 4th day of the workshop. Starting with how to develop a storyboard and use a web editor the participants were individually guided step-by-step by Dr. Sahdev Singh, Mr. Agus Prajogo and Dr. Maru through developing a Web based platform for their NAIS. The outputs of this session included prototype web sites of each participating country NAIS.

Day 5: Distance Learning, Agricultural Market Information Systems and Regional and Global Initiatives for ICM in ARD.

In the morning of the final day of the Workshop, after a brief review of the Workshop by Dr. Maru, Dr. Robert Raab and Ms. Buenafe of SDLEARN presented about ICT based learning in agriculture and conducted a hands-on work session on e-learning using SDLEARN's web-based course on Digital Literacy. Mr. Sunil Khairnar, CEO of AgriWatch made his presentation on Agricultural Market Information Systems in the afternoon. Dr. Qiao-Qiao Zhang of CABI introduced the participants to CABI information products. Dr. Seishi Ninomiya, NARO-Japan made his presentation on application of ICTs in Regional networking of agricultural projects. This was followed by two presentations by Ms. Bhava Dungana and Mr. Naylin Oo from UNESCAP on their organizations ICT and ICM related activities under the titles *UN-ESCAP e Community Centers* and *UN-ESCAP Program FADINAP*, a regional fertilizer network.

The first part of training was concluded through a closing ceremony

presided by Dr. Seishi Ninomiya, Chairman, APARIS Steering Committee. He presented all participants with Certificates of Achievement.

Day 6: Field Trip to International ICT Expo in Bangkok.

On day 6 (August 8), the participating trainees visited the International ICT Expo organized in Bangkok from 4-8 August 2004. The International Expo had hundreds of booths of national, regional and international ICT organizations, both public and private. The Expo demonstrated various up-to-date and upcoming software and hardware technologies for emerging knowledge society.

Days 7, 8, 9: Participation in Joint Conference of Asian Federation for Information Technology in Agriculture (AFITA) and World Congress on Computers in Agriculture (WCCA).

AFITA and WCCA jointly organized an international conference from 9-12 August 2004 at the Four Seasons Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand. The AFITA/WCCA2004 Conference provided forums for agriculture related professionals to exchange information on applications and developments in the use of IT. There were approximately 400 participants with more than 100 paper, poster and technical workshop contributions from various countries and organizations. Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of the Royal Kingdom of Thailand graciously presided at the grand opening ceremony of the Conference on 9 August 2004 at 15:00 hrs. The Conference was organized by following institutions: AFITA, AIT, ASAE, CIGR, EFITA, FAO, HAI, IAALD, JIRCAS, JSAI, MOAC, NECTEC, PanAFITA, UNESCO, and NSTDA.

In the Conference, APAARI was represented by Dr. Sahdev Singh, APAARI Assistant Executive Secretary; Dr. Ajit Maru, APAARI Resource Person and Dr. Ashraf Tanvir, APARIS Steering Committee Member. All 9 training participants also attended the Conference as the second part of their training program. They actively participated in APAARI contributions to the Conference. During the Conference, Dr. Sahdev Singh delivered a 90-minute technical workshop on Distributed Database Systems in Agricultural Research,

chaired a paper presentation session on Information Resources and Databases and presented a paper on APARIS. Dr. Ajit Maru presented an APAARI study on status of ICT/ICM in ARD in the Asia-Pacific Region. The full papers and presentations of APAARI contributions are available on the official [AFITA/WCCA 2004 web site](#).

Day 10: Informal and Formal Feedback on Training Workshop.

On the last day of the workshop, Dr. Sahdev Singh and Dr. Ajit Maru had a 2-hour meeting with training participants. During the meeting, participants filled a feedback form and made a brief presentation about his/her experience during the training. The compiled report of the feedback, highly positive, is presented on APAARI web site.

Conclusions

The following were the lessons learned from the conduct of this Workshop:

- There is strong enthusiasm in the participating countries to use ICT for agricultural and rural development.
- The skill levels needed for ICM and embedding ICTs in agricultural information systems in the participating countries are weak.
- A participatory mode with emphasis on working sessions for the Workshop was found to be successful.
- The design of the Workshop around frameworks, tools and techniques for ICM was found to be useful to convey the significance of ICM in NAIS within the short time available.

