



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

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Tempus fugit...And before you know it, year 2003 is over!

Indeed, our dear readers, this is the last issue of the GFAR electronic newsletter for this year. This year has been a very challenging one for GFAR.

Armed with the Secretariat work plan for 2003 which was presented and endorsed by you in Manila and the tasks you have mandated us to do, we were able accomplish several activities that allowed for continued interaction among stakeholders. In this issue, we are sharing with you some of the activities carried out by the stakeholders in the last three months.

To start with, GFAR now has a new Vice-Chair from the NGO stakeholder group in the person of Ms Monica Kapiriri. She succeeded Dr. Willem van Wuure who assumed the post for one year. The turn-over was held in Nairobi in October 2003 during the GFAR Steering Committee meeting. The editorial of this quarter's issue of the newsletter is in fact written by Kapiriri. Also included in this issue are the highlights of the GFAR October meetings, including the informal session of all the Executive Secretaries of the five regional fora who met for the first time as a group. Together, they have discussed ways of improving inter-regional collaboration in the context of GFAR.

This issue also features some updates from the various on-going activities being carried out by stakeholders ? Global.RAIS, link to the new website of the Facilitation Unit on Under-utilized species, results of the International Workshop on Post-harvest systems, cotton network, and Prolinnova (Promotion of Local Innovation). News from the five regional fora as well as from other GFAR stakeholders is also featured in this issue.

These are just among the activities in the last quarter of 2002. We will continue to keep you posted about the activities of various ARD stakeholders next year. We should mention that on 2-3 February 2004 a GFAR Retreat will be held in Florence, Italy to review and discuss the analysis and synthesis of the recommendations put forward by stakeholders in the GFAR 2003 Conference and to develop a draft GFAR Business Plan, 2004-2006 and GFAR Secretariat Programme of Work, 2004. These two documents will serve as GFAR instruments in continuing its journey towards contributing to addressing the GFAR mission of mobilizing the scientific community and all stakeholders in agricultural research for development, in an effort to alleviate poverty, increase food security and promote the sustainable use of natural resource endowments.

Meanwhile, we wish you Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Happy Reading, too!

O.O.

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Letter from The new GFAR Vice-Chair

Dear colleagues,

It is with hope, excitement mixed with trepidation that I send these greetings to you. Hope because this is a season when we are reminded that despite the ills that seem to crowd our days and seasons over the year, there is hope, and that hope never gives up. I am excited because of the tremendous opportunity GFAR presents to all of us, that of making this hope a reality in the lives of the millions of men and women, who may not afford gifts, parties, a square meal and warmth this season. Trepidation because I am aware of the enormous responsibility this position demands, and I can not help but keep asking myself; "What did you get yourself into"! May the blessings of the season, the renewed hope be yours now and always.

Secondly, I would like on behalf of the NGOs to thank GFAR stakeholders for this opportunity, and the trust they have demonstrated by nominating us into the Vice chair position. NGOs and Civil Society organizations have always been and will always be key stakeholders in agricultural research for development (ARD). However, the role of NGOs in decision-making has been peripheral, confined to relying on others to represent their issues at higher organizational levels. Our confidence in GFAR lies in one of its main attributes; that of providing a common meeting place in which all stakeholder constituencies can participate and utilizing their comparative advantages for research and development. I therefore understand this trust to mean the following:

That GFAR values the roles of NGOs in ARD: It is important therefore, to recognize that the full potential of NGOs in ARD is best unleashed when the sector diversity is given room to fully be expressed, and that the pressure for a single voice only alienates the vast majority of NGO categories. It is therefore my hope

that GFAR stakeholders will be committed to providing a home where NGOs will develop their diversity into synergies that will in turn strengthen the forum.

That GFAR is committed to supporting NGO efforts to strengthen its constituency: The meeting in Dakar generated priority areas for NGO strengthening. Mobilization and awareness raising especially at local and national levels, identifying priority innovations, technologies or approaches that can be tested and demonstrated in collaboration with other stakeholder groups. On this point I want to commend GFAR for its support to PROLINOVA initiative.

At the same time GFAR is *challenging NGOs to "do unto others as they would like to be done unto them"*. I can only relate this challenge to a saying from my home: "*Never trust a monkey to be objective when settling a forest boundary dispute*". The message being that naturally the monkey would side with extending the boundary into the farmland. It is therefore a challenge to ask NGOs to judge impartially when they have to vehemently defend their stand. I am confident however, that with guidance from the Chair and the rest of the executive, I will be able to contribute to GFAR efforts of providing the space and audience all groups need to develop their own constituencies and positions in the forum.

It is my sincere prayer that the next three years will see GFAR grow into a platform where all stakeholders can freely share successes, failures, challenges and aspirations and be received, guided, corrected and supported. Having said all this, I want to end with a reminder that the responsibility of all of making GFAR a forum that works for us and that we are proud to be part of rests with each one of us.

Thank you

Monica Kapiriri
GFAR Vice-Chair



New staff at GFAR Secretariat

October 14th of this year, GFAR Secretariat had a new addition, Nur Abdi, seconded by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. Mr. Abdi, a Somali born and Canadian resident, has joined GFAR from the graduate school of Department of Agricultural Economics at McGill University, Montreal, Canada. He has also studied in Egypt where he received B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Agricultural Economics in Alexandria University, Egypt. After attaining his Masters he worked, a period of one year, for the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Regional Office for the Near East (RNE) in Cairo, in the Policy Analysis Branch, where he was involved in the implementation of regional and sub-regional projects and assisted in designing agricultural development strategic frameworks for the member countries in the region. Mr. Abdi, will pursue the work of Ms. Lani Trenouth, who left the Secretariat last September. As the Farmers' Organizations Focal Point, Mr. Abdi will be involved in facilitating the participation of Farmers' Organization in GFAR activities and programs.

GFAR Secretariat

A new Business Plan for GFAR

The current GFAR Business Plan (BP) the second in the series was designed to cover the period of 2001 to 2003, and a new one the third in the series will cover the period of 2004-2006. The preparatory phase for this third BP started a little while ago, when the Dakar 2003 Conference working group indicated that one of the main expected outputs of that Conference was the definition of a framework or the identification of essential elements for the GFAR Business Plan for the triennium 2004-2006. Stakeholders responded admirably during the Conference, and formulated a series of recommendations which contained

such essential elements. Shortly after the Conference, the Secretariat synthesized and summarized these recommendations, and combined them with an analysis of the status of implementation of the 2001-2003 BP, to produce a working document for the formulation of the new BP (2004-2006).

Representatives of the various GFAR stakeholder groups have been invited to a BP formulation retreat during which they will use the working document and other pertinent documentation to complete the process of formulating the third GFAR BP (2004-2006). We believe this approach of active participation and involvement of GFAR Stakeholders in the development of our next BP fully respects the participatory decision making principles of GFAR, and will ensure a strong stakeholder commitment to its implementation.

The invited 25 participants are: the Executive Secretaries of Regional Fora, and representatives from the Farmers' Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, International Agricultural Research Centres, Advanced Research Institutions, the Private Sector and Donor support Group. Members of the GFAR Management Team will participate as well, to play an oversight role. The process will be moderated by a facilitator.

The retreat will be held from the 2nd to the 3rd of February 2004, at the Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare in Florence, Italy. We look forward to what promises to be an exciting and fruitful retreat, and will promptly share the outcome with the GFAR family and friends.

O.S.

GFAR Statutory Meetings 2003

The year 2003 in retrospect: a report from the GFAR Secretariat

The year 2003 was an eventful one in many respects. This was the year that a new Executive Secretary came on board to manage affairs at the Secretariat with all of the changes that implied. It was also the year of GFAR triennial Conference, an important land mark in the affairs of GFAR. In reviewing our stewardship during the year 2003, we were able to

group our accomplishments under the following four categories of activities: **facilitating the system governance operations, engaging and interacting with stakeholders, facilitating Research Partnerships, and providing a medium of communication and knowledge sharing for GFAR stakeholders and their collaborators.**

With regards to **facilitating the systems governance operations**, we organized a series of statutory meetings during which important decisions related to the governance of GFAR and the activities of its stakeholders were taken. These meetings ensured that the governance wheel of GFAR moved smoothly, and that GFAR remained functional. Examples are:

1. A Management Team Meeting (MTM) held in February 17th -18th 2003, during which important decisions were taken with regards to such issues as the minimum critical staffing at the Secretariat; relationship with GPP Facilitating Units; fine tuning preparations for the GFAR 2003 conference.
2. The GFAR 2003 conference itself (May 22-24), which constitutes an important statutory meeting of GFAR that brings all of its stakeholders together to renew alliances and provide guidelines and input on the issues on which the group as a whole should focus over a three-year period. It was a major undertaking for the Secretariat which, in collaboration with a Conference Organizing Committee, designed the meeting agenda, and then undertook all of the organizational activities required for the meeting to hold as scheduled, including raising funds to finance the meeting. By all accounts, including formal and informal evaluation by the participants as well as a meeting post mortem by the Secretariat, GFAR 2003 was successful in that it addressed the set objectives and achieved the expected outputs.
3. A series of four committee meetings held in October (25-27) in conjunction with the CGIAR AGM 03. These were the NARS sub-committee, the GFAR Steering Committee and the Donor Support Group (DSG) meetings. The fourth

meeting (the first of its kind) was convened to allow the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Fora to meet and deliberate on how to facilitate and promote inter-regional collaboration, an issue of great importance to GFAR.

