



# GFAR

GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

## Newsletter

Issue 20/2007 – October 2007

### News from the Secretariat

- > Upcoming GFAR Statutory Meetings, Beijing, China
- > GPPs
  - > Updates on the Linking Farmers to Markets GPP

### News from the Fora

- > **AARINENA**
  - AARINENA ExCom Meeting
  - Regional Workshop on AIS for ARD
  - 5th AARINENA ICT-RAIS SC Meeting
  - 3rd INCANA SC Meeting
- > **APAARI**
  - Expert Consultation on Biofuels
  - APARIS: Sept. 2007 update
  - Information dissemination
- > **CACAARI**
  - Expert Cons. on Regional Research Needs Assessment
- > **EFARD**
  - PAEPARD update
- > **FARA**
  - FARA 4th General Assembly
  - FARA Strategic Plan
- > **FORAGRO**
  - ICM advocacy project
  - New publication on Institutional Innovation

### News from the other Stakeholders

- > WARDA, CIAT, IRRI Programmatic Alignment
- > Conference on Organic Agriculture at FAO
- > Oasis Builds Momentum in Montpellier

### ICM Corner

- > 2nd Expert Cons. on IISAST
- > EGFAR Taskforce meeting
- > 4th ICM4ARD Inter-Regional Consultation
- > GFAR at Web2forDev
- > GFAR participaton in the e-Agriculture Week

### Editorial - The new GFAR Business Plan for 2007-2009

The new GFAR Business Plan for 2007-2009 is the fourth in the series since GFAR's inception in 1996. Each business plan reflects what GFAR stakeholders perceive as critical issues in agricultural research for development and the action that the global ARD community should take to resolve them.

The activities endorsed in the new GFAR business plan by the GFAR stakeholders were guided by the need to shift agricultural research, education and extension systems from a narrow technological focus towards a more interactive, multidisciplinary, gender sensitive and integrated approach with focus on pro-poor, smallholder farmers and producers. This would be the basis to solve the inter-related and complex issues of poverty alleviation, food security and conservation of natural resources in a rapid and threatening global climate change context.

For the new business plan, GFAR stakeholders have re-aligned and consolidated GFAR's Strategic Objectives. These now include consensus-building and advocacy for action on agricultural research and innovation priorities, promotion of global and regional partnerships for collaborative research and innovation; knowledge and communication for agricultural research and innovation and strengthening the Institutional capacities of GFAR and its Stakeholders.

The activities planned to meet the GFAR strategic objectives include a set of six new projects in addition to its ongoing activities. These projects are on advocacy on adaptation to climate change, transformation of the agricultural research, education and extension systems, linking smallholder producers to markets, adaptive research and transfer to farmers technologies for the management of on farm water use, promoting sustainable development in agricultural research systems and enabling small farmers' access to knowledge for innovation. GFAR will also continue its global partnership projects and increase support to inter-regional networks. GFAR communications especially its EGFAR platform for information sharing and communication will be further strengthened.

The GFAR business plan is now available on the EGFAR website [here](#)<sup>1</sup>.

GFAR Secretariat

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/232719/GFAR\\_BUSINESS\\_PLAN\\_2007-2009.pdf](http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/232719/GFAR_BUSINESS_PLAN_2007-2009.pdf)



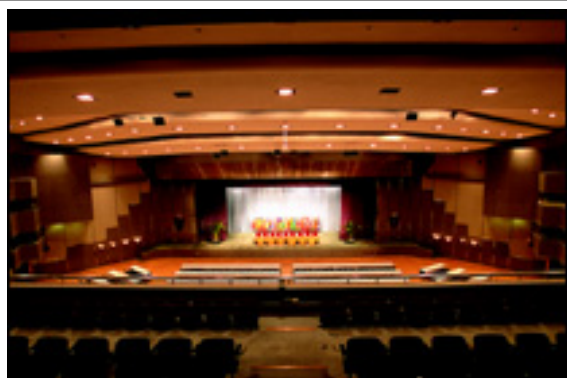
## News from the Secretariat

### Upcoming GFAR Statutory Meetings, Beijing, China

The next GFAR Statutory Meetings will be held in Beijing, China, from November 28th to December 1st 2007.

The following schedule has been planned for the meetings:

- GFAR Programme Committee  
28th and 29th November 2007
- Meeting of the Executive Secretaries of Regional Forums  
afternoon of 29th November 2007
- GFAR Steering Committee  
30th November and 1st December 2007
- Donor Support Group Meeting  
tentatively, in the afternoon of 1st December 2007



Beijing International Conference Center

The GFAR secretariat has launched an **electronic consultation on GFAR's program of activities** for 2008 and beyond.

The forum is accessible from EGFAR: login (or register) [here](#)<sup>2</sup> and access the forums from "Community and forums". The name of the forum is "GFAR Programme".

This forum is private: those who wish to participate should kindly send their MyEGFAR usernames to [EGFAR-webmaster@fao.org](mailto:EGFAR-webmaster@fao.org) so that they can be given the necessary permissions.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.egfar.org/egfar/myegfar>

The GFAR Statutory meetings will be held prior to the CGIAR Annual General Meeting being held from 3rd December 2007 at Beijing, China.

Updated information, including agenda and background documents, will be always available [here](#)<sup>3</sup>.

GPPs

### Updates on the Linking Farmers to Markets GPP

The first meeting of the Interim Steering Committee (ISC) for the GFAR Global Partnership Program (GPP) on Linking Farmers to Markets (LFM) was held at the GFAR Secretariat offices in Rome, in June 4-6, 2007.



The objectives were to define the parameters of the LFM-GPP in (i) developing a long term plan, (ii) devising the structure for a large global project, based on regional field implementation, (iii) reaching agreement on the interim phase budget and defining the "terms of reference" for 4 regional studies and (iv) outlining important short term activities to be led by the ISC and regional representatives and fora, to manage activities, that would raise the profile of the LFM GPP and mobilise significant funds to fund longer term activities.

