



GFAR

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

DRAFT

15TH PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING

MARRAKECH, MOROCCO

1ST – 2ND DECEMBER 2005

MEETING MINUTES

GFAR-SECRETARIAT

c/o Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Rome Italy

1. OPENING REMARKS

In his opening remarks, Mr. Mohammad Roozitalab, GFAR Chair, welcomed all participants, with a special recognition of those attending the meeting for the first time, such as new Regional Fora (RF) chairs from APAARI (Mr. H.P.M. Gunasena), FARA (Ms. Njabulo Nduli) and other stakeholder representatives Mr. Ron Bonnett from IFAP and Mr. Robert Carreau from the European Commission (see the full list participants in Annex 2). He reminded participants of the decision to convert the NARS sub-Committee to a Program Committee (PC) with new programmatic functions, and that this was the first time the committee was meeting as a PC, to which reports of past achievements and future plans and programs of all stakeholder groups will henceforth be presented, so that it can carry out its new programmatic function. Hence the presence of all stakeholder groups including the previous Advanced Research Institutions (ARIs) which as in the revised Charter are now considered as RF from Europe and North America, as well as coordinators of on-going Global Partnership Programs (GPPs), who will all make brief presentations.

2. Adoption of meeting Agenda and approval of Minutes of 14th NARS Sub-Committee Meeting

The agenda (see Annex 1) which was adopted without any changes comprised the following:

- Progress reports from regional fora,
- Updates from stakeholder groups
- Updates from on-going GPPs and other initiatives

Following the adoption of the agenda, the Chair presented the minutes of the previous meeting, which were also approved with no amendments.

3. Regional Fora Progress Reports

A summarised version of reports presented by RF Executive Secretaries and Chairs are presented below. The full presentations are available on EGFAR (GFAR website: www.egfar.org).

3.1. AARINENA

The report presented by the Executive Secretary, Ibrahim Hamdan, briefly described some of the activities carried out during the year, and some future plans of the RF in the following areas.

3.1.1. Regional Agricultural Information System (RAIS) Activities

- Arabic version of the AARINENA website was launched in 2005 in order to improve its outreach since Arabic is the first language of the majority of its members.
- ICT Steering Committee comprising representatives from the five sub-regions of AARINENA, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), FAO, GFAR and International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) established to provide guidance for the development of the AARINENA Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS).
- Co-sponsored and convened the second Inter-Regional ICT workshop in May 2005 in Cairo. One of the main outputs of this meeting was the decision to develop a joint AARINENA and INFOSYS+ project to enhance inter-regional sharing and exchange

of experiences, skills and tools in order to develop and strengthen the National Agricultural Information system (NAIS) managers.

- Publication of four issues of AARINENA Newsletter during the year

3.1.2. Commodity Networks

According to the Executive Secretary, two new regional networks on biotechnology and water use efficiency are in the planning stages of being established to complement the four on-going commodity networks.

3.1.3. Global Post Harvest Initiative

In collaboration with GFAR-Secretariat, a regional workshop on Post Harvest and Linking Farmers to Markets was convened in March 2005 in Antalya, Turkey. During the meeting, thematic working groups were set up and they prepared concept notes on the following topical issues to be developed into full proposals for funding and implementation:

- Innovation, Extension & Technology Transfer Systems
- Organic Farming
- Market Orientation for networks

3.1.4. CSOs involvement

During the last Executive Committee meeting of the year held in Sanaa Yemen in September it was decided to institutionalize the participation of farmers' organizations and NGO representatives as Associate Members of the Executive Committee, pending a constitutional amendment to give them full membership status. The issue will be discussed during the 2006 General Assembly scheduled for May 2006 in Yemen.

DISCUSSION

The main issue brought up after the presentation was that of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) participation in the RF activities. The Executive Secretary of AARINENA, described some of the efforts being made to improve CSOs participation and integration into the RF, but lamented the fact that many times the CSOs constituency did not respond adequately to such efforts, and even found it difficult to attend AARINENA meetings to which they were invited. He expressed AARINENA's willingness to continue to invite CSOs to participate in its meetings and forge a better relationship.

3.2. APAARI

The report presented by the new chair, H.P.M. Gunasena, was titled "APAARI: Strengthening Partnership". He started his presentation by highlighting the three strategic areas of activity engaged in by the RF: a) Information and Communication Technology; b) Agricultural Biotechnology; and c) Thematic Research Networks for Crop, Livestock and Fisheries.