Detailed reports of all of these statutory meetings have been prepared and disseminated for information via several media, including on the EGFAR web-site.

In accordance with our mandate of **interacting with and providing support to stakeholders**, the following activities were carried out during the current year.

1. Update of the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Data Base. The current GFAR database on CSOs was updated and expanded through a formal survey and web searches, which yielded an additional 50 odd entries. The database will soon be linked to the EGFAR in the form of a searchable database, which will eventually be managed by the CSOs themselves through the EGFAR Back Office system (EBO), in order to ensure regular updating and an increased sense of ownership
2. Building a CSO network in the Southern Caucasus. The Secretariat participated in an initiative of NGOs and farmers organisations (FOs) in the Southern Caucasus designed to organise themselves into a network, for a more effective contribution to a common objective. During a two-day meeting held on 31 March to 01 April 2003 in Tbilisi Georgia, NGOs and FOs from Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, met with the objective of laying the foundation of a network that will take up the challenge of raising awareness to current constraints to the agricultural sector, map out strategies to ensure the voices of the NGOs and FOs are heard and that they contribute to decision making processes related to ARD. One of the outputs of the meeting was the adoption of an agenda that will guide them towards achieving the set objective. The Secretariat will continue to monitor and facilitate this initiative, and will make use of the outputs of this

workshop in defining future efforts to strengthen CSOs in the region.

3. Contribution to the development of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) research priorities. This year we intensified on-going collaborative efforts between the GFAR Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Interim Science Council. The objective of our joint effort was to ensure that recently identified Regional Fora research priorities are taken into account by the CGIAR centres as they formulate new research priorities and implementation strategies for their own programmes of research. The GFAR Secretariat identified and recommended participants for the various stakeholder and scientific consultations organized by the Interim Science Council Secretariat, and also facilitated a feedback process to GFAR stakeholders during the GFAR 2003 conference. In addition, the Secretariat participated actively in the development of the Challenge Programme (CP) on Unlocking genetic diversity in crops for the resource poor, and represents GFAR on the Programme Steering Committee (PSC) of the CP. Moreover, it facilitated the participation of 4 representatives from GFAR stakeholder groups in a Technical Planning Workshop of the CP during the month of August. Finally the Secretariat started the process of establishing a GFAR stakeholder committee to advise the PSC, and provide a feedback and consultative mechanism to the various stakeholders.

During the current year, the Secretariat **facilitated the development of a number of Global Partnership Programmes** focused on one or the other of the four areas of global importance identified in our Business Plan. Two of the more advanced initiatives focused on Rural Knowledge Systems and Innovation Processes and Rural Innovation for the Support and Development of Small and Medium sized Agro-Enterprises. The two initiatives have brought together a number of different stakeholders who are moving towards working together on common problems. We hope that these and perhaps one or two others will start being implemented in the coming year.

In order to **facilitate communication and knowledge sharing amongst GFAR stakeholders**, the Secretariat was given the mandate to develop, manage and maintain an electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research (EGFAR) and to assist Regional Fora to develop manage and maintain their own Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS). This mandate was admirably addressed by the Secretariat during the current year. Firstly, the EGFAR became a more dynamic, iterative and user friendly site, and now features a new tool for uploading information allowing stakeholders to manage the content of some pages and/or information contained in EGFAR database through a decentralized input process. This tool, the EGFAR Back Office System (EBO) brings us that much closer to our goal of developing a truly decentralized information and communication management system because of the decentralized nature of the GFAR set up and our commitment to full and active stakeholder participation in all of our activities.

Secondly, within the context of a Global Regional Agricultural Information System (Global RAIS) project the Secretariat facilitated the implementation of three (WANA, CAC and APAARI) out of five planned workshops. The two others (FARA and FORAGRO) will be held early in 2004, as will the Inter-regional workshop. The objective being on one hand for each RF/SRF to develop and implement an information-communication strategy that will benefit from synergies and economies of scale at both the national and regional levels, and on the other hand, to develop a global strategic agenda that will link all of the regions, and facilitate a bottom up approach for the implementation of a global information system.

In terms of knowledge sharing and information dissemination, we continued the tradition of publishing an EGFAR quarterly newsletter in two formats - PDF distributed to the 1500 stakeholders on the GFAR-stakeholder mailing list, and - HTML available online in the newsletter section. The only edition of the newsletter published this year, focused on the GFAR 2003 conference.

Other publications that were completed and disseminated this year were:

- case studies on Innovative Research Partnerships presented during the 2000 GFAR conference, held in Dresden in the form of a CD ROM
- Initiative on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in a book form
- GFAR 2003 proceedings in a book form

As indicated earlier, the year was an eventful one, and we have highlighted some of those events that show GFAR is poised to take giant strides towards its goals, and that its Secretariat has positioned itself to facilitate movement in that direction. With an expanding Donor Support Base, and increasing expression of interest in GFAR and its activities, the future looks bright and promising, and we invite all stakeholders to also renew their commitment to the GFAR.

O.S.

GFAR Statutory Meetings 2003



NARS Sub-Committee meeting

The meeting was held on 25 October 2003 from 14:00 to 18:30 in Nairobi, Kenya, and was presided by GFAR Chair Mohammad Roozitalab. Present during the meeting were all the Chairs and Executive Secretaries of the five regional fora.

Each regional fora was given 15-minutes to make their presentation which was then followed by a 15-minute discussion, it was noted that all the RF are making good progress as regards their respective activities. During this meeting, the new Chair and Executive Secretaries from Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC), Latin America and the Caribbean (FORAGRO), AARINENA and FARA were introduced as they have just been elected to their post recently.

Potential thematic areas for inter-regional collaboration were identified. However, given the large number of potential areas, it was agreed that there is a need to be strategic which

means to focus on, as well, on the building of comparative advantage and on the strengthen and merging of opportunities in each region.

It was recommended that the functions, membership and mechanisms by which the NARS Sub-committee operates be revisited. It was intended that in the future the NARS sub-committee will be playing a more programmatic role. As the topic has implications on the current GFAR Charter, it was recommended that the Charter be revisited. A group will be charged to conduct the review with the GFAR Management Team driving the process.

A detailed report of the meeting can be find on the web site.

O.O. & A.S.

GFAR Statutory Meetings 2003



GFAR Steering Committee meeting

The GFAR Steering Committee was held last 26 October 2003 in Nairobi, Kenya.

During this meeting which was attended by various stakeholders, GFAR Secretariat presented progress made so far since the Manila meeting which took place in October 2002. The outline of the GFAR Business Plan 2004-2006 was also presented. Participants also endorsed the process by which the Business Plan will be developed.

Updates on some Global Partnership Programme (GPPs) and pending projects were also presented, namely: outcome of the International Workshop on Under-utilized species; Promoting Local Innovation (Prolinnova): Ethiopian Experience; Global RAIS; Programme DURAS; portfolio of projects aimed at strengthening civil society organizations (CSOs); and Post-harvest Systems Initiative. In the ensuring discussion, the need for active involvement of Regional Fora on all these activities was stressed.

Stakeholders made their respective statements and reported their

activities in the previous year. For instance, the advanced research institutions (ARIs) stakeholder group expressed their preference not to be referred to as "ARIs" as the term itself appears to be a misnomer since even in the so-called "South," there exist some "advanced research institutions." It was also cited that European "ARIs," are grouping them as forum where NGOs are also involved, thus qualifying them as a regional fora. Several suggestions were also put forward in establishing North American Fora (NAFAR), as well as inviting China as an observer in GFAR.

The financial situation of GFAR in 2003 and budget for 2004 was presented. It was also reported that several projects in support of achieving the objectives of GFAR will be launched in 2004.

Also during this meeting, the NGO group took over the GFAR Vice-chair position after an extensive consultation amongst them. Ms Monica Kapiriri (Aga Khan Foundation) was nominated to serve in that capacity. Meanwhile, the Farmers' Organizations have accepted to start consultations amongst themselves in order to nominate a new representative to the GFAR Steering Committee as a replacement for the current incumbent who has served over the last three years. Recently, Mr. Jack Nicholson, President of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), was nominated to the GFAR Steering Committee. It was also decided during this meeting that the GFAR charter will be revisited and that a small group will be tasked to do this, with the GFAR Management Team driving the process.