Participants could develop a basic web-based platform for a NAIS, though most had no exposure to web design and development.

Sahdev Singh
APAARI Assistant Executive Secretary

Asia-Pacific



Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS)

The 3rd APARIS Steering Committee Meeting was held from 9:00 -12:00 am on 8th August 2004 at the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand. The participants included: Dr. Seishi Ninomiya, JIRCAS/NARO, Japan (Chair, APARIS Steering Committee); Dr. Ashraf Tanvir, PARC, Pakistan (Member); Dr. Malcolm Hazelman, FAO-RAP (Member); Dr. Ajit Maru, APAARI Resource Person (special invitee to report to GLOBAL.RAIS Initiative); Mr. P. K. Saha, APAARI (Liaison Officer); Dr. Qiaoqiao Zhang, CABI (special invitee); Mr. Satoru Miyata, Regional JIRCAS Coordinator (special invitee); and Dr. Sahdev Singh, APAARI (Member Secretary).

Dr. Seishi Ninomiya, the APARIS Steering Committee Chairperson, welcomed the participants and invited comments on the meeting agenda items and the background paper that was provided to all participants in advance and also during the meeting. He emphasized that the meeting discussions should concentrate on practical, doable activities that APARIS can undertake considering its current financial and manpower limitations. Dr. Ashraf Tanvir of PARC, Pakistan was invited to co-chair the meeting and he also welcomed the participants. The main agenda for discussions was the APARIS Business Plan for 2004-2007 under 3 broad themes as follows:

- *Advocacy* for enabling, enhancing and enlarging agriculture related information systems at national, sub-regional and regional levels in the Asia-Pacific region
- *Capacity development* in information and communications management and use of appropriate information and communications technologies for national agricultural information systems
- *Integration of information systems* within NARS, in the Asia-Pacific Region and with other regional and global agricultural information

systems such as the GLOBAL.RAIS Webring.

The Chair invited Dr. Sahdev Singh, Member Secretary, to brief the participants on on-going activities of APARIS as described in details in the Background Paper. The participants expressed their satisfaction with the APAARI efforts and also agreed that APARIS should continue to focus on the above three broad themes in accordance with the GFAR's initiative to evolve a global agricultural information system of which APARIS will be the Asia-Pacific node. The deliberations prioritized the activities of APARIS Business Plan for 2004-2007 as follows:

a) Advocacy

- Collecting, collating and providing access to information, on a biannual basis, related to status of ICT use and information systems in NARS of the region and agriculture and rural development related ICT use indicators at national and regional level (2005 and 2007).
- Developing an advocacy paper on ICT and agricultural information related policy and strategy issues at national, sub-regional and regional level that can provide fact-based support for advocacy role of APARIS (early 2005).
- Organize, during APAARI General Assemblies, a 1/2 day sensitization and awareness workshop on policy and strategy issues in enabling, enhancing and enlarging agricultural information systems for senior NARS and agricultural policy makers and managers (2004-2007).
- Identify and publish success stories on ICT/ICM in ARD using case studies from selected Asian countries (2005).
- Associate and network with other initiatives and forums to promote awareness about ICT/ICM in ARD and also publicize APARIS in the on-going AFITA Conference in Bangkok as well as the next one in India in 2006; FAO-RAP/SPC sub-regional workshop in the Pacific in September 2004; and as co-sponsor of the NARO Field Server Workshop in Bangkok in January 2005. (2004-2007)

b) Capacity Development

- An Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop for NINPs for need assessment and to evolve a framework for National Agricultural Information Systems (in 2005).
- Three Sub-regional Training Workshops for NINPs and two ICT/ICM trainers from each country (in 2006):
 - a. South Asia (Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka) in collaboration with SAIC.
 - b. South-East Asia (ASEAN countries) in collaboration with SEARCA.
 - c. the Pacific (APAARI member countries) in collaboration with SPC.
- National Workshops, facilitated by NINPs and trained NAIS trainers, for two officers from each major national agricultural institute (in 2007).