The meeting was successful and all stated objectives were met. The ISC is formed by a set of diverse stakeholder groups through various resource institutions (IICA, FAO, CIAT, IFAP), representatives of four regional fora (AARINENA, APAARI, FARA, FORAGRO) and the GFAR Secretariat. It is fully operational and is ensuring the smooth development of the GPP and its coherence with GFAR's guiding principles.

For more information on LFM GPP and its first ISC Business Planning meeting download the report [here](#)<sup>4</sup> or visit the [LFM website on EGFAR](#)<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.egfar.org/egfar/website/action/GFAREvents/eventsitem?contentId=1711&languageId=0>

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.egfar.org/egfar/lfm/gphi\\_documents/03\\_Meetings/07\\_2007\\_BP\\_meeting\\_Rome/GFAR\\_Planning\\_meeting\\_June\\_4-6\\_Report.pdf](http://www.egfar.org/egfar/lfm/gphi_documents/03_Meetings/07_2007_BP_meeting_Rome/GFAR_Planning_meeting_June_4-6_Report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.egfar.org/egfar/lfm>



## News from the Regional Fora

AARINENA

### AARINENA Executive Committee Meeting, Aleppo, 5 May 2007



AARINENA Executive Committee held its meeting in Aleppo, Syria at ICARDA on the 5th of May 2007 in conjunction with ICARDA Presentation Day. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Ahmad Al Bakri, President of AARINENA, and attended by executive committee members and representatives of ICARDA and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR).

The meeting discussed revisiting priority settings and proposed the formulation of an expert group that will consist of 4-5 experts to draft a report on the priority setting activities in the region to be presented for the 11th General Conference. Moreover, the Committee approved and encouraged the Division of the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) partnership in updating the country profiles.

With regard to Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) Network, the committee recommended supporting this activity by providing the travel and accommodation for two participants from the region in the proposed expert consultation meeting for the network.

A concept note on Near East Rural and Agricultural Knowledge and Information Network prepared by FAO was presented. The committee approved the network taking into consideration the following:

- The network to be linked, facilitated, and monitored by AARINENA while its implementation will be supported by FAO and GFAR.
- The activities of the network should be NARS driven.

Dr. Abdelmajid Slama, GFAR Executive Secretary presented the GFAR business plan for 2007-9 and covered various steps for its preparation starting with the GFAR 2006 Triennial Conference and ending with the GFAR Steering Committee's approval. Dr. Ibrahim Hamdan presented the financial status of the Association up to 30 April 2007.

AARINENA

### Regional Workshop on Agricultural Information Systems for ARD, Cairo, 27-30 May 2007

To assist information managers in developing an information strategy for their organizations and in establishing new structures and procedures for effective information management, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with AARINENA and Egypt National Agricultural Research Information Centre (NARIC) organized a regional training workshop on Information Systems for ARD. The workshop was held during the period 27-30 May 2007 with the participation of information specialists from Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen, along with FAO and Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD).

The event was designed for capacity building and development of information specialists and library information and knowledge management specialists in the application of Information and Communication Management Systems (ICMS) for strengthening knowledge resources linkages in Near East member States in regional levels, and to improve the information infrastructure in the Near East and North Africa region through introducing a "Near East Regional Agricultural Knowledge and Information Network, NERAKIN" developed by FAO and providing the appropriate training for participants.

During the workshop two important projects have been introduced to the participants: The first project was NERAKIN which was developed by the FAO/RNE. NERAKIN has several modules with Front end and Content Management System which allows the regional countries to build their information systems. The second project was the National Agricultural Research Information Management System (NARIMS) which was developed by the Central Lab for Agricultural Expert Systems (CLAES). A review was made on the Egyptian case study on NARIMS, including system demonstration.

A training session relevant to the Arabic AGRIS Application Profile (AP) for indexing and cataloguing and inserting the appropriate metadata was held.

AARINENA



### **Fifth AARINENA ICT-RAIS Steering Committee Meeting, Egypt, 29 May 2007**

In the framework of the workshop on Information Systems for Agricultural Research for Development, the Fifth AARINENA ICT-RAIS Steering Committee meeting was held in Cairo, Egypt on the 29th of May 2007. Representatives of the AARINENA RAIS-ICT Steering Committee from AARINENA 5 sub-regions and representatives of FAO, and AOAD attended the meeting.

Dr. Mohammad Sallam, Chairman of the Steering Committee, outlined the progress made since the Amman meeting in April 2006. The achievements include: participation in the last Steering Committee Meeting and relevant meetings, preparation and revision of the ICT-RAIS work plan 2007-2009, preparation of TORs of Focal Units and follow up of their establishment with NARS leaders, establishment of focal units within AREA-Yemen and ARC-Oman, preparation of a concept note for strengthening NAIS and RAIS, seeking support for training from donors, coordination and follow up on relevant training courses. Dr. Sallam explained that lack of funds for implementing the prepared ICT-RAIS work plan and lack of proper interactions and responsiveness by NARS leaders and some of the committee members in the establishment of focal units were the main constraints.

The meeting discussed and deliberated on the following:

- AARINENA will champion the implementation of the NERAKIN platform and decide on the course of actions required.
- NERAKIN should focus on the thematic regional network module while NARIMS should focus on the national level.
- Information on NARIMS and NERAKIN should be fed to the AARINENA-RAIS website and electronic versions of both reports should be circulated.
- Member countries should be provided with beta copies for testing prior to implementation of NARIMS and NERAKIN.

AARINENA

### **Third INCANA Steering Committee Meeting, Syria, 19-20 June 2007**

The Third Steering Committee Meeting of Inter-regional Cotton Network in the Central Asia and North Africa (INCANA) was held in Damascus, Syria during the period 19-20 June 2007. The

meeting was organized by the General Commission for Scientific Agricultural Research (GCSAR) and INCANA Secretariat, and co-sponsored by AARINENA, Asia and Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), ICARDA- Central Asia and Caucasus (CAC) regional office.