CGIAR Chair Ian Johnson and CGIAR Director Francisco Reifschneider joined GFAR towards the end of its Steering Committee. Among others, they acknowledged the role played by GFAR in the development of some Challenge Programmes, and expressed interest in exploring with GFAR ways by which the CGIAR can from GFAR experience in engaging NGOs. Possible World Bank support to GFAR will also be explored in the future.

O.O. & A.S.

GFAR Statutory Meetings 2003



Donor Support Group meeting

The meeting was held on the 27th of October in Nairobi, Kenya and was chaired by Dr. Rodney Cooke of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). It was well attended, and thus reflected GFAR's renewed effort to broaden its support base.

Current and new donors present during this session reaffirmed their commitment to support GFAR. Some others, which GFAR considers as potential donors (e.g. DFID, USAID, WB), adequately directed GFAR in how to pursue negotiations for possible support.

It was recommended to work other ways of channeling funds to GFAR in order to minimize administrative constraints and to avoid overhead costs. One example cited was the Italian contribution which would be channeled through FAO as if it were an Italian funded project. There were also discussions as whether donors could consider the BP 2003-2006 as basis for pledging its financial contribution to GFAR. This proposal received mixed reactions, and many responded that they would have to study if this would be possible.

The GFAR Chair underscored in his concluding remarks that GFAR goes beyond agricultural research *per se* and plays an important role in agriculture and rural development while focusing on building national capacities and effective partnerships in ARD.

He then thanked everyone present in the meeting for their participation.

A detailed report of the meeting can be find on the web site.

O.O. & A.S.



First meeting of the Regional Fora Executive Secretaries

The Regional Fora Executive Secretaries' Meeting was the first of its kind convened by the GFAR Secretariat. It was held on the 27th of October 2003 in Nairobi Kenya and was attended by all the Executive Secretaries of all the five Regional Fora, with Dr. Ola Smith, GFAR Executive Secretary as presiding. The aim is to establish a stronger and more efficient coordination among the RF, facilitate inter-regional collaboration, and exchange of information on relevant activities that they plan at regional level.

Issues discussed involved the schedule of the GFAR Statutory meetings, interactions between the GFAR Secretariat-RF and themes for inter-regional collaboration.

Participants agreed that GFAR SM meetings would be held twice yearly - one linked to AGM, and another one linked to RF Executive Committee meeting ? in the next two years. The advantages and disadvantages of this set-up would be studied and then decide later on whether to continue or not with such schedule. GFAR was requested to play a facilitating role in bridging AARINENA and FARA together. Towards this end, FARA invited a North African country representative to sit in the ExCo as an observer. Regional Fora Executive Secretaries also recognized the need to foster discussions for the development of effective inter-regional collaborations. It was agreed to share the programs of work of the Executive Secretaries to facilitate the planning of activities ahead of time.

FORAGRO and AARINENA came forward and made their respective offers to host the next Executive Secretaries Meeting. The two proposals will be studied and a final decision will be taken as soon as possible.

A detailed report of the meeting can be found on the web site.

AGORA: 69 Countries qualify for free access to scientific literature over the Internet

Mark your calendars for October 14! On that day in Rome, the Food and Agriculture Organization, together with Cornell University's Mann Library, the Rockefeller Foundation and nine major publishers will roll out AGORA: Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture. AGORA is an Internet portal (<http://www.aginternetwork.org/>) that links users to full-text articles in 600+ agricultural science journals. From Agricultural Economics to Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society, eligible developing country researchers will be able to download the world's latest published literature to their office or home computer at no cost.

Founding publishers include Blackwell Publishing; CABI, Elsevier, Kluwer Academic Publishers; Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins, Oxford University Press, Springer Verlag and John Wiley and Sons. An additional 60 commercial publishers, learned societies, governmental and international organizations will be approached to contribute content as well.

Anyone can use AGORA and browse its journal collection up to the abstract level. Free access to the full-text articles, however, is only offered to countries, areas and territories with annual GNP per capita of less than US\$1,000. Sixty-nine countries qualify in this initial phase.

Within eligible countries, institutions whose staff and students may have access to the journals include educational, government and research organizations that have a non-profit status and focus on agriculture and related biological, environmental and social sciences.

List of countries which will be eligible for free access (GNP per capita < \$1000):

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

O.O. & A.S.	Angola	Ethiopia	Niger
	Benin	Gambia	Nigeria
	Burkina F.	Ghana	Rwanda

Burundi	Guinea	Sao Tome & Principe
Cameroon	Guinea-Bissau	Senegal
Central African Republic	Kenya	Sierra Leone
Chad	Lesotho	Somalia
Comoros	Liberia	Sudan
Congo	Madagascar	Togo
Côte d'Ivoire	Malawi	Uganda
Dem Rep of Mali		United Rep of Tanzania
Congo		
Djibouti	Mauritania	Zambia
Eritrea	Mozambique	Zimbabwe

Asia-Pacific

Afghanistan	Kiribati	Papua New Guinea
Bangladesh	Lao	Solomon Islands
	People's Dem. Rep.	
Bhutan	Mongolia	Tokelau
Cambodia	Myanmar	Tuvalu
Dem. Rep. of Timor	Nepal	Vietnam
	Leste	

West Asia and North Africa

Yemen

Central and Eastern Europe & the Caucasus

Albania	Kyrgyzstan	Ukraine
Armenia	Rep. of Moldova	Uzbekistan
Azerbaijan	Tajikistan	
Georgia	Turkmenistan	

Latin America & the Caribbean

Guyana Nicaragua Honduras
Haiti

To take full advantage of AGORA, users must have at least a 56 kbps Internet connection. The system is designed to work best with Internet Explorer version 4.0 or higher, or Netscape version 4.5 or higher. Users will also need an Adobe Acrobat viewer for journal articles in PDF.

The AGORA website will offer an indexed database for searching AGORA's content, with direct links to the journals' abstracts and full-text articles. AGORA incorporates the fundamental design and systems elements of two existing resources: TEEAL and HINARI. TEEAL is The Essential Electronic Agricultural

Library, which was developed by Mann Library at Cornell University and provides access to agricultural journals on CD-ROM (<http://www.teeal.org/>). TEEAL offers the most affordable solution to information access at institutions that cannot yet take advantage of the Internet. HINARI (<http://www.healthinternetwork.org/>) is the equivalent to AGORA in the health sector. It was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and launched in January 2002. AGORA builds on and shares the infrastructure of HINARI. This collaboration between the agriculture and health sectors saved significant costs for systems development and will allow for efficiencies in training and outreach.

Financial assistance for AGORA's development has been provided by the Rockefeller Foundation, the UK's Department for International Development and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Interested users need to complete and submit the online registration form (<http://www.aginternetwork.org/>). If you have any questions that cannot be answered by visiting AGORA's website, please email us (AGORA@fao.org).

Olivia Went
TEEAL/AGORA Outreach Coordinator

Global Initiatives
Facilitation Units



GLOBAL.RAIS project: where we are

The GLOBAL.RAIS project is half its way now; after the first regional workshop held in February this year in the AARINENA region, the second regional consultation has recently been held for the APAARI region in Bangkok, Thailand, at the beginning of December. The pause between the first and second workshop was due understandable constraints: GFAR Conference held in May that fully engaged all GFAR Secretariat staff not only in the preparation but also in the follow-up.

Finally the GFAR Secretariat team is now ready to organize all the remaining regional consultations and the inter-regional workshop that will mark the end of this first phase of GLOBAL.RAIS.

Next dates are:

- **27-28 January 2004**, Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Regional Workshop for the Central Asia & the Caucasus region
- Last week of **February 2004** (date to be defined), San José, Costa Rica: Regional Workshop for the Latin America & the Caribbean region
- Last week of **March 2004** (date to be defined), Accra, Ghana: Regional Workshop for Sub-Saharan Africa
- **27-28 April 2004**, Rome, Italy: Inter-regional Workshop

The project has been extended until the end of April. A very positive outcome of the two regional consultations, is the participation of representatives coming from other regions leading to very interesting discussion and opened the way to future fruitful collaborations at the inter-regional level.

We are now envisaging the second phase of the GLOBAL.RAIS project; once the picture of regional requirements and possible ways of interaction/collaboration between regions is clear, it will be the time to work at the practical level, connecting existing systems (EARD-Infosys+, APARIS, INFOTEC) or developing modules for the "new" ones (AARINENA, FARA, CAC).

Personal contacts with RAIS managers as well as initial collaboration at technical level make us very optimistic in this regards.

F.B.