c) Integration of Agricultural Information Systems and Resources

- Develop an online compendium of good practices, standards, guidelines, protocols etc. for agricultural information exchange and sharing in the Asia-Pacific region (2004-2007).
- Participate, as a representative of the Asia-Pacific Region's NARS, in negotiations related to setting of standards, guidelines, protocols related to agricultural information systems at the global level (2004-2007).
- Conduct seminars at Sub-Regional levels, South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific countries related to sharing and exchange of information, especially on the use of standards, guidelines and best practices in agricultural information systems in conjunction with the Sub-regional training workshops proposed in the Capacity Development section and other APAARI related activities. (2004-2007).
- Further strengthen the directory of agricultural information on the web and the Gateway/Portal function to access the information resources of various institutes (2005-2007).

- Promote data and information sharing among various member institutes using applications such MetBroker and localized crop models.
- In consultation with GFAR and other regional and sub-regional forums, integrate APARIS as Asia-Pacific node in the Global Web Ring of Agricultural Information Systems (2004-2005).

It was suggested that APAARI should develop a detailed Business Plan using concept notes for these activities and submit to GFAR for consideration and also identify potential collaborators and donors in close consultation with APARIS Steering Committee members and focal points in Support Group Organizations such as GFAR, FAO-RAP, ACIAR, AIT, JIRCAS/NARO, CABI, SDLEARN, and others.

Sahdev Singh
APAARI Assistant Executive Secretary

West Asia & North Africa



Future AARINENA web site: a mock-up

One of the most important scopes of AARINENA Regional Agricultural Information System (RAIS) is to facilitate the access to scientific and technical information on agricultural and rural topics by end-users. Our mission is to generate accurate and up-to-date information from all the regional countries and convert it into useful knowledge.

In this regard, and in support to the mission of RAIS, the AARINENA-RAIS Secretariat is going to publish the new version of [AARINENA web site](#), developed in collaboration with GFAR. This new website will serve as a gateway to useful information of the region and sub-regions.

In this new version, you can identify three main streamlines, organized in sections:

- 1) The first section is related to the AARINENA association. It contains the general information about AARINENA, its vision and mission, the governance group (which includes the Executive Committee,

AARINENA Secretary and Secretariat and etc.), Sub-regional Organizations;

2) The second section is related to the AARINENA-RAIS. It contains general information about the RAIS (Steering Committee and RAIS Secretariat functions and composition), databases, regional networks, E-discussions, events, publications, etc;

3) The third section contains Tools like spotlights, search engine, site map and a link to the GLOBAL.RAIS Webring connecting AARINENA information system to all other RAIS through EGFA, within the latter acting as the gateway of regional gateways.

In the left side you can find the spotlight section as a rolling-up text window. The middle of the page contains a brief introduction about AARINENA, while in the bottom AARINENA's Global Partners with their own logos and direct link to their web sites can be found.

The new draft version of the website was sent to all AARINENA-RAIS Steering Committee members for comments and suggestions before the new website was finalized and launched.

We are also trying to develop the Arabic version of the AARINENA website since about 90 percent of the region's native language is Arabic. For this purpose, we need to collaborate with one or more countries of the region.

One of the new tools we are developing is a [form](#), which will allow us to collect information related to the Agricultural Researchers in the region. The idea is to develop a Regional Agricultural Researchers database. The form is very easy to fill and it's available on the new version of the website.

We also have developed a simple [search system](#) to browse and find more easily all the National Agricultural Research Institutions, Universities, NGOs, etc. in the sub-regional countries. When you go through the mentioned link, a page appears which allow you to select the country and the object which you want to search.

Taraneh Ebrahimi
AARINENA-RAIS Secretariat

Inter-Regional Activities



The 2nd INCANA annual meeting

Following the first Inter-regional workshop on cotton research carried out in October 2002 in Tehran, Iran, the 2nd annual meeting of INCANA will be held from 6-8 September 2004 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The agenda of this meeting is available on the [INCANA website](#).