Twelve participants from Egypt, India, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attended the meeting.

In the opening session, Dr. Majd Jamal, Director General of GCSAR addressed the opening session and stated the importance of cotton crop in the Syrian economy, where about one million of people depend heavily for their livelihoods. Moreover, Syria is a leading country with high productivity (more than 4 tons/hectare) using IPM techniques and biological control.

Dr. Ibrahim Hamdan, Executive Secretary of AARINENA highlighted the importance of exchanging knowledge and information among the stakeholders of agricultural research of the region and the role of the networks in achieving such goal.

Mrs. Aisel Gharedaghli, Coordinator of INCANA presented a report on INCANA activities and achievements including the network expectations from the member countries and the establishment of active workgroups.

Country reports of Egypt, India, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan addressed the problems and results in cotton research and development, Bt cotton, and IPM program on cotton.

AARINENA

---

APAARI

### **Expert Consultation on Biofuels**



APAARI in collaboration with IRRI, CIMMYT and ICRISAT organized an expert consultation meeting on 27 – 29 August 2007. The objective was to: (i) discuss how bioenergy production may have an impact on global and regional food security and the sustainability of key agricultural systems in Asia, (ii) summarize current understanding of bioenergy options for key crops and cropping systems in Asia, (iii) identify key options and research priorities for designing and evaluating integrated food-bioenergy production systems for Asia, and (iii) develop a framework for research on biofuels in key agricultural systems of Asia and agree on follow-up activities, including meetings with public and private sector partners.





In all, 44 participants attended the Expert Consultation organized into five sessions: (i) Global opportunities and constraints, (ii) Country Status Reports, (iii) Food Security vs Biofuels in Asia, and (iv) Plenary Session and General Recommendations. There was consensus that biofuels will play a major role in the global economy of the future. Many countries are exploring different strategies and policies on alternative energy sources; and the Asia-Pacific region, in particular, is expected to play a significant role in development and promotion of biofuels. Besides general recommendations, specific recommendations were made on three different bioenergy technologies: (i) bioenergy from thermal conversion of biomass, (ii) ethanol from sugar, starch or cellulose biomass, (iii) biodiesel from oil crops.

APAARI

### Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS), September 2007 update

Based on the recommendations of an APAARI organized Inter-regional Workshop on Advocacy and Collaboration for ICT/ICM in ARD in July 2006, in which representatives of all RFs, GFAR, FAO and other global agricultural information systems participated, APAARI published a collection of success stories and best practices of ICT and ICM in ARD as an advocacy tool. The publication is entitled "Selected Success Stories on Agricultural Information Systems" and is available at [APAARI website](http://www.apaari.org/)<sup>6</sup>.

This was followed by another advocacy related activity, i.e., a Sensitization and Awareness Building Workshop on ICT/ICM in ARD for the Leaders and Senior Managers of member NARS. APAARI in collaboration with GFAR-FAO organized the workshop on 30th August 2007 at PCAARD, Philippines. NARS leaders and senior managers of many developing countries of the region need to develop and advocate appropriate policies to enable and promote effective use of new information and communication technologies to improve communication among various stakeholders, specially researchers and farmers. It was also observed that many NARS have initiated comprehensive ICT/ICM projects and programs in their organizations using state-of-the-art information technology. At the end of the workshop, participants were

unanimous in recognizing the important role that ICT plays in linking researchers, farmers and markets.

The major recommendations of the workshop included:

- APARIS should continue to focus its activities on advocacy, capacity building and regional knowledge sharing through greater involvement of various NAIS of the region.
- To further strengthen linkages between APARIS and NAIS, NARS need to officially designate their ICT/ICM related units or departments as National Information Nodal Points (NINPs).
- New web technologies and tools should be adopted for cost effective updating of agricultural research information systems and regional information exchange.

To implement some of the above recommendations, APARIS team plans to undertake a major revision of [APAARI website](http://www.apaari.org/)<sup>7</sup> using newly available web technologies for a better content management system and linkages to other ARD web sites. The revised web site will also make it easier to directly upload information from decentralized input sources such as NINPs, spread across the Asia-Pacific Region and also globally.

APAARI



Participants in the Sensitization and Awareness Building Workshop on ICT/ICM in ARD, PCAARD, Philippines, August 2007

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.apaari.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.apaari.org/>



## Web-based Information Dissemination

As a part of its continuing activity, [APCoAB website](#)<sup>8</sup> provides regular updates on developments in agricultural biotechnology with specific reference to the Asia-Pacific countries. During November 2006 till date, about 300 news items pertaining to 31 countries were posted on the website.

A revised database of agricultural biotechnology institutes of the Asia-Pacific region has been compiled and uploaded on the website.

A new e-news service has been started with the objective of providing wide circulation to information on significant developments in agricultural biotechnology in the Asia-Pacific region. APAARI members have been invited to send brief success stories on application of biotechnology that have made impact in improving agricultural production and farmers' incomes.

APAARI

---

CACAARI

## Expert Consultation on Regional Research Needs Assessment in Central Asia and the Caucasus

A 'Regional Research Needs Assessment' Workshop was convened in Tashkent in March 2007 to involve the eco-regional fora such as CACAARI, APAARI, AARINENA, together with GFAR, farmer associations and private sector organizations. It provided a unique opportunity for developing a common vision on the nature and extent of agricultural problems. Participants revisited the CAC regional priorities and defined the needs for agricultural technologies / information for improving the productivity of the prevalent farming systems for improved livelihoods of the people who depend on agriculture.

Irrigated and rainfed agriculture together with livestock production systems are important components of the economies of Central Asian and the Caucasus (CAC) republics. Mixed crop-livestock production systems have been the mainstay of livelihoods of the rural people since many centuries. Recent changes consequent to the break up of the Soviet Union have a significant impact on agriculture and the people who depend on it. Agricultural research needs assessment is a continuous process in view of the fast changing socio-economic and policy

---

<sup>8</sup> [www.apcoab.org](http://www.apcoab.org)

scenarios and emergence of many other stakeholders, not involved earlier. Whereas many agricultural problems are country specific, there are some problems which are common to all the countries in the region (e.g. river water salinity, climate change etc.) and could be best tackled by joint actions of the governments in CAC.