H.P.M. Gunasena then focused his presentation on the RF programs and achievements in 2005, the highlights of which were:

3.2.1. Information and Communication Technology

This thematic area of activity is implemented by the Asia Pacific Agricultural Research Information Systems (APARIS), whose main objectives are: i) Advocacy to promote ICT in ARD, ii) Capacity building of NARS during the initial stages of NAIS development, and iii) Integration of National, Regional and Global Information Systems. Through the activities of APARIS, the RF carried out an ICT status report in the region and was the only RF to have completed this exercise in 2004.

Furthermore, in order to facilitate knowledge sharing among RF stakeholders, it carried out the following activities:

- convened a national workshop on the Role of Information Communication Technology in Taking Scientific Knowledge/Technologies to the End Users in January 2005
- carried out a regional training workshop on Integrating National Information Systems in November 2005
- regularly updated the APAARI Homepage (www.apaari.org)
- currently publishing three APAARI success stories on ICM
- developed ARD Information Gateway and Experts Database

3.2.2. Asia Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology (APCoAB)

APCoAB was established to implement the agricultural biotechnology thematic area of activities. In January 2005, it convened a brainstorming session on Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in Agricultural Biotechnology. Some of the areas recommended for future work are in:

- Policies for national strategy, Intellectual Property Rights, regulatory mechanisms
- Human resource development for scientific, policy, legal matters.
- Capacity building- basic research, knowledge alliances
- Establishment of incubation centers

3.2.3. Research Networks

A total of 7 research networks covering crops, livestock and fisheries are currently active in the region.

He also highlighted the following specific set of activities carried out by the RF during the year:

- carried out research gap analyses in two sub-regions (South East Asia and Pacific) with support from GFAR
- convened, in collaboration with GFAR and FAO, a high level policy dialogue on biotechnology for food security and poverty alleviation: opportunities and challenges
- produced various reports, newsletters, success stories and an updated version of APAARI on CD

He indicated that during the year the RF saw a growing involvement of CSO in various activities illustrated with a list of farmers organizations working in partnership with APAARI. He regretted the withdrawal of Asian Non-Governmental Organization Coalition (ANGOC) as a member of APCoAB, but noted that other avenues are being explored.

3.2.3. APAARI 2006 Program of Work

A comprehensive list of activities planned to be carried out in 2006 was presented, with a request for support from the GFAR-Secretariat for the ones presented below.

Activity	Period	Amount Requested (US\$)
Inter-regional workshop on ICM – Bangkok, Thailand	April/May, 2006	30,000
APARIS Steering Committee Meeting and Workshop for Senior NARS Managers – Bangkok, Thailand	April/May, 2006	15,000
APAARI General Assembly and Expert Consultation (Topic linked to that of GFAR 2006) – New Delhi, India	November, 2006	30,000
Brainstorming for synthesis of three sub-regional reports on need assessment	June/July, 2006	20,000
Planning Workshop for PHT initiatives in A-P region	June/July, 2006	20,000
Publication of Success Stories: (i) Bt cotton in China (ii) Tissue culture of Date palm in Iran	Before October, 2006	10,000

In his concluding remarks H.P.M. Gunasena, invited the participants to APAARI General Assembly, which will be held from the 5th to the 7th of November 2006 in New Delhi just before the GFAR Conference.

DISCUSSION

A number of issues were raised during a brief discussion period following this presentation

Access to and utilization of technology generated in the region by end users especially farmers and the role of extension services in disseminating such outputs was one of such issues. The APAARI chair reassured the committee that every effort is being made to ensure access and utilization of research products in the region, not only through the extension services but also through the utilization of modern information sharing means such as the CDs, and gave the example of using such audio visual means to inform farmers of crop damaging insects and the control methods. Other issues revolved around sharing the lessons learned in APAARI in fostering Public-Private Partnerships, and enhancing CSOs participation in RF activities. With regards to the latter, the APAARI chair reiterated that the RF has intensified efforts to better engage the CSOs but sometimes ran into a lack of sufficient interest on the part of the CSOs to engage with the RF, and cited the case of ANGOC, which initially accepted to be a member of the Steering Committee of APCoAB, but has not been actively participating. He assured the committee that the RF will continue to explore various ways and options of enhancing CSOs participation in RF activities. Finally he suggested that one way to share experiences of APAARI with regard to public-private partnerships is to package some of successful cases as success stories and share these with others.