During the meeting executive committee members and the subcommittees for each of cotton research related disciplines will be elected. Some of the subjects of work plan of INCANA for 2004-2005 are as follow:

- Publication of INCANA newsletter, success stories, reference booklet, research abstracts;
- Enhancement of INCANA website including database on research programs and projects in the member countries;
- Conduct of pest risk analysis;
- Organization of training workshops on cotton research priorities and scientific visits;
- Exchange of germplasm;
- Conduct of joint research projects on cotton research priorities;
- Preparation of the 3rd INCANA meeting in 2005.

Aisel Gheredaghli
INCANA Secretariat

Farmers' Organizations



Profile Article: The creation of the Apex Farmers' Organization of Ghana

"Millions of farmers – One voice!"
With the chanting of this slogan the Apex Farmers' Organization of Ghana (APFOG) was officially created on October 2nd, 2003 at Sogakope, Ghana. After years of discussions and negotiations between several leading farmers' organizations, approximately thirty organizations came together under an umbrella organization with the main aim of lobbying and advocating for favorable agricultural policies. In May 2004 APFOG attended the 36th World Farmers Congress and became a member of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP).

APFOG is an apex organization for farmers' organizations engaged principally in agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries and agro-processing. The vision of APFOG is *Harnessing opportunity to grow farmers and better their lives*. The mission statement is to unify farmers' organizations in Ghana to lobby, provide services and information in order to enhance security, financial and economic advantages of its members.

The specific objectives of APFOG are:

- To unify all farmers' organizations in Ghana under one umbrella;
- To be a self-financing organization with a professionally run secretariat;
- To lobby and advocate for farmer friendly policies;
- To provide services and to disseminate information to members;
- To provide capacity building to members and to stimulate them to form bodies on national level;
- To facilitate access to financial and economic security;
- To assist members to market their produce both locally and international, and to process and store their produce.

APFOG is run via a national office based in Accra, the capital of Ghana, and is supported by four zonal offices which are spread strategically throughout the country. The National Executive Council is the decision-making body and consists of five members representing different commodities. The five members, including the president and vice-president, are elected during the Annual Meeting of the General Assembly.

While the council is responsible for the formulation of APFOG's policies, the committees take care of the implementing of activities. The Lobby Committee's acts as the 'one voice' of APFOG by ensuring the involvement of farmers in decision making for agricultural policies. The Committee for Proposal Writing identifies possible donors and other supporting organizations, and assists members in formulating proposals for sponsorship and access to credit. Others are the Information and Communication, and Training Committees. The Women's Committee deals with the specific and peculiar needs of women in agriculture and ensures the integration of gender in all activities.

The need to form an umbrella organization representing farmers was strongly felt after the change of government in December 2000. Farmers' organizations that were on good terms with the previous government were suddenly not involved anymore in government decision-making. Since this has been the case with previous governments it was found necessary to create an a-political independent apex organization to enable farmers influence the political agenda. Over a time-span of almost two year several organizations were consulted. In general they were enthusiastic about the initiative of their colleagues, although every organization consulted expressed their fear for government interference. During this process IFDC was asked to facilitate the discussions, because the involvement of a *third party* was desirable.

In December 2002 a workshop for leaders of farmers' organizations was held in Dodowa to discuss the creation of an apex organization. To guide the participants in their discussions apex organizations from Uganda (The Uganda National Farmers Federation, UNFFE) and Nigeria (All Farmers Apex Association of Nigeria, ALFAAN) were invited as resource persons to share

their experiences. After three days of intensive discussions, participants were convinced of the need to establish an apex organization. The positive experience of learning from other umbrella organizations and the impression that there was much to be learned, IFDC organized a study tour for leaders of eight farmers' organizations to UNFFE in Uganda. During this tour participants grasped the basic ideas for the formulation of an apex body.