Handling scalar issues of the dimensions encompassing the whole region requires funding support from the international community and active technical backstopping from the CG centers and other advanced institutions. Experiences of APAARI, GFAR, FAO and AARINENA will also prove very relevant in any priority setting exercise.

In the current agricultural regional research needs assessment (RNA) and prioritization exercise, efforts have been made to involve stakeholders in NARS of all the CAC countries, CG centers, global and regional fora and international organizations active in the region. It is an important step for advancing agricultural research in the region. This event has also demonstrated that the Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (CACAARI) has become a viable forum for coordinating regional agricultural research activities. It has had some farmer participation, which I believe will grow further. This provides the farmers with a forum for articulating their demands for additional need based research.

The report of the Expert Consultation is available [here](#)<sup>9</sup>.

CACAARI

---

EFARD

## PAEPARD transcontinental meeting



The European (EFARD) and African (FARA) fora for agricultural research for development (ARD), are building a platform of partnership on ARD. The purpose is to facilitate knowledge exchange for stronger partnership between the two continents, as an example of inter-regional partnership. The first transcontinental consultation was organized during the FARA

---

<sup>9</sup>[http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/230504/RNA\\_AC-Final%20Report.pdf](http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/230504/RNA_AC-Final%20Report.pdf)



general assembly. The purpose was to provide opportunity of interaction among the African and European stakeholder in order i) to identify the major past and current limitations, constraints and bottlenecks that are responsible for the weaknesses in the partnership between both continents, ii) to look at priorities, opportunities and mechanisms that could be relevant for enhancing the partnership.

The consultation meeting helped define mechanisms and tools on how PAEPARD could operate as an efficient platform for building-up bridges between the two continents. Discussions were triggered from experiences given by the African subregional research organizations (ASARECA, CORAF, and SADC-FANR) on handling European Commission competitive funding mechanisms. Their experiences showed that for Africa to respond to different funding opportunities from Europe, such as from the European Commission, still requires to strengthen its capacity to write proposals, project management, financial institutional capacity, as well as clear understanding of the complex proposal and implementation requirements from donors. Once funding are awarded to African institutions such as CORAF and ASARECA, their implementation has to be consistent with EC administrative and financial requirements, which can be very complex to hinder effectiveness and efficiency of the project implementation. FARA and EFARD were advised to work with the EC and AU on how to solve this issue. Partnerships should be built on the principles of subsidiarity. Clear roles and responsibilities of partners are crucial for a partnership to be successful.

The group was encouraged to open partnership with the African universities, represented by RUFORUM as well as the civil societies, especially the private sector.

PAEPARD as a European Commission project, will first focus on improving the African participation in EC and its member states funding opportunities such as its FP7 program or EDF10 and Food Security Thematic Program.

#### What will be the PAEPARD focus?

PAEPARD will assist the regional and subregional organizations as well as national partners in achieving their objectives. PAEPARD will add value to existing initiatives within the region led by FARA, SROs, RUFORUM in partnership with EFARD members such as ECART and NATURA. It will be an interface, a facilitator and catalyst for Europe-Africa cross-actions that promote equal partnership between EU and African ARD Stakeholders on African and global issues. It will

facilitate increased awareness of opportunities for collaboration in ARD as well as better understanding of funding mechanisms and procedures.

Within the year that PAEPARD is being built, it will be developed to be a platform owned by all stakeholders including the CSO. PAEPARD business plan will show clear indicators, clear concept of sustainability and strategy to reach out to national partners. Partnerships built will be based on principles of subsidiarity and shared understanding of roles and responsibilities of each partners or members.

If you are interested to join PAEPARD, please don't hesitate to contact the project coordinator; [mjones@fara-africa.org](mailto:mjones@fara-africa.org) or the facilitation unit team: [mwopereispura@fara-africa.org](mailto:mwopereispura@fara-africa.org) and [jacky.ganry@cirad.org](mailto:jacky.ganry@cirad.org).

EFARD

---

FARA

### **FARA Fourth General Assembly, June 2007**



*"The fourth FARA general assembly, with its large, diverse and vigorous participation, provided a fertile source of information and knowledge on the opportunities and problems currently facing African agriculture."*

Hon. Lulama Xingwana, Minister for Agriculture and Land Affairs, Republic of South Africa

FARA held the Africa Agricultural Science Week (AASW) and Fourth General Assembly (GA) at the Sandton Convention Center in Johannesburg, South Africa, from June 10-16, 2007. This event was the result of more than a year of planning and close collaboration between the FARA Executive Committee, the FARA Secretariat, the South African Ministry of Agriculture and Land Affairs and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), and a South African Local Organizing Committee.

The theme selected for the week's event was "Promoting the productivity and competitiveness of African agriculture in a global economy".

The General Assembly was attended by approximately 670 delegates from African Ministries of Agriculture, agricultural research and development organizations, universities, advanced research institutions and CGIAR Centers, NGOs, farmers' organizations, the





private sector/agric-business, development partners, and the media.

Dr. Monty Jones (FARA Executive Secretary) stated that "This year's general assembly was undoubtedly our most successful to date. With ten sub-themes and only a week to work through all of them, we are thrilled with the resolutions that have been brought to the table".

the capacity strengthening initiatives reflect established demands;

- redressing gender and age imbalances and inequities;
- recognising sub-Saharan and North African civil society organizations;
- regarding research on peri-urban agriculture as a mainstream activity, but one that requires new approaches to research;
- mainstreaming indigenous science into agricultural research and development;
- making the necessary personal and institutional adjustments that are required to enable communication and joint learning between practitioners of the different sciences.