Global Initiatives
Facilitation Units



GFU for Underutilized Species website

We are pleased to inform the GFAR community that the GFU's website has been launched. The aim of the site is to be the internet gateway to information on underutilized species for a large and diverse clientele. The site is not intended to duplicate existing efforts, but rather to provide an umbrella or portal to all available sources of information about underutilized species. The kind of information accessible through this portal ranges from details of specific crops, events of interest, important topics related to underutilized species, to relevant publications. Shortly it will provide a database of experts and ongoing activities on underutilized species. Besides making knowledge available for download, the site also intends to offer a platform for communication among interested parties. The portal is hosted at IPGRI. After analyzing various options this decision was taken during the last steering committee meeting in March. All members appreciated IPGRI's offer and support to this site. IPGRI has committed itself to host the portal for the time being, while the GFU is still using its resources to maintain and update it. IPGRI, however, would be pleased to collaborate with other agencies to seek resources for a long-term solution.

The website's URL is
www.underutilized-species.org.

Please, visit the site and send us your feedback and contributions to be included.

We recently have conducted a global survey among different stakeholder groups to get an overview on current and past activities on underutilized species activities and on the organizations being involved. The data obtained will be compiled in a searchable database. This will facilitate improved networking and development of synergies among stakeholders. An essential part of the information will be an expert list, which will allow interested actors to contact each other in their particular field of expertise. We are confident that this kind of information will be useful to stakeholders and will

contribute to active and fruitful interactions among the "underutilized species community". It will provide an opportunity to make the work and expertise of an organization or an individual known to a large community.

An International Workshop on Underutilized Plant Species was held in May 2003 in Leipzig, Germany. The workshop was jointly organized by the GFU, Capacity Building International InWEnt, and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation GTZ. The German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development BMZ, the International Fund for Agricultural Cooperation IFAD and the Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation CTA sponsored the workshop. The meeting has convened more than 50 representatives of government bodies, the private sector, development agencies, NGOs, networks, donors and research institutions. The objectives of the workshop were to identify the strategic elements for the promotion and sustainable utilization of underutilized plant species and to recommend next steps and potential actors for their implementation. In brief the following outputs were obtained:

1) In view of the range of existing terms used for underutilized plant species, which include minor, neglected, local, traditional, underexploited, underdeveloped, orphan, lost, new, niche, promising and alternative, and which all have their limitations, advantages and disadvantages the participants agreed on the following working definition: *Underutilized plant species are those with a potential, not fully exploited, to contribute to food security and poverty alleviation. The promotion of their use should happen in a sustainable fashion.* A particular point of discussion was the range of species to be included (e.g. traditional varieties of major crops, which remain underutilized) and the level of utilization to be characterized as *underutilized*. The clarification of these issues was beyond the scope of the workshop and will remain as an important future task.

2) It was recognized that due to the diversity of underutilized plant species it is important to identify groups of species, which share key commonalities with regard to their

contributions to food security/health, income generation, non-material benefits and biodiversity/environmental services. This is not for the purpose of prioritizing plant species at an early stage, but rather to be able to develop more targeted promotion strategies based on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified for each of these plant groups.

3) Several approaches generally used for the promotion of underutilized species were discussed. All approaches have their individual strengths and weaknesses, which suggests that no single approach can be successful- a combination of different approaches will be required, depending on the objective of the promotion of underutilized plant species, the type of species and the respective project context. The participants identified the following key characteristics required within an approach to successfully target and benefit poor people with the promotion of underutilized plant species and to minimize the available risks and weaknesses of each approach:

- Recognition of underutilized plant species as public goods in order to ensure the continued availability and accessibility of the plant genetic resources to present and future generations
- Fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from the use of underutilized plant species for sustainable agriculture and food security.
- Strengthening the capacity of marginalized people in the negotiation with private sector and government.
- Access to information for all stakeholders in order to ensure equal positioning in decision making.
- Participatory and multi-stakeholder oriented approaches to provide for inclusion and consideration of different interests and needs

4) The participants established eight intervention areas, which allow for targeted support to underutilized species. These areas are: Conservation/improvement of and

access to plant genetic resources; policy and legislation; capacity building; information generation and management; awareness creation and lobbying; marketing; post-harvest handling and processing; and inter-sectoral interventions.

5) Strategic elements relevant for the promotion and sustainable utilization for underutilized plant species have been identified under each area of intervention.

6) Actors have been identified that should contribute to the implementation of the strategic elements under the different areas of intervention.

A full workshop report will be soon available on our website.

During this workshop and through other interactions with stakeholders it became clear that exploiting the economic potential of underutilized species is most attractive for many countries and communities and represents the driving force for conservation of these species. The growing demand in developed and developing countries for more variety and novelty in food and other products is creating new markets for underutilized species. This situation can generate new opportunities for additional income for poor farmers in less favored environments where these species have a comparative advantage over staples and other commercial crops. However, producers and exporters are often lacking information on what the market demands and do not have the necessary contacts with potential importers/buyers. The GFU was requested to provide support in these areas. Therefore a study on "Market opportunities for underutilized species products - What does the market want?" has been commissioned. It will provide an overview of the interest of commercial food, pharmaceutical, cosmetics and other companies in Europe and the USA for underutilized species products. The survey focuses on fair trade companies in order to guarantee benefit sharing to the producers, but also includes conventional business companies for the purpose of a broader view. The information gathered will be made available to the stakeholders together with a list of contacts of the interested companies for a further and detailed market research on particular species and their products.

A potential trade barrier for commercialization of underutilized species products in Europe is the EU Novel Food Regulation. This regulation refers to food that has not been consumed within the EU to a significant degree before May 1997. If a food is considered novel, an assessment of the food's safety by the member state's competent authority is required before it can be placed on the market. The process scrutinizes the novel food against the objectives of the Novel Food Regulation, which are to ensure that it does not represent a danger for the consumer nor that its consumption is nutritionally disadvantageous. The person or firm that wants to place a food item on the EU market has to first evaluate whether the food is novel or not and to present evidence to support the case. If the product is novel, the applicant has to provide scientific evidence that proves the safety of the food for the consumers. The Regulation has in some cases led to the rejection of an imported food within the EU. Many novel food items are derived from underutilized species. The costs, complexity, duration and uncertain outcome of the NFR procedures have discouraged the typically small firms in this sector to file applications. Against this background the GFU together with the GTZ Project on Agro-biodiversity has commissioned a study to analyze the implications of the NFR on trade with underutilized species. The study is available to all interested parties on our website. The results of the Novel Food study have been presented to the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development BMZ. It has been pointed out that the Regulation might be in conflict with the Ministry's and EU's objective to facilitate the access of developing countries to international markets. A meeting at the German Ministry of Consumer Protection, Nutrition and Agriculture BMVEL was organized involving also BMZ, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation GTZ, the International Potato Center CIP and GFU. A proposal, prepared by CIP, containing suggestions for an amendment of the Regulation that considers the interests and needs of developing to export these products to the EU was discussed. In a joint CIP-GTZ-GFU activity an update of the proposal has been prepared for official submission to BMVEL. The Ministry committed itself to analyze the suggestions for their compliance with German Food Law and then to submit

them to the EU working group on Novel Food for their potential consideration during the upcoming revision of the Regulation.

Imrgard Hoeschle-Zeledon
Coordinator, GFU for Underutilized Species

*Global Initiatives
 Facilitation Units*



Outcomes of the International Workshop on a Global Post-harvest Initiative - Linking Farmers to Markets

Investment in the post-harvest sector has potential to contribute to sustainable economic growth, poverty alleviation and food security in developing countries. Yet the focus of development assistance is still substantially in favour of increased agricultural production which under some circumstances may lower farm incomes, for example, through falling prices. Cognizant of the importance of post-harvest development in developing countries, GFAR, the Agricultural Support Systems Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO/AGS) and the Global Post-Harvest Forum (Ph Action) recently agreed to work collaboratively on the development of a new post-harvest initiative: *A Global Post-harvest Systems Initiative for the 21st Century: Linking Farmers to Markets*. To this end, a Draft Strategic Framework was developed.

With the objective to review and endorse this framework an International Workshop was convened by GFAR, AGS, and PhAction on 7-9 October 2003. A vast diversity of stakeholders from both the supply and beneficiary sides, representing all regions, attended the event. During the three days of the workshop, working groups on a Regional basis were formed, which carefully analyzed and modified each section of the Strategic Framework. It was recognized that the new initiative offers an innovative platform for a supply chain approach to post-harvest development. The framework acknowledges the central role of a

market-oriented approach to address the post-harvest and production problems. The initiative also offers participation of stakeholders in the development and implementation of the initiative, at the lowest most effective level in keeping with the concept of a Global Partnership Programme.

In the last day, during Plenary session, the Framework was finally endorsed, and the next steps for moving forward the initiative defined: GFAR, FAO/AGS and PhAction were asked, in fact, to convene an Interim Coordinating Committee. A revised version of the Strategic Framework, which takes into account the various suggestions of all the stakeholders is now being prepared.