3.3. FARA

The new chair of FARA, Ms. Njabulo Nduli, gave a brief statement before she invited the RF Executive Secretary, Monty Jones, to present the RF 2005 progress report. During her statement she thanked GFAR-Secretariat for support provided to FARA during the year especially with regards to strengthening CSOs involvement and integration into the RF, as well GFAR's active participation in the FARA General Assembly held in June 2005. She informed the community the process of incorporating the North African countries into FARA has now been completed, and that these countries are now part and parcel of FARA.

The report presented by the RF Executive Secretary, titled “*Inclusive partnership in Action*”, contained three main thrusts, which are also the three pillars of FARA program of work: i) Advocacy and constituency building; ii) Promoting partnership; and iii) Information and

learning exchange. The report not only covered the main achievements in 2005, but also highlighted the RF medium and long term strategies in responding to the problems related to food and agriculture in the region. Below are the highlights of the report:

3.3.1. Advocacy and constituency building

During FARA General Assembly in Entebbe Uganda in June 2005, the RF signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with AARINENA which allowed the northern African region to be members of AARINENA as well as FARA; this has increased the FARA membership from 45 states to 53 states (i.e. all of the African continent).

Monty Jones also reported that FARA, as part of its advocacy role, has also signed a MoU with the African Union (AU) as its technical arm on ARD. The Executive Secretary said the agreement will allow FARA to play a more active role in advising the AU member states on issues related to ARD. He also briefed the participants on the outcomes of the recent FARA visit to Niger, which he called, one of the severe Hunger Spots in the continent.

In his presentation the ES reported the outcomes of recent NARS assessment and recommendations by SROs during a retreat convened by FARA. Below are major issues discussed during the retreat, which he said FARA will take a lead in addressing:

- the effectiveness of research institutions
- the financial sustainability and weak financial management of NARS
- the need for effective partnership building which includes CSOs, universities and other non-traditional ARD stakeholders

With regards to promoting CSOs inclusive ARD, the ES reported that in collaboration with the GFAR-Secretariat, the FARA Secretariat organized a civil society consultation workshop in Accra, Ghana following the formation of the Sub-Saharan Africa NGO Consortium, also facilitated and supported by GFAR-Secretariat, last June 2005 during the FARA General Assembly. The Accra meeting involved farmer's organizations, NGOs and small-medium enterprises representatives. Each group developed an action plan to boost up the CSOs capacity to participate in ARD processes, not just in technology development or innovations but also during strategic planning and decision making processes. Monty Jones, said that the RF institutionalized the CSOs participation in its decision making processes sometime ago and will now move forward, pretty swiftly, in strengthening their capacity to actively participate in ARD activities at the national levels.

3.3.2. Promoting partnership and exchange of information and learning:

The ES reported that on-going and/or planned activities that address the above issue could be clustered under the following five initiatives which also touch on the building up of an institutional architecture for AR4D with the potential to impact on favourably on economic growth in the region. .

- a) Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP) which encompasses all FARA/SRO programs, i.e. a regional umbrella program. The ES reported that the objective of the FAAP is threefold:
 - to strengthen capacities of African agricultural innovation systems and increase investments by African governments in technology development and dissemination;
 - to foster and support needed reforms in African research and extension institutions, and in markets and the agricultural policy environment; and

- to link national, sub-regional and regional programs/networks with strong international partnerships to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in technology generation, dissemination and adoption.
- b) Sub-Saharan African Challenge Program (SSA CP) which brings all the stakeholders together to carry-out joint activities that will respond to the needs of resource poor farmers. The inception phase of this program which included the identification of 3 Pilot learning sites (one in each sub-region) was recently concluded.
 - c) Building African Scientific and Institutional Capacity program (BASIC): The main purpose of this program is to strengthen the scientific and institutional capacity of African universities and colleges to produce the quality of graduates that are required to implement Africa's ambitious public and private development programs, such as the SSA CP, ALive and TERRAfrica..
 - d) African biotechnology and bio-safety initiative: the program aims to to coordinate all activities related to biotechnology and biosafety issues in the region
 - e) Regional agricultural information and learning systems (RAILS): in order to enable African scientists to better retrieve and contribute to the global knowledge of agricultural science and development, FARA is closely working with GFAR and its SROs (ASARECA, CORAF/WECARD and SADC-FANR) with technical backstopping from the European infosys+ group.