Participants in the FARA General Assembly, Johannesburg, June 2007

During the Business Meeting that took place on June 16th, the FARA Strategic Plan was endorsed, along with various changes to the FARA Constitution and Governance Manual and the FARA Secretariat's response to the two external reviews conducted in 2006 and 2007. The General Assembly congratulated the FARA Executive Committee (ExCo), Dr. Monty Jones, and the FARA Secretariat staff for the

The resolutions include:

- the promotion of intra-African trade in food staples and international trade in high-value products;
- the development of endogenous innovation capacity, including the ability to identify and adapt potential foreign innovations;
- maximising the impact of agricultural research and development by providing policy makers with evidence-based pragmatic options, preferably developed jointly by researchers and policy makers;
- endorsing FARA's integrated set of networking support functions as a sound basis for continent-wide contributions to the work of the SROs;
- advocating and facilitating the strengthening of research management and agricultural sciences;
- developing adequate veterinary capacity, livestock disease surveillance, and epidemiological and response systems;
- addressing the broad and systemic issues in capacity strengthening to focus on causes rather than symptoms and to assure that

many accomplishments that have occurred since the Third GA in Entebbe in 2005. Particular thanks were extended to the departing Chair of the FARA ExCo, Mme. Njabulo Nduli; Dr. Denis Kyetere (Director General, NARO-Uganda) was elected as the new Chair of the FARA Executive Committee, and Dr. Tiemoko Yo (Director General, Centre National de Recherche Agronomique, Côte d'Ivoire) was elected Vice Chair.

GFAR Chair Dr. Adel El-Beltagy, after opening the CSOs side event on June 10<sup>th</sup>, made a presentation at the plenary in the Opening Ceremony. His presentation "Enabling inter-regional partnerships around issues of global concern" focused on: a) sensitising participants on what GFAR is and how it operates; b) the new GFAR business plan; c) previous GFAR-FARA collaboration; and d) FARA role in future GFAR activities.

All presentations and documents are being posted on the FARA website.

FARA





### FARA Strategic Plan developed and endorsed

At their February 2007 meeting, the FARA Executive Committee recommended that the FARA Secretariat develop a new strategic plan in light of the many changes in FARA's external environment since the first strategy was adopted in 2002. Between March and June, Secretariat staff drafted the new strategy, drawing upon expert input to ensure congruence between the new strategies of CORAF/WECARD and ASARECA, and to identify key background issues that should be included in the plan. The planning process also drew upon the considerable knowledge about stakeholder needs that FARA has accrued during numerous recent consultations with partners and constituents. The first draft of the strategic plan was discussed and validated in a workshop in May 2007, involving 45 people representing a cross-section of FARA stakeholders from all over Africa. The draft strategic plan was revised to reflect stakeholder input, and was submitted to and endorsed in the Business Meeting at the Fourth FARA General Assembly.

The new strategy is designed to guide the work of both the FARA Secretariat and FARA as a Forum over the next ten years. It identifies five "networking support functions" ("NSFs") that, taken together, should enable the FARA community to achieve the goal of establishing high, broad-based agricultural growth in Africa to reduce food insecurity and poverty and to enhance environmental conditions. The five NSFs are:

- Advocacy and resource mobilisation – to support the SROs and their NARSs in establishing appropriate institutional and organizational arrangements (including a conducive policy, research infrastructure and financial environment) for regional agricultural research and development.
- Access to knowledge and technologies – to empower researchers and end users through access to information, learning opportunities, and new technologies.
- Regional policies and markets – to promote and facilitate policy analyses and market research.
- Capacity strengthening – to ensure that Africa has the human and institutional capacity, public and private, to achieve improved broad-based agricultural productivity.
- Partnerships and strategic alliances – to catalyse and facilitate the establishment of partnerships with the range of expertise and sufficient capacities necessary to drive

agricultural innovation for African agricultural research and development.

The FARA Strategic Plan is currently being revised to incorporate comments received during and since the General Assembly. When finalized, it will be available on the [FARA website](#)<sup>10</sup>, along with the the Five-Year Medium-Term Operational Plan.

FARA

---

FORAGRO

### FORAGRO-IICA ICM advocacy project



Technical information is a key element in every process of research or innovation that takes place in the agricultural sector. In the institutions that promote these processes, managing technical information poses several challenges. These occur in a changing environment, marked by an exponential increase in the quantity of potentially important information and by continuous advances in information and communication technologies (ICT), among other factors. The challenges include the need to incorporate the information related objectives and activities explicitly within the planning and execution of all institutional processes and taking maximum advantage of the possibilities offered by available ICT, while providing support for processes of knowledge management. Information management (IM) takes place through a series of actions that involve: 1) defining objectives and priorities related to the area of the information, and 2) planning, facilitating and coordinating the necessary activities to reach these objectives.

It is in this framework that this project proposes the urgent need for raising awareness among decision makers on the importance of managing adequately the technical information in agricultural research and technological innovation organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean

The general objective of this project is to create awareness by building capacities for the incorporation of information within the planning and execution of institutional processes and for taking maximum advantage the possibilities that offer available ICT.

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.fara-africa.org/general-assembly-2007/documentation/>



The target beneficiaries are a) decision makers of the agricultural research and technological innovation organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean, belonging to the Forum for the Americas on Agricultural Research and Technology Development (FORAGRO); b) coordinators or managers of technical information and communication within these organizations.

The expected results of the project have been identified as follows:

- 100% of the beneficiaries of the project have received basic training on how to incorporate information within the planning and execution of institutional processes.
- 100% of the beneficiaries of the project are better able to take advantage of the possibilities offered by information and communication technologies (ICT), in support of processes of technical knowledge management.
- Formal mechanisms to share experiences in management of technical information among the agricultural research and technological innovation organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean have been developed.
- A permanent program for training in technical information management for agricultural research and technological innovation organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean is in place.
- The program for International Certification in Technical Information Management has been created.