More detailed information on the elements of the Strategic Framework, and on the moving forward of the initiative can be obtained by contacting directly the GFAR Secretariat.

A.S.

*Global Initiatives
 Facilitation Units*



Inter-Regional Network of Cotton in Asia and North Africa (INCANA)

INCANA was established on the recommendation of the Inter-regional Workshop on Cotton which was held in October 2002 in Tehran, Iran. The countries participated in the workshop were Azerbaijan, Greece, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. In addition to these countries, representatives from some international and regional research organizations naming APAARI, AARINENA, CAC, GFAR, and ICARDA attended this workshop.

Cotton plays an important role in the economy of many developing countries. This strategic industrial crop has a wide range of application and provide significant employment opportunities for rural poor people in many developing countries. Some

important facts about cotton are as follows:

- Cotton is not just a fiber, but food (oil) and fuel (white gold)
- Grown by many resource poor farmers in about 70 countries in 5 continents around the world
- Provides significant employment and rural livelihood in many developing countries
- No international research centers to support NARS and develop technologies for sustainable cotton production in different regions
- Many agronomic, environmental and economic constraints

Considering the importance of cotton role in sustainable development of developing countries, optimization of cotton agronomy and farming through performing research projects in different fields such as seed improvement, pests and diseases control, irrigation, application of pesticides and fertilizers, cotton quality, processing, etc. is of prime importance.

In this regard, the most pivotal challenges should be addressed through an intact research priority setting. The participants in the Workshop agreed upon the following research priorities for cotton:

- Water management and increasing water use efficiency.
- Development of early maturing varieties tolerant to drought, salinity and biotic stresses.
- Integrated pest management and decreasing pesticides applications.
- Cotton quality and technology.
- Weed management.
- Nutrient (both micro and macro) management.
- Growth regulators.
- Hybrid and transgenic cotton.
- Mechanization & farm management.

- Increasing crop productivity and intensity of cropping system.
- Economics and commerce.

The participating countries in the Workshop felt the necessity of establishing a cotton research network in order to harmonize and make coordination between the research activities and share the new research findings with other members. This could accelerate research development and decrease the costs and provides a collaborative environment for different stakeholders to work together on collaborative research projects.

As agreed by the Network members, the Secretariat of the Network was established in the **Cotton Research Institute**, Agricultural Research and Education Organization (AREO) in Iran.

Missions of the Network are:

- Establishment of an information management system on cotton.
- Exchange of germplasm.
- Publication of a monthly electronic and a regular newsletter.
- Organization of conferences, workshops and training courses.
- Publication of successful cases on cotton production within the member countries.
- Organizing the annual meeting of Network- Steering Committee in member countries.

The workshop established the Steering Committee which consists of directors of cotton research institutes/heads of cotton research departments of the member countries and representatives from APAARI, AARINENA, CAC, GFAR, ICARDA, and AREO. The Steering Committee will have an annual meeting: on a rotational basis in one of the member countries to review the progress made and to oversee the activities of the Network.

Financial Contributions have been received in 2003 from APAARI, AARINENA, ICARDA and AREO for starting the activities.

Agricultural Research and Education Organization (AREO), Iran has also provided an office and needed facilities including e-mail (incana@accir.com), fax and telephone as well as appointing the Network Secretary and staff.

Network Achievements in 2003 are:

- Contacting the NARS in APAARI/AARINENA/CAC regions as well as ARIs such CIRAD, France (joining the Network, exchanges of germplasm and information).
- Establishment of a data base on the AARINENA Website (<http://www.aarinena.org/>).
- Planning to prepare the data bases (research institutes, research programs and scientists) for NARS in the APAARI/AARINENA/CAC regions.
- Publishing soon an electronic and regular newsletter on cotton.
- Organizing in June 2004 in Tashkent the 2nd Network Steering Committee Meeting.

Workplan 2004-2005 is the following:

- Information exchange through coordinating units, website, newsletters, booklets, annual reports, etc.
- Directory of cotton researchers in the region.
- Data base on research programmers and projects in the network countries.
- Publication of success stories from different countries on cotton production technologies.
- Information on area, production, productivity, incidence and damage due to the pests and diseases, abiotic stresses, etc.
- Pest risk analysis.
- Training programs.
- Visits of scientists.
- Travelling workshops.

- Exchange of germplasm.
- Joint research projects.

Mohammad H. Roozitalab
GFAR Chair

Global Initiatives/Facilitation Units

Progress with Prolinnova

The idea for Prolinnova (PROMoting Local INNOVation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management) developed four years ago. A group made up mainly of NGOs met in Rambouillet, France, in December 1999, with the support of the GFAR, the NGO Committee of the CGIAR and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to discuss how to forge global partnerships in agro-ecological research and development (R&D). Three areas of partnership were discussed:

- InterDev, to manage practical information on natural resource management (NRM)
- Prolinnova, to identify local innovations and promote participatory innovation processes
- PolicyNet, to address policy and institutional issues in agro-ecology and NRM.

At that time, the subgroup discussing Prolinnova asked ETC Ecoculture (Netherlands) to coordinate the further development of the concept and proposal and to lobby for support from donors. The Rambouillet Group can now feel satisfied that Prolinnova is well on its way.

In 2003, IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) provided funds for the participatory design of Prolinnova programmes in three countries: Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda. In each country, multi-stakeholder steering groups collected local experiences in recognizing farmer innovation and experimentation and promoting participatory technology/innovation development (PTD/PID). They convened workshops to analyze their experiences and, on this basis, developed action plans to improve and scale up participatory approaches to farmer-led R&D. More information

about this bottom-up process towards a global partnership programme can be found on the Prolinnova website (<http://www.prolinnova.net/>).

In the meantime, NGOs in several other countries have developed proposals for facilitating similar processes of participatory design of their own Prolinnova programmes at national or sub-national level. Recently, the Netherlands Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS) agreed to give partial support to Prolinnova as an international network convened by civil-society organizations (CSOs) for institutionalizing participatory approaches to environmentally-sound use of natural resources. This will allow the start-up of Prolinnova programmes in Cambodia, Nepal, Niger, South Africa, Sudan and Tanzania but, because the funds are quite limited, some will start in 2004 and others in 2005. Moreover, DGIS stipulates that at least 35% of the activities in the proposal be funded from other sources.

The national plans differ, depending on the experience and self-identified strengths and weaknesses in recognizing the dynamics of indigenous knowledge, engaging in PTD/PID and institutionalizing the approach. However, they have some common elements, such as:

- inventory of initiatives in promoting local innovation and of the organisations involved
- national multi-stakeholder learning platforms
- capacity building, including training and coaching, in identifying and documenting local innovation and in PTD/PID
- implementation of PTD/PID activities by partners, building on local innovation and involving participatory experimentation led by local people, and participatory monitoring and evaluation of the joint activities, outcomes and impacts
- process documentation of Prolinnova experiences
- awareness-raising and policy dialogue activities to create a

favourable environment for Prolinnova approaches.

The national-level activities are supported in terms of coordination, administration, capacity building, methodological backstopping, advocacy, electronic exchange, web-based knowledge management, documentation, editing and publishing by four organizations: the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction with headquarters in the Philippines), the Swiss Centre for Agricultural Extension, the Dutch Centre for International Cooperation at the Free University of Amsterdam, and ETC Ecoculture. Collaboration in action research on partnership building to scale up participatory approaches in R&D is also being planned with universities in the Prolinnova partner countries.

For activities at international level, this international support team has been piecing together a mosaic of funds from different sources. One of the main activities was a study and workshop on "Advancing Participatory Technology Development", i.e. further developing PTD, scaling it up and integrating it into mainstream agricultural research, extension and education. At the workshop held in at IIRR headquarters, participants presented and analyzed case studies from Brazil, Cameroon, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, Ethiopia, Honduras, India, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, Uganda, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. IIRR published the proceedings (*Participatory Technology Development for agricultural improvement: challenges for institutional integration*) and a selection of edited papers (*Advancing Participatory Technology Development: case studies on integration into agricultural research, extension and education*). These books can be obtained from IIRR (bookstore@iirr.org). The proceedings and case studies can also be downloaded from the Prolinnova website and are available on CD-ROM.

Prolinnova received support for the Advancing PTD workshop and publications from CTA (ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation), DGIS, Misereor (Germany), the NGO Committee of the CGIAR, Rockefeller Foundation and the Swiss Development Cooperation.

The next big event will be the international workshop in March 2004 to share experiences in developing country-level partnerships for Prolinnova, to discuss national action plans and to decide on international activities and governance. This will be hosted by the Prolinnova partners in Ethiopia. Also in 2004, an international Prolinnova workshop for training-of-trainers will be held at IIRR in the Philippines.