3.3.3. FARA-GFAR Future collaboration

In his concluding remarks the ES highlighted three areas in which FARA wishes to collaborate with GFAR in 2006, these include:

- strengthening of Civil Societies in agricultural innovation systems,
- exchange of information and learning initiatives in Africa and
- increase inter-regional sharing of experiences of success stories and modern technologies

Discussion

Issues raised during a brief discussion period following the presentation revolved mainly around the following: Firstly, a clarification was sought from the Executive Secretary of FARA about the status of the Northern African countries that he said are now part of FARA, with regards to whether they still belong to ARRINENA. He indicated that all of the 8 Northern African countries that recently became a part and parcel of FARA still remain members of AARINENA as well, and he thought this arrangement which also exists elsewhere, for example Cyprus which belongs to both AARINENA and EFARD, will only strengthen linkages and collaboration among the regions. Secondly, a cluster of comments and questions were raised around the issue of CSOs engagement and participation in FARA activities, and efforts being made to strengthen and empower them.

The Executive Secretary of FARA explained that CSOs are routinely consulted and invited to participate in all of FARA activities, but that until recently their participation had not been encouraging, and he thought this was related to a limited capacity of the CSOs to respond effectively. The situation has, however improved, and active participation of CSOs is on the rise. He illustrated this improvement with active participation of farmers' organization in the recent FARA General Assembly, and the recent CSOs consultation that involved other

stakeholders, on the issue of how to strengthen collaboration among the various stakeholder groups, in order to more actively contribute to the development and implementation of FARA agenda.

Secondly, a question was raised as to how FARA will ensure that weaker stakeholders and institutions will participate in the SSA-CP which is run on a competitive basis. In response, the ES indicated that FARA uses the concept of asymmetric participation which ensures that weaker institutions are teamed up with stronger ones for the implementation of various aspects of the Challenge Program, with real opportunities for capacity building for the weaker institutions. Thirdly, and in response to the question of whether policy makers in the region, accept and the concept of a strong and effective CSOs, fully engaged in national level activities and the importance of strengthening them and their organizations, he indicated that he believes there is a some acceptance of the concept, but that sensitization in this regard needs to continue. Finally, with regards to the planned and on-going activities in the area of biotechnology and bio-safety the question was raised as to whether there are plans for collaborating with other regions working on similar issues. H indicated that efforts are on-going to develop inter-regional collaboration on such novel issues where exchange of expertise and know how could be mutually beneficial.

3.4. EFARD

In his presentation of EFARD activities during the year, the vice-chair of EFARD, Christian Hoste, acknowledged the active participation of GFAR in the EFARD conference held in Zurich. He indicated that EFARD since then, has been in a state of transition which should culminate in the setting up of a strategy and structure that will provide some continuity and avoid the current situation where EFARD is more or less dormant between the General Conferences. The process would also include the election of a new chair and vice chair.

He explained that activities within the region can be clustered at three levels. A first level is at the policy level handled by EIARD. As an example he mentioned a recent general assembly held in the UK where policy issues related Europe, CGIAR and its Science Council relationships were discussed. A second level is at the Program level where efforts are made to co-ordinate activities among member countries. He gave the example of an on-going initiative that brings together a total of 14 member states (with the recent addition of three new participating countries- UK, Lithuania and Spain) now ready to pool their resources for coordinated agricultural research activities. The third level he identified was the project or operational level which he illustrated with a number on-going activities being carried out by ECART, a consortium of 6 European institutions from 5 countries. For example, ECART is working with FARA on impact assessment within the context of the Challenge Program. Another example is the services it is providing to monitor the utilization of funds provided by the EC to the CGIAR He concluded his presentation by highlighting the important roles these organizations could play in promoting inter-regional collaboration as they could make European expertise available to southern partners.