FORAGRO

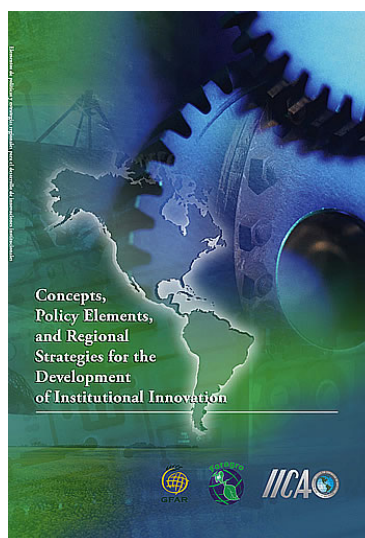
**New publication: "Concepts, Policy Elements, and Regional Strategies for the Development of Institutional Innovation"**

"Concepts, Policy Elements, and Regional Strategies for the Development of Institutional Innovation" is the title of a new publication released by IICA. The document presents the

findings of a study of the trends and challenges in agricultural research in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), in terms of the way it is organized and its institutional architecture. The study was carried out for FORAGRO, with support from the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR).

The subject of the study is also one of IICA's Strategic Priorities, established in its 2006-2010 Medium Term Plan (Promoting the introduction of Technology and Innovation for the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Development). The general objective of this priority is to support the efforts of the member countries to modernize agriculture and enhance its contribution to economic, social and environmental development by promoting technological and institutional innovation policies and processes that will promote and facilitate the incorporation of new knowledge and technologies into agricultural production chains.

The study provides the bases for developing a conceptual framework for institutional innovations, with recommendations for a cooperation agenda aimed at revamping the institutional



architecture of national and regional agricultural research. To that end, the study outlines the institutional innovations needed to strengthen the national and regional systems of agricultural science, technology and innovation in the region.

FORAGRO

**News from the other Stakeholders**

**WARDA, CIAT, IRRI: Joint Declaration on Programmatic Alignment**

August 2007, Cotonou, Benin. Africa Rice Center (WARDA), Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT) and

International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) "propose the establishment of a sub-Saharan Africa Rice Consortium (SARC), which will consolidate the two existing regional rice networks – West and Central Africa Rice Research and Development Network (ROCARIZ) and the Eastern and Central Africa Rice Research



Network (ECARRN). SARC will also embrace those other parts of SSA that are not covered by the existing regional rice networks."

The PDF document of the Joint Declaration is available [here](#)<sup>11</sup>.

WARDA, IRRI, CIAT

---

### International Conference on Organic Agriculture and Food Security organized by FAO in May 2007 in Rome



The Conference recommended that FAO strengthen its Organic Agriculture unit and promote organic agriculture to national policy makers as a tool for achieving food security. It also asked the FAO to facilitate the establishment of an organic agriculture research unit within the CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) system. More than 660,000 samples of plant germplasm, mostly from developing countries, are available with the CGIAR centres that conduct agricultural research and provide germplasm to national public and private sector researchers. In October 1994, these centres signed agreements with the FAO placing the collections of plant germplasm under the auspices of the FAO in trust for the whole world.

The Conference was held in collaboration with international partners: World Watch Institute, WWF, FiBL, IFOAM, Third World Network, RAFI-USA, CIHEAM and the Associazione Italiana Agricoltura Biologica. About 350 participants from more than 80 countries attended, including representatives from 66 FAO member countries, three UN agencies, five inter-governmental institutions, 15 international NGOs, 30 national NGOs, 24 research institutions, 31 universities, 8 private companies and 9 farmer associations.

The objective of the meeting was to identify organic agriculture's potential and limitations in addressing the food security challenge, including conditions required for its success through the analysis of existing information in different agro-ecological areas of the world.

More information [here](#)<sup>12</sup>.

*Subhash Mehta*

---

<sup>11</sup>[http://www.egfar.org/egfar/digitalAssets/776\\_Joint\\_Declaration\\_by\\_WARDA-IRRI-CIAT\\_on\\_Programmatic\\_Alignment.pdf](http://www.egfar.org/egfar/digitalAssets/776_Joint_Declaration_by_WARDA-IRRI-CIAT_on_Programmatic_Alignment.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.fao.org/organicag/ofs/index\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/organicag/ofs/index_en.htm)

---

### Oasis Builds Momentum in Montpellier

The Oasis initiative to combat desertification and dryland degradation organized a global workshop during 20-22 August hosted by CIRAD and IRD at the CIRAD campus in Montpellier, France. The workshop strengthened global partnerships while developing a pre-proposal for CGIAR Challenge Programme consideration. Sixty-one participants from 24 countries participated.

Oasis answers the global call for greater scientific input embodied in the Articles of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Oasis will engage with the UNCCD mechanisms such as the Committee on Science and Technology and National Action Plans to strengthen the world's ability to meet the threat of desertification and land degradation more effectively than in the past.

ICARDA and ICRISAT jointly catalyze the Oasis initiative on behalf of the Alliance of CGIAR Centers. Six institutions from beyond the CGIAR have now joined the Alliance partners as co-proponents of Oasis, making it a truly global initiative: CIRAD; IRD; the European Consortium for Agricultural Research in the Tropics (ECART); the European Commission's Institute for Environment and Sustainability (IES) of the Joint Research Centre (JRC); and the Sahel-Sahara Observatory (OSS). Ten CGIAR Centers are involved in Oasis: Bioversity, CIAT, CIMMYT, ICARDA, ICRISAT, IFPRI, ILRI, IWMI, WARDA, and the World Agroforestry Centre.

Participation of developing-country partners in the pre-proposal workshop was made possible by contributions from the Belgian Development Cooperation (DGCD) - Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Co-operation; the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) through the DURAS project supported by the Government of France, and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC-Canada). CIRAD / IRD and ICRISAT / ICARDA also contributed hosting and organizing resources.

The Oasis pre-proposal advocates a break from past approaches to dryland degradation and desertification, which too often fell short of expectations. The approach advocated by Oasis partners is to view land degradation and desertification as a sustainable development problem rather than simply a biophysical problem to be treated through centralized government decrees ordering land users to



change their practices. Too often such past practices were not adoptable because they did not take land users' needs for secure and prosperous livelihoods into account. The Oasis motto is "building lives, saving lands", recognizing that neither secure livelihoods, nor environmental protection can be achieved

without addressing both at the same time.