Other organizations that were involved in developing the Prolinnova concept have managed to raise funds to undertake activities at national and regional level, for example: PELUM (Participatory Ecological Land Use Management) organized case studies and a workshop on farmer innovation in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The GFAR Secretariat provided funds to allow a person within the Prolinnova initiative to attend some meetings where Prolinnova could be presented to donors and members of regional and sub-regional fora for agricultural research for development. Recently, Amanuel Assefa from AgriService Ethiopia (ASE) attended the GFAR meeting in Nairobi, where he presented the experience of building up PROFIEET (PROMoting Farmer Innovation and Experimentation in Ethiopia) under the Prolinnova umbrella.

In collaboration with existing electronic databases and networks with similar interests, Prolinnova will be building up discussion platforms on concepts and experiences in promoting local innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and NRM. To overcome the digital divide, printed materials (brochures, posters, books, circulars) will also be disseminated and links will be sought with other media, such as radio and video. An exciting new exploration will be in using participatory video to give local innovators an opportunity to make their own audiovisual documentation for sharing with other communities and for influencing policymakers.

Ann Waters-Bayer
PROLINNOVA Coordinator

Europe



New EFARD Chairman elected

Dr. Hans Hurni has been elected new EFARD Chairman starting from 1st January 2004.

At present Dr. Hurni is Co-Director of the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), based in Bern, Switzerland.

He was born in the Swiss Alps on 21 December 1950. As of 1969, he studied Geography, Mathematics and Geology at the University of Berne, which he completed by doing an MSc degree in 1975, followed by a teacher's diploma in 1978. In 1980, he completed his PhD on climate change in Ethiopia. In 1991, he received the 'venia docendi' of the Natural Science Faculty based on a thesis titled 'Soil erosion and soil conservation in agricultural environments'. In between these educational activities, he professionally worked for WWF International from 1975-1977 as a Warden of the Simen Mountains National Park in Ethiopia.

In 1979 and 1981, he was a UNU fellow in Northern Thailand, and from 1981-1987, he worked as initiator and director of a national network on soil conservation research in Ethiopia. Since 1987, he is back at the Institute of Geography, where in 1988 he helped founding the 'Centre for Development and Environment', co-directing it since then.

During the past 10 years, he was fulfilling several mandates and tasks, currently as president of KFPE: Swiss commission for research partnerships with developing countries (since 1999); as editor-in-chief of MRD, the international journal 'Mountain Research and Development' (since 1999); as member of the Scientific and Technical Council of the Observatory of the Sahel and the Sahara (OSS), Paris (since 1998); as a member of the Board of IBSRAM:

International Board for Soil Research and Management, Bangkok (since 1994); as a member of the Board of ISCO: International Soil Conservation Organization, and as president of WASWC: World Association of Soil and Water Conservation (1991-1997).

Between 1975 and 1999, Hans Hurni authored or co-authored 7 books, 22 scientific reports, 79 papers and articles in journals or chapters in books, and 14 maps, and he co-edited 7 books. In addition, he wrote 10 unpublished reports and about 20 editorials and WASWC president's reports.

The first institutional meeting for Dr. Hurni within his new position, will be next EFARD Steering Committee, to be held in Bern on 28 January 2004. The agenda of the meeting will focus on (a) starting the process for the next EFARD General Meeting to be held in April 2005 following the one held in Rome in 2002, (b) preparation of the ERA project on ARD as a reaction to the ERA-NET, and (c) election of the new Vice-Chair and the new EFARD representative in the GFAR Steering Committee.

Fabien Boulier
EFARD

Asia-Pacific



Expert Consultation on Strengthening Regional Agricultural Information System: Role of ICT in ARD and Status of Regional Research Networks and Consortia

APAARI launched on the 1-3 December 2003 a regional consultation on strengthening the Asia Pacific Agricultural Regional Information System (APARIS). This ICT Expert consultation, held at Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok was partly supported by GFAR, as one regional component of the GLOBAL.RAIS Project. This workshop was articulated through three main sessions: (1) Global and Regional Initiatives, (2) status report on ICT/ICM activities from the NARS of

the Asia Pacific Region, and (3) Demonstration of existing ICT opportunities. The following NARS presented a national report underlining the strengths and weaknesses of their country in the area of ICT/ICM in ARD: Bangladesh, India, Iran, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, South Korea, Taiwan, New Caledonia, Vietnam and Western Samoa. To take into accounts the main outcomes of the various issues raised as well as the main lessons learned from the national statements, four working groups discussed the APARIS framework and formulated some recommendations from the point of view of the end-users. Parallel to the third session, a special session highlighted the main updates on the research networks operating in collaboration with APAARI.

The APARIS Steering Committee Meeting during the evening of the 3rd of December reviewed the ICM plan of work consistent with the two following objectives: (a) To enhance information sharing and exchange, and (b) To strengthen capacity development for effective ICM and ICT use in ARD.

On the 4th of December, the APAARI Executive Committee Meeting endorsed: (a) the recommendations of the APARIS Steering Committee, (b) the establishment of the APCoAB, and (c) issues related to the APAARI functioning such as progress report of the Secretariat, opening up of the memberships, audited account statement, 2004 plan of work and budget, and the venue of the eighth General Assembly and Expert Consultation on Post-harvest Technologies to be held in December 2004.

Raj Paroda & Sahdev Singh
APAARI

West Asia & North Africa



First AARINENA-RAIS Steering Committee meeting

During the first Steering Committee Meeting of the AARINENA-RAIS, held

with the kind support of ICARDA in Aleppo, 28-29 July 2003, and chaired by Pr. Ahmed Rafea (Egypt), the sub-regional representatives of Mashreq, Maghreb, the Nile Valley, West Asia, and Arabian Peninsula reported on the present situation of ICT and information management capacities. Tools that are used or have been developed in these regions were also presented. The discussion led to a strengths and weaknesses analysis of the five sub-regions of the AARINENA Forum. The common following weaknesses were identified: (a) lack of well qualified human resources, (b) lack of national policy on information management, (c) language barriers (need for a multilingual system), (d) poor communications at the sub-regional level, and (e) poor communications infrastructure in some countries (bandwidth).

Members reviewed then the RAIS requirements, strategy and implementation. Six projects/components were identified and further defined within the concept of National Agricultural Information Systems (NAIS), perceived as being the prerequisite of the launching of the RAIS gateway function.

The next steps to be undertaken were endorsed as follows: (a) To draft a project proposal and to circulate it to different stakeholders to ensure exchange of ideas and experiences through inter-regional discussions, (b) To prepare a provision work plan for improving the AARINENA Website (<http://www.aarinena.org/>) hosted by AREO (Iran), (c) To prepare a questionnaire to collect information about the current system that are related to the proposed modules in the collaborative program in the region, and distribute it to all countries in the region through the SC sub-regional members, (d) To draft a project proposal for Human Capacity Building based on NARS actual needs.

Ahmed Rafea
AARINENA

West Asia & North Africa



Expert consultation on Olive oil production

AARINENA is preparing an Expert consultation on Olive oil production, to be held in the Olive Tree Institute at Sfax, Tunisia, 16-18 February, 2004. The experts from AARINENA Olive producing countries will attend the meeting, as well as European Experts belonging to the already existing ESCORENA Olive Network. National status reports will be presented and discussed, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, in order to define a shared vision statement on the objectives to be achieved at a regional level in Western Asia and North Africa. A document on "Regional Olive Technical Co-operation Network" is under preparation. The role to be played by AARINENA in the launching of this Olive Oil production Network will be discussed during this meeting. AARINENA has already played a similar role in the launching of the Global Date Palm Network (GDPN). More information will be soon available on the AARINENA website (<http://www.aarinena.org/>).

Ibrahim Hamdan
AARINENA

Sub-Saharan Africa



FARA at CG-AGM 03 Nairobi, Kenya

This year's CGIAR AGM brought together approximately 1,000 international and Kenyan policy makers, agricultural research experts, scientists and development specialists. Discussions focused on agricultural research and technology, food initiatives and new ways of working to ensure that science continues to promote sustainable development by facilitating agricultural growth, reducing hunger, protecting the environment while delivering real benefits to the poor.

The FARA delegation included the Chair of FARA, Dr. Pape Seck, Vice Chair, Ms. Bongwiwe Njobe, Executive Secretary, Dr. Monty Jones, FARA Senior Resource person, Dr. Ralph von Kaufmann and the Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary, Madam. Myra Wopereis-Pura. The meeting provided them an opportunity to meet FARA and GFAR stakeholders and donors, and brief them on the progress that FARA has made since the plenary in Dakar in May 2003. It also provided an environment to meet key partners to chart the way forward on FARA's priority activities.