In October 2003 the study tour group, supported by IFDC, organized a workshop in Sogakope to form an apex farmers' organization for Ghana. With 63 representatives from 37 organizations attending the workshop, it turned out to be the biggest ever farmers' organizations conference held in Ghana. Participants discussed in detail the structure of the Executive Council, the function of an Executive Secretary, the first draft of the constitution and the details on membership. The name *Apex Farmers Organization of Ghana* and the slogan *Million of Farmers – One Voice* was adopted and a National Executive Council was elected.

Since APFOG's formation on 2nd October 2003 the organization has been registered, and the constitution finalized. A national office has been established in Accra and an executive secretary recruited. A lobby training was organized for the executive members and a Strategic Review Program has been organized for all members to gather information for the formulation of a Strategic Planning Document. APFOG has participated in national events such as the Farmers' Day in Cape Coast, and international events such as the 36th World Farmers Congress. Besides, APFOG signed a memorandum of understanding with IFDC for technical and financial support during the first year of its existence. Recently APFOG was accepted as member of IFAP. The official launching of APFOG will be held on August 20th, 2004 in Kade, Ghana.

For more information on APFOG, please contact our national office in Accra (e-mail: apfogsecretariat@yahoo.com or telephone +233-21 763 890 / 21 780 829 / 21 780 830).

Juliet Biney
APFOG Executive Secretary

Farmers' Organizations



IFAP 36th World Farmers' Congress

The 36th World Farmers' Congress of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) was held in Washington D.C. during the period May 29-4 June under the theme *Farmers Speaking for Themselves*. About 400 farmers from 70 countries and representatives from regional and international institutions gathered to discuss, exchange views and find solutions to the problems faced by the agricultural sector and farming communities worldwide.

GFAR Secretariat, for the first time, facilitated the participation of Regional Fora in the IFAP's biennial farmers' Congress with the objective of strengthening the linkages between farmers and researchers. Regional Fora representatives made various presentations during parallel regional sessions. These papers were prepared in most cases by tandem of a farmer and a researcher from the respective Regional Fora. The GFAR-Secretariat prepared a short introductory paper on GFAR, and presented this at each of the regional sessions, before the regional forum paper was presented. In addition, and in collaboration with the Rural Institutions and Participation Service of the Department of Sustainable Development of FAO, contributed a paper on strengthening the linkages by drawing on past experiences, to analyze the *why* and *how-* to strengthen these linkages. (Read the [paper](#)).

There was a consensus among participants/farmers on the importance of agricultural research and the role research can play not only in alleviating poverty but also in improving livelihoods of small farmers in developing countries. A theme that was frequently emphasized by farmers, especially those from developing countries, during the many discussion periods was the importance of developing FOs capacity in order to have fruitful and true farmers-centered research, since they currently lack the capacity to interact and work with researchers as equal partners.

Dr. Ola Smith, GFAR Executive Secretary also touched on this issue in his message to the plenary session, in which he focused on the crucial role farmers and their organizations could play as equal partners within the global scientific community in developing a multi-purpose agriculture that effectively contributes to poverty alleviation, food security, and sustainable natural resources utilization. (Read the [speech](#)).

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O.S.

Other topics that were discussed during the Congress include environment and natural resource management, agriculture and the WTO trade negotiations, strengthening farmers' involvement in rural development, and industrial concentration in the agri-food chain. For further information about the 36th World Farmers Congress, please visit IFAP's World Farmer [page](#).

The ultimate goal of the IFAP's biennial Congress is to provide a platform for farmers from both industrialized and developing countries to debate and discuss issues of mutual interest and set common priorities to challenge decision makers at national, regional and global levels.

IFAP is an international organization that represents 500 million farm families and groups in 100 national organizations from 70 countries. It was founded in 1946 and has General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Its Secretariat is based in Paris, France.

N.A.

Donors

Donor Contribution Acknowledgement

In the hustle and bustle of everyday activity that we undertake to address our mandate, and meet often self-imposed deadlines we forget to acknowledge the generous contributions of many bilateral and multi-lateral Institutions that support us and make it possible for us to provide the services we provide to our many stakeholders. We would like to take a pause from the hustle and bustle for once, and publicly acknowledge the support of our many benefactors whose generosity has made it possible for us to do many things including the regular publication of this newsletter. Our

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