To address this sustainable development problem, Oasis partners advocated co-learning with land users from the beginning, to understand their motivations and constraints.

GFAR endorsed its support to the initiative, participated in the workshop and supported stakeholders' participation.

The Oasis pre-proposal will be submitted by the Alliance to the CGIAR in early September for consideration in the coming months by the CGIAR's Science Council and Executive Council. If approved, a full proposal would be developed in 2008 leading to a formal launching of the new Challenge Programme.



Participants in the Oasis workshop, Montpellier, August 2007

ICRISAT, ICARDA

## ICM Corner

### 2nd Expert Consultation on International Information Systems for Agricultural Science and Technology (IISAST)

The 2nd Expert Consultation on International Information Systems for Agricultural Science and Technology (IISAST) was held on 23 – 24 September 2007 in FAO, Rome, and organized by seven organizations CGIAR, CTA, DFID (UK), FAO, GFAR, IAALD, MAE (France). Participants comprised approximately 60 experts working in networks and information systems in agricultural science and technology at international, regional and national levels. The objectives were to review progress since the 1st Consultation<sup>13</sup> in 2005, to reassess the objectives of the IISAST initiative on and confirm commitment of the partners, to reassess the modalities of implementing the initiative, and to establish future priorities for and contributions to the initiative.

In recognition of the primary focus of the IISAST initiative being on impact at national level, the first day of the Consultation was spent examining six case studies from national level on developing institutional archives and

collaborative networks. Presentations were made highlighting key issues and lessons learned, and participants reviewed and discussed the nature of the conceptual framework for development of institutional information systems developed at the first Consultation in 2005 adding various major elements and identifying further generic issues. They also identified the areas of intervention for the IISAST initiative at the international level, and the outputs to be produced. The second day started with reports from the international Task Forces on Advocacy and Content Management and the mechanisms for collaboration on Capacity Building that had been established at the first Consultation. Group discussions on the overall scope of the IISAST initiative identified the specific shorter-term objectives related to information and communication management, within the overall context of applying technology to assist small farmers. Finally, priorities and mechanisms for future work were defined in relation to the continuation of the three Task Forces and the formation of a body for general coordination was agreed.

Stephen Rudgard (FAO)

<sup>13</sup>[http://www.fao.org/qi/gil/consultations/consult\\_infos\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/qi/gil/consultations/consult_infos_en.asp)





### EGFAR Taskforce meeting, Rome, 26 September 2007

The 1st meeting of the EGFAR Taskforce was held in the forenoon on September 26<sup>th</sup> 2007.

The setting up of the Taskforce was planned under the ICM4ARD GPP Project Plan and its main terms of reference consist in guiding the development of EGFAR, the ARD Web Ring and ICT enabled agricultural information systems at global, regional and national levels through liaising with similar global taskforces and initiatives and coordinating with the IISAST initiative.

The presentations on EGFAR and on all the Regional Forums websites showed great progress in managing ARD information through web channels. Progress was also noted in the management of information on organizations, experts and projects at the regional, and in some cases also national, level.

The next challenge for the EGFAR Task Force is seen in defining and further developing the ARD Web Ring. The development of the Web Ring has been planned as one of the main activities of the ICM4ARD GPP and as a major role for GFAR. In this meeting, the Web Ring was defined as a network of ARD "gateways" and nodes through which information flows smoothly for global access.

In this view, the EGFAR Taskforce also has to contribute, through GFAR and in coordination with the IISAST initiative, to the development of the RAIS and NAIS especially in capacity development, integration through introduction and use of standards, guidelines, norms etc and appropriate governance structure that ensure equitable and fair access to ARD information globally. The role of the EGFAR Taskforce is not seen as a normalising role in a top-down approach, but rather as a facilitating role in harmonising policies and strategies through the exchange and promotion of best practices in information management and sharing among GFAR stakeholders and the ARD community at large.

The members felt that EGFAR should also be a "marketplace" for experience sharing, ICM related documentation, tools (and toolboxes) and applications for managing ARD information. Coordination with the IISAST initiative in this was recommended, as demand for a similar service also arose from the 2nd Expert

Consultation held just before this Taskforce meeting.

More information on the meeting and the draft report can be found [here](#)<sup>14</sup>.



EGFAR Taskforce meeting, Rome, September 2007

### 4th ICM4ARD Inter-Regional Consultation, Rome, 26 September 2007

On September 26th the 4th inter-regional consultation on Information and Communications Management for Agricultural Research for Development (ICM4ARD) was held in Rome, during the e-Agriculture Week.

[ICM4ARD](#)<sup>15</sup> is a GFAR Global Partnership Programme started in 2004 with the purpose of enabling "more equitable access to agricultural information globally for ARD stakeholders through improved ICM and more efficient use of ICT in National, Regional and Global agricultural information systems"

Since the [1st Expert Consultation on International Information Systems for Agricultural Science and Technology](#)<sup>16</sup> (IISAST) was held in 2005, GFAR has actively participated in the IISAST initiative and co-operates with the other IISAST stakeholders to promote synergy and coherence in international information systems for agricultural science and technology. The initiatives through which GFAR contributes to this multi-stakeholder effort towards

<sup>14</sup>[http://www.egfar.org/egfar/website/action/icm\\_icts/ewekegfar](http://www.egfar.org/egfar/website/action/icm_icts/ewekegfar)

<sup>15</sup><http://www.egfar.org/egfar/website/action/partnership?contentId=241>

<sup>16</sup>[http://www.fao.org/gi/gil/consultations/consult\\_infos\\_ys\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/gi/gil/consultations/consult_infos_ys_en.asp)



coherence are the ICM4ARD GPP and the EGFAR Taskforce.