Besides the small meetings held with individual delegation, two major meetings were organized by FARA, such as the FARA-Donors meeting and the Africa group meeting. The FARA-donors meeting was attended by around 20 representatives from the international donor community, FARA partners such as SROs and the FARA ExCo and its Secretariat. This was a follow-up from the Dakar pre-Plenary meeting in May 2003. The purpose was to allow transparency and better coordination of support to FARA. Donors had the opportunity to exchange information/views on its support to FARA to avoid duplication. FARA presented in details activities currently supported and could be supported by individual donor through its three year rolling work program and business plan. The meeting had very productive discussions and FARA was encouraged to continue its openness and transparency.

The Africa group meeting replaced the regular African Caucus Meeting held every CG-AGM, but this year the agenda centered on 'how to enhance Africa's ownership of its agricultural research systems by increasing investment in African agricultural research for development'. The topic is not new but this time, concrete actions need to be identified to achieve agricultural development. Discussions were initiated by presentations from Monty Jones, FARA's Executive Secretary who shared FARA's views on how resources could be mobilized, and FONTAGRO's Executive Secretary Nicolas Mateo shared experience on successful investment in agricultural research through endowment funds provided by national governments.

A consensus was made that FARA has a big role to play in advocating for

increased investment by the African government, but should not be limited towards the ministers of agriculture alone but should include the ministers of finance who gives out funding. Discussions were very lively from 44 participants, mainly FARA key stakeholders who shared experiences and views, but time constraint cut it short. It was then decided that discussions be continued by electronic forum to be organized by FARA. The e-forum will start in January 2004 when FARA launches its e-forum.

In general, the discussions indicated greater awareness and interest in collaborating with FARA as compared to CG-AGM02 in Manila. Numerous action points were identified that will guide FARA in pursuing its mandate.

The Sub Saharan Africa Challenge Program (SSA CP) proposal was also presented during the parallel session on partnerships and stakeholders consultation, highlighting activities and revisions made after the interim Science Council commentary. The CG-AGM03 also gave the opportunity for FARA to discuss with Ian Johnson and Francisco Reifschneider of CGIAR the way forward for the SSA CP. FARA was assured that approval need not wait until the 2004 CG-AGM04 but the process will be facilitated via email through the new Science Council, ExCo and the CGIAR members.

Beside the CG-AGM03, FARA actively participated in the GFAR statutory meeting such as the NARS sub-committee, regional fora and GFAR steering committee meetings. These meetings have enhanced collaboration among the regional fora, one of the major outcome was cross-collaboration on ICT where FARA was invited to be actively involved in GFAR's project on strengthening regional agricultural information system (RAIS) project. AARINENA gave its indication on willingness for North African countries to join FARA, a contact person was recommended that FARA could follow-up.

FARA also took part in the exhibition that included displays from each of the 16 CGIAR Centres and many partner organizations. FARA's booth received visitors who had the opportunity to know more about FARA and its activities. Copies of FARA's major documents were distributed such as the 2002 annual report, strategy, implementation framework, the three year rolling work program

and business plan. Documentation of the SSA CP were also available, as well as the first FARA Newsletter.

The CG-AGM03 had very fruitful to FARA to continue its function as the apex organization and as a catalyst for innovation and change for Africa's agricultural research for development. It was also an opportunity for FARA to enhance and strengthen partnership with CGIAR focusing on the Millennium Development Goal and programmatic integration approach for Africa.

Monty Jones & Myra Wopereis-Pura
FARA

Central
Asia &
the
Caucasus



New CAC Regional Forum: CACAARI

Dr. Sherali Nurmatov of Uzbek Scientific Production Center for Agriculture (UZPCA) was elected as the new Chair of the Central Asia and the Caucasus Regional Fora in June 2003.

Drs. Samuel Avetisyan (Ministry of Agriculture of Armenia) and Asanbek Ajibekov (Center of Agrarian Science and Consulting Services-Kyrgyz Republic) were nominated as the Executive Secretaries for the Caucasus and Central Asia sub-regions, respectively. Dr. Bakhtiyor Kamilov (UZPCA) was named Executive Director.

While it was established in 2000, it was not until in June 2003 that CAC's regional fora adopted its official name - Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutes (CACAARI) - where at the same time, the new set of above mentioned officers were elected. In their previous two meetings, held last 08 June 2003 in Uzbekistan and on 28 September 2003 in Armenia, important decisions taken include the adoption of CACAARI's constitution, approval of its logo, to pursue partnership with the Inter-Regional Network on Cotton (INCANA) and to learn from the experience of APAARI and AARINENA. As a first step towards inter-regional collaboration, those two regional fora were invited

to participate in the forthcoming CAC-RAIS workshop in January 2004.

CACAARI Secretariat is also being established. Currently, the RF is being supported jointly by the CGIAR Program Facilitation Unit (PFU) in Tashkent and the ICARDA Regional Office in the CAC region.

Sherali Nurmatov
CACAARI

Central Asia & the Caucasus

Regional Agricultural Information System Workshop 27-28 January 2004, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

The workshop on Regional Agricultural Information System (RAIS) for Central Asia and Caucasus (CAC) to be organized in the framework of GLOBAL.RAIS Project, will be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan 27-28 January, 2004.

The main purposes of the workshop are: a) to define the current regional situation on agricultural Information and Communication Management (ICM) and generate SWOT analysis of this situation, and b) to design a regional program of work leading to the launching of a RAIS for CAC region, including a capacity-strengthening component. Expected added value from CAC-RAIS are:

- Renewal of National Agriculture Information Systems (NAIS) potential and local knowledge integration into the information systems.
- Facilitating access to publications, research results, articles and current news whether inside or outside the region.
- Facilitating access to the global information facilities.
- Providing interaction between researchers and other agriculture stakeholders.
- Encouraging regional research networks to be integrated into the RAIS, systematization of databases, capacity building in ICM.

- Promoting the use of web-enabled technologies in the information facilities in the region.
- Facilitating the exchange of information between Governmental, Private Sector, International, Nongovernmental and Farmer Organizations.

The focus will also be on studying the possible opportunities of AgroWeb CAC Network

(<http://agrowebcaucasus.org/>) as a model for now to better develop and socialize a RAIS for CAC Region. The discussion will be enriched in order to receive contributions from other institutions/organizations which have gone through similar processes in building networks.

An electronic discussion will be launched 14-21 January, 2004, based on the a draft background document in order to receive comments/inputs from all interested Stakeholders of the Region but also from representatives of other RAIS, sharing their experiences, and all interested experts who wish to bring their point of view or simply aware of particular lessons learned and possible failures/mistakes of other systems.

GFAR and AgroWeb CAC invite all interested experts who wish to participate in electronic discussion and in the Workshop, especially coordinators of other RAIS or similar organizations/networks. All preparatory documents are available on the website of the workshop (<http://agrowebcaucasus.org/cac/RAIS/>).

Arman Manukyan
Agroweb Caucasus

IARCs



GFAR Report to the CGIAR AGM 2003

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) since it was founded in 1996, has held its statutory meetings in conjunction with and just prior to the AGM and this year was no exception. The agenda of these meetings was rich and comprehensive

and included a progress report and an outline of the GFAR business plan for the next triennium year 2004-2006. In addition stakeholders had the opportunity to exchange information on their respective activities during the year, and to renew alliances. This report presents some of the outputs of those three days of deliberations and interactions, as well as some of the interactions between the CGIAR Centres and other stakeholders of GFAR.

Inter-regional collaboration was recognized as a value adding niche for GFAR. A number of strategies were discussed and will be implemented to pursue this activity more vigorously. A favourite instrument that GFAR uses to promote partnerships around common problems is the development and implementation of Global Partnership Programmes (GPPs) by stakeholders who have common interests, objectives and goals. The instrument is serving us well, as reflected by the healthy portfolio of GPPs reported on during the meetings. Some examples of such on-going GPPs presented during the meetings are: Promoting Local Innovation (PROLINNOVA), which focused on farmer innovation in Ethiopia (PROFIET), an initiative driven by a consortium of NGOs but implemented with other stakeholders in Ethiopia, and the Under-utilized Species GPP, which is poised to move into a phase of concrete activity implementation. A number of other initiatives were reported as being close to becoming GPPs, e.g. Rural Knowledge Systems and Innovation Processes which is designed to build on and enhance the utilization of local knowledge to tackle problems facing communities. GFAR Secretariat is also implementing an on-going initiative called GLOBAL.RAIS project whose objective is to strengthen and link the agricultural information systems of our regional and sub-regional fora. GFAR's efforts to fully engage the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in its activities are yielding some fruits, as this important group of stakeholders participated actively in all of deliberations. The NGOs, after an extensive consultation decided to accept the GFAR Vice Chair position. Ms Monica Kapiriri (Aga Khan Foundation) was nominated to serve in that capacity. The Farmers' Organizations, on the other hand, have accepted to start consultations amongst themselves in order to nominate a new representative to the

GFAR Steering Committee as a replacement for the current incumbent who has served over the last three years. The result of the Donor Support Group meeting reflected renewed efforts to broaden the donor support base of GFAR. Current and new donors were present to confirmed their commitment to accompany and support GFAR. Other potential donors present adequately directed GFAR on how to continue with on-going negotiations. Both the Chair of the CGIAR and the Executive Secretary of the Systems Office joined towards the end of the GFAR Steering Committee meeting. Some useful and important discussion on several issues took place, engaging the Civil Society Organizations and the private sector, as well as the role of GFAR in current and future global events such as the assessment of agriculture. The current GFAR charter was drafted in 1998, and has since then been revised only once in 2000. The consensus during these meetings was that in order to respond to new developments in the global agricultural research for development, there is a need to review and revise the charter. Some of the issues that will be examined include the transformation of Advanced Research Institutions (ARIs) of the North concept and terminology to Regional Forum, as used for our southern stakeholders. New roles for both the NARS sub-committee and Executive Secretaries of Regional Fora to promote GFAR's agenda of strengthening inter-regional collaboration.