Discussion

A representative from the European Commission (Robert Carreau) provided some additional information indicating that what was presented by the EFARD Vice chair are essentially related to the activities of the DG Research within the European Commission, and that another arm of the EC, the DG Development provides support to strengthen NARS, and also to activities at the sub-regional level and to the CGIAR. A question was raised as to on-going plans to strengthen EFARD and its linkages to other regions. Christian Hoste reiterated the

on-going consultation to elect a new chair, vice-chair and an Executive Secretary with the idea of having a structure that can follow up on other issues and not just become active to organize meetings once every three years. Another issue raised was whether there is a role and a place for the CSO, within EFARD. The reply was that yes, CSO are active within the Forum, but that they are also well funded which makes it sometimes difficult to engage them actively on EFARD issues..

4. STAKEHOLDER GROUPS UPDATES

4.1. Farmers Organizations

Ron Bonnett on behalf of Jack Wilkinson (who could not attend the meeting) presented a report for the farmers' constituency entitled "IFAP collaboration with GFAR and Regional Research Forums".

He acknowledged the support received from the GFAR-Secretariat during the year especially for the establishment of the IFAP Committee on ARD. He briefly described the mandate, structure, and objectives of the new IFAP ARD committee. According to him, the main functions and roles the committee crafted for itself are:

- to facilitate the exchange of concrete experiences of farmers' organisations - research centres collaboration and share positive practices
- to identify possible processes for having an influence at national, regional and international level, and
- to maintain regular contact and continuous involvement with national and international research centres.

Guided by these functions, the committee developed a plan of work it hopes would enable it carryout these functions. Some elements of the plan developed by the Committee during its first meeting comprise the following:

- **Lobbying** of regional and international agricultural research structures
- Documentation of **good practices and positive processes** between researchers and farmers
- **Capacity building** programs for farmers and their organizations
- Development of a farmers' **documentation kit** on agricultural research
- Facilitating and co-ordinating **farmer representation** at agricultural research meetings

He expanded a bit on some of the elements of the planned lobby campaign and listed the following as some of the expected outputs of the campaign:

- A direct involvement of farmers' organisations in research institutes and networks
- A socioeconomic orientation of research (marketing, policy, environmental and social issues) to complete the technical orientation of research (existing and new technologies, production, processing, etc.)
- A budgetary line within research projects, dedicated to the rapid and efficient dissemination of results to farmers and their organisations, with the participation of a strong extension system
- An increase in public funding for research projects respecting the involvement of farmers' organisations in all its phases of development

With regards to future activities, he briefly discussed a number of such activities that the farmers group will focus on in the near future. These include:

i) Enhanced collaboration with GFAR through:

- A continued involvement in the Steering Committee
- Active participation in the GFAR General Conference in 2006
- Participation in the DURAS project, the high value product initiative, the Global Post Harvest Initiative, and the Stakeholder Committee for the GCP

ii) Working with Regional Forums through the identification of farmers' representatives who will work actively within the RF, and involvement of farmers in the implementation of the SSA Challenge Program.

He reiterated the plan to carryout studies on a socio-economic orientation of research to identify the factors that impact on, as well as the organizational actions farmers could take to improve their income.

In his concluding remarks Ron Bonnett said that the collaboration between GFAR and IFAP has strengthened recently and IFAP will continue to work closely with GFAR in engaging farmers in the activities and decision making processes of the various RF. He requested that consideration be given to providing interpretation facilities during GFAR events in order to encourage active participation. He then informed the committee of the forthcoming IFAP biennial World Farmers Congress scheduled for May 2006 and invited members and RF representatives to participate actively in the congress..

Discussion

The chair congratulated IFAP for the comprehensive report as well as the achievements made during the year. He said this is the first time farmers presented such a comprehensive report. The Executive Secretary of AARINENA lamented the fact that although RF made strong and positive efforts to respond to the request from the president of IFAP that farmers should be involved in all of the activities carried out in the region, the response from IFAP to nominate representatives to many of the activities was not always prompt and positive. Ron Bonnet acknowledged this problem, and suggested it might be due to a number of reasons including timing of the various activities. He however indicated that the new research committee will ensure more positive responses in the future. The experience in FARA was different according to the Executive Secretary of FARA, in the sense that increased farmer participation was observed, and a farmer representative now sits on the Executive Committee of FARA.

With regards to the planned lobbying campaign, Ron was requested to elaborate on what strategies would be used to ensure that farmers get full recognition for the work they do, given that farmers are great researchers who develop technologies as well. One of the strategies described was the documentation of successful stories of such activities and of collaboration to show case what works and on which future activities could be built.