This year, the ICM4ARD and EGFAR meetings took place a few days after the 2nd Expert Consultation on IISAST (see article in this issue), and drew on related discussions and outcomes of the Consultation.

The ICM4ARD consultation was the occasion for a review of the project, which highlighted some major achievements, particularly as regards the strengthening or establishing of Steering Committees / Task Forces of all Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS), the development of their websites, the studies on the ICM status in the regions, the development of toolkits for the National Information Systems (NAIS) and the re-engineering of EGFAR to contribute to development of an ARD Web ring. The review also stressed that there are areas where the targets have been slow to be realized, such as capacity development of NAIS managers, the development of distributed databases on Institutions, Experts, Projects and Project outputs, monitoring and evaluation, and attracting funds.

The discussion on future priorities focused mainly on: sensitisation of senior NARS leaders and policy makers; attraction of donor investment; improvements in monitoring and evaluation; and improvements in content generation and its management. It was recognized that in addition to ICM policy development at global, regional and national

stakeholders and beneficiaries. It was recognised that all the partners active in the Task Forces of the IISAST initiative (including GFAR and Regional Forums) would be taking the lead in developing this framework as a tool for further advocacy and support to NARS, in the form of guidelines for development and implementation of ICM policies. The outputs would be advocated under the ICM4ARD GPP. These policies should look at issues in generating, processing and using more effectively information through ICT-enabled systems for ARD at the Institution and ARD Systems level.

More information on the meeting and the draft report can be found [here](#)<sup>17</sup>.

### GFAR at Web2forDev Conference

*"Technological innovation is taking place at a breathtaking pace. Dozens of free or very low-cost interactive Web tools continuously emerge that can enhance the ways we create and publish information and the ways we collaborate and share resources. This evolution of the Web, commonly known as Web 2.0, offers opportunities and challenges to enhance collaboration. It is an easy way to voice out ideas, experiences and needs from which rural communities all over the world could benefit. We need to understand and grasp these, to further improve networking, collaborating and exchanging knowledge in the field of rural development and natural resource management."*

This was the aim of the "Web2forDev - Participatory Web for Development" Conference held in Rome from September 25th to 27th 2007, during the e-Agriculture Week.

The Conference has been extensively covered on the web, through the publication of all presentations and several video recordings (all available on the [Web2forDev Conference website](#)<sup>18</sup>), and also, as might be expected, through Web 2.0 tools like the [Conference blog](#)<sup>19</sup> and the photos published on [Flickr](#)<sup>20</sup>.

Representatives from GFAR and the Regional Fora attended several sessions of the Conference, and GFAR had a presentation in the parallel session on



4th ICM4ARD Consultation, Rome, September 2007

levels, the major focus needed to be on individual institutions having clear policy frameworks on how the outcomes of research and development activities are communicated to

<sup>17</sup>[http://www.egfar.org/egfar/website/action/icm\\_icts/ewekegfar](http://www.egfar.org/egfar/website/action/icm_icts/ewekegfar)

<sup>18</sup><http://www.web2fordev.net>

<sup>19</sup><http://blog.web2fordev.net/>

<sup>20</sup><http://www.flickr.com/photos/tags/web2fordev/>



"Shared Virtual Spaces for Remote Stakeholder Collaboration". The presentation was on "[The EGFAR Web Space: Using Web 2.0 Technologies to Electronically Mimic GFAR](#)"<sup>21</sup> and highlighted how GFAR's objectives of providing a communication platform and facilitating the flow of information and GFAR's principles of subsidiarity, additionality and decentralisation are best implemented electronically through the use of an overall Web 2.0 approach and of some specific Web 2.0 technologies. The Web 2.0 technologies applied in EGFAR were described and also the major challenges faced in this approach were discussed in the presentation, challenges such as attracting participation and involving partners in information sharing.

### GFAR participation in the e-Agriculture Week

From September 22nd to 29th the FAO headquarters in Rome hosted the [e-Agriculture Week](#)<sup>22</sup>, a "week-long dialogue focusing on the use of information, communication, and associated technologies in sustainable agricultural development and food security". The E-Agriculture Week was designed as part of the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), who identified e-Agriculture as a priority in its Plan of Action. It was organized by a number of international organizations, led by FAO.

GFAR participated in several events taking place during the e-Agriculture Week. Some of them, as the 2nd Expert Consultation on IISAST, the 4th inter-regional consultation on ICM4ARD, the EGFAR Taskforce and the Web2forDev Conference, are covered in other articles in this issue. Other important meetings in which GFAR participated were:

- [8th Agricultural Ontology Service \(AOS\) Workshop](#): "7 years of AOS: Achievements and Next Steps", organised by FAO and held on 21-22 September, in which information and knowledge management experts in agriculture met to review ongoing developments of semantic standards and their application. GFAR presented a project that is under development in strict collaboration with FAO and with the support of other partners: the Agricultural Organizations Registry project for managing information on agricultural organizations in a distributed architecture using a central Registry. More on this project in the next issue of our Newsletter. The program,

presentations and final report of this workshop are available [here](#)<sup>23</sup>.

- [CGIAR: Global Public Goods - From Information and Knowledge to Food](#), organised by CGIAR and held on 28 September, an open and inclusive meeting to help lay out new approaches for the CGIAR to provide its "information customers" worldwide with simple but enhanced access to the vast array of scientific data, information and knowledge generated by its research centers working with their national research partners.
- [Farmer-led documentation: Local knowledge sharing in an agricultural context](#), organised by PROLINNOVA / ETC EcoCulture, IAALD and FAO and held on 28 September, an interactive exchange meeting, where organizations involved in agricultural development were invited to share their views on farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing, specifically on farmer led documentation.

#### People at the GFAR Secretariat

Leighla Bowers  
Ajit Maru  
Valeria Pesce  
Antonio Schiavone  
Sylvaine Thomas

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.web2fordev.net/468.html>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.e-agriculture.org/102.html>

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.fao.org/aims/pub\\_aos8.jsp](http://www.fao.org/aims/pub_aos8.jsp)