The GFAR chair as you all know sits on the Executive Committee of the CGIAR, and has, in this capacity, brought in the perspective of other GFAR stakeholders to the decision-making process of the committee. During the current year, the GFAR Secretariat and the Interim Science Council (ISC) sitting in the proximity of each other at the FAO in Rome, collaborated on many occasions to advance the CGIAR agenda. For example, the GFAR Secretariat participated in a number of brain storming sessions convened by the (ISC) chair to map out an appropriate procedure for carrying out the task of formulating new research priorities and implementation strategies. The GFAR Secretariat at the request of the CGIAR systems office organized an electronic consultation of its

stakeholders, to identify suitable candidates and recommend representatives of NARIs, Farmers' Organizations and NGOs to sit on the re-organized Genetic Resources Policy Committee (GRPC).

GFAR has actively participated at the various stages of the development of the Challenge Programme on Unlocking Genetic Diversity in Crops for the Resource-Poor, and is a full-fledged member of the Programme Steering Committee (PSC), a role that GFAR takes seriously to ensure that the views of its various stakeholders are made known and accommodated. It was recently suggested that a GFAR Stakeholder Committee be established to advise the Programme Steering Committee of the CP and provide a feedback and consultative mechanism to the various GFAR stakeholders. The operationalization of this proposed mechanism is currently being examined. Other CPs have not taken full advantage of the convening power of GFAR, and the expertise it can mobilize. As such, current and future CPs were urged to liaise with the GFAR Secretariat to jointly develop strategies to ensure a stronger role for GFAR in the development and implementation of Challenge Programmes.

A number of Centres participate actively as lead, facilitating or collaborating stakeholders in the development and implementation of GPPs such as in post-harvest systems initiative.

GFAR holds its own conference only once every three years, and the last one was held in Dakar on 22-24 May 2003. GFAR is currently in the process of using some of the recommendations of the stakeholders, including the 40 participants from the Centres who met as a distinct stakeholder group and the views expressed and the suggestions made by CGIAR Chair Ian Johnson as a Keynote Speaker as input into our Business Plan for the forthcoming triennium (2004-2006).

True to its mandate of providing a forum for all stake holders in ARD, GFAR took the necessary steps to ensure that stakeholders other than IARCs participated actively in that meeting, especially the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The Secretariat also organized a pre-GFAR 2003 meeting brainstorming session of three days for the CSOs, and they seized the opportunity to refine their vision of ARD and to identify particular concerns that needed to be

addressed by the larger GFAR family. Given the particular relevance of the results of this activity to the AGM participants, the GFAR chair shared with them some of the advice and recommendations the CSOs passed on to GFAR as outputs of that CSO consultation.

The CSOs endorsed the concept of partnerships in ARD activities but insisted that such partnerships should be based on reciprocity, mutual trust and learning, as well as on a shared vision and complementary strategies. The CSOs would like to see such partnerships - which they consider indispensable to the realization of their own vision - promote and stimulate farmer innovation, facilitate and strengthen research-extension linkages and promote capacity-building so that farmers and their representatives become true partners with essential leadership skills and analytical capacities that enable them to better express their needs. At the end of his speech, the GFAR chair took the opportunity to thank the in-kind and financial support to the Secretariat provided by FAO and IFAD, GFAR's two facilitating agencies.

Mohammad H. Roozitalab
GFAR Chair

Farmers' Organizations



Farmers' Organization Network in Ghana (FONG) Workshop: a follow-up to the FARA/GFAR Plenaries May 2003, "Sustaining Africa's agriculture through research for development"

The Farmers Organization Network (FONG) in Ghana, with support FARA and FAO organized a workshop from 22nd-24th September 2003 at Hotel Eredec Koforidua Eastern Region, with the theme *Sustaining Africa's Agriculture through Research for Development*.

The FONG's, which was formed as a follow up of World Food Summit-fyl, mission is to create a platform for Farmer Based Organization engaged in Food security; to participate,

contribute enhance and influence national service policies and food programmes related to Food security in Ghana.

It may be recalled that, World Food Summit-fyl was held from 8 to 13th June 2002 in Rome, the NGOs had an international parallel Forum in Rome to discuss how poverty could be eradicated to improve food security and how the 1996 goals could be reached. Two NGOs from Ghana (Ken Kinney from The DI and Lydia Sasu from DAA) attended this international meeting in Rome. DAA in collaboration with FAO organized the workshop to discuss the outcome of the meeting held in Rome with other NGO/CSOs who were not able to participate in the Rome event.

Again in May 2003 in Dakar, FARA and GFAR successively held their plenary conferences, with the respective themes *Sustaining Africa's agriculture through research for development* and *Linking Research and Rural Innovation to Sustainable Development*. Farmers, NGOs, Researchers and civil society from the world over were invited to discuss these themes. FARA is convinced that agriculture is critical to the African economy, social and rural development. FARA is taking the task to act as a facilitator between the researchers and other stakeholders and a platform for knowledge exchange. This will ensure that agricultural research do have impact on food security at poverty alleviation in Africa. Issues raised at the meeting among the participants include the following:

- Bringing researchers and farmers together to plan and work together;
- To strengthen the farmers groups;
- To enable the farmers to communicate and interact better to each other;
- Farmers to have one voice;
- Farmers to understand the researchers and researchers in turn understanding the farmers better;
- Researchers to work closer with farmers.

Among those from Ghana who attended this conference was a representative of FONG who organized a two-day workshop with support from FARA, to discuss the outcome of the meeting with other farmers' organizations, researchers, media and extension who were not able to participate on the 23rd September 2003.

The main objectives of the meeting were:

- To support the efforts of NGOs, Farmers' Organizations (FOs) involved in Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D);
- The capacity building efforts will revolve around improving communication within and between various groups;
- To improve through advocacy and sensitization efforts, the involvement and participation of FOs in IAR4D; and
- To inaugurate the FOs Network in Ghana (FONG).

50 participants being researchers, farmers, media and representatives from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture were invited to the meeting. The meeting was opened and the Deputy Minister of Food and Agriculture launched FONG with supporting statements from FAO representative in Ghana, FARA Executive Secretary. All of them looked forward for effective action plans for farmers, researchers, and extension to work together and fight hunger/poverty.

Experience was shared with the representatives by representatives from FARA, CSIR, Animal Research, Fisheries Research and Farmer's representative. They all agreed to work as partners and collaborate with each other, as technologies cannot be developed independently of their needs.

Representative from FARA mentioned the new institutional arrangements and extension approaches allowing farmers to participate fully in developing, demanding and accessing information will improve farmers' capacity to select and adopt appropriate technologies and the

capacity of scientists and partners to respond to research needs.

After discussion, the group came out with 12 issues for the action plan as follows:

- Environmental Degradation
- Rural Development infrastructure
- Integration of Aquaculture, crop and animal husbandry
- Farming as a business
- Engagement in off-farm activities
- Enhancing marketing and processing
- Collaboration among farmers, extension officers, researchers
- Agricultural research (crops/animal, fisheries)
- Increasing access to extension service
- Capacity building for farmers
- Advocacy and lobbying
- Strengthening FOs in Ghana

To strengthen the capacity of FOs, regional representatives were selected to start its operation.

After the workshop letters were sent to Special Programme for Food Security and CSIR for representation of farmers' representatives at their programmes, which they had replied to consider at their subsequent meetings. When consideration is given, the national, regional/district levels will be considered. FONG is also planning for regional representative meeting to strengthen communication and collaborations.

On behalf of FONG, the committee members thank FARA, FAO and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture for such support to pave the way forward to strengthen the organization.

Lydia Sasu
FONG