The Executive Secretary of FARA expressed some surprise for the strong case made for the utilization of extension services to transfer research outputs to farmers, given the observed collapse of these services in many countries. Current thinking in this regard according to him is direct participation of farmers and a move away from the linear research-extension-farmer approach. Ron suggested that the role of extension services will vary from country to

country, and he believes that in some countries extension services are still strong and deserve to be supported.

Two other issues raised with respect to this presentation were: role RF were expected to play during the IFAP congress, and potential partners farmers will work with as well as strategies they will use to implement the planned socio-economic studies, With regards to the first question, it was indicated that the agenda for the Congress was still being developed and suggestions as to specific roles for RF would be welcomed Nevertheless, RF should plan to participate in the meetings of the IFAP' s regional committees. On the second issue, it was indicated that it is too early yet to identify partners and strategies. All that could be confirmed now is that trade related issues already identified by IFAP as an important problem will be high on the agenda, and institutions with appropriate expertise such as universities will be key partners.

A final general comment made by the representative from IFAD (Shantanu Mathur) with regards to the session as a whole, was the observation that in general reports from RF has become richer than before, and there was some evidence in the reports that the movement from NARIS to NARS is well on its way. He also noted the increasing collaboration among RF which adds value to the work of GFAR. The Chair brought the session to a close after thanking participants for presenting such good reports and discussing many issues which he thought are important to GFAR.

The Chair opened the second session of the meeting and recognized the following members and participants who were not present the previous day. Abdushukur Khanazarov, the new Chair of CACAARI, Raj Paroda the Executive Secretary of APAARI, Arvin Kapur the private sector representative, Abdel Fardous the chair of AARINENA, and Irmgard Hoesch-Zoeledon coordinator of the Global Facilitating Unit of the Under Utilized Species GPP.

3.5. CACAARI

The report presented by Abdushukur Khanazarov, the Chair of CACAARI comprised three parts: a rapid overview of the goal, objectives and members of the Forum; followed by a review of activities carried out from October 2004-December 2005; and finally a description of planned activities for 2006.

The goal of the RF as presented by the chair is to foster required regional cooperation for strengthening agricultural research for sustainable development in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The four-part objectives he presented were:

- to promote the exchange of scientific and technical know-how and information;
- to encourage the establishment of appropriate research and training programs in accordance with identified regional, bilateral or national priorities;
- to strengthen research organizational and management capability of member institutions; and
- to build cross-linkages with regional and international research centers and organizations through involvement in jointly-planned research and training programs

3.5.1. Activities carried out during the period October 2004- December 2005

i) New Constitution approved

The first constitution of the RF was approved and adopted by all the eight national and institutional members in 2004. Current members are: Armenia, Ministry of Agriculture; Azerbaijan, National Agrarian Science Center; Georgia, Academy of Agricultural Sciences; Kazakhstan, Ministry of Agriculture; Kyrgyzstan, Center of Agricultural Research and Consulting Services; Tajikistan, Tajik Academy of Agricultural Services; Turkmenistan, Ministry of Agriculture; Uzbekistan, Uzbek Scientific Production Center for Agriculture.

ii) New RF chair elected

Following the departure of Sheraly Nurmatov the former chair of the RF who moved on to become the Governor of Ferghana region, new elections were held during the CACAARI Executive Committee meeting held in May 2005, and Abdushukur Khanazarov was elected as the new chair.

iii) New RF web-site

A new web-portal, <http://www.cacaari-forum.narod.ru>, which includes a database on Agricultural Research Institutions of the eight member countries, was launched during the year, and members were invited to visit and send comments.

3.5.2. Program of work for 2006

Planned activities include:

- Annual Regional Forum Meeting scheduled for April 2006
- Strengthening of RAIS in CAC Region

- Priority setting and needs assessment to be carried out for each of the sub-regions, with support from the GFAR-Secretariat and other partners.
- Publication of Newsletter and Success Stories
- Establishing Regional and Inter-regional Research Networks

Finally, members were informed that new elections for the chair and the executive secretary will be carried out in April 2006 during the annual general meeting

Discussion

Main issue raised was to re-emphasize the fact that the Forum is young, and needs some support to get it well organized and established so that it can effectively carry out the functions expected of it, including that of coordinating research for development activities within the region and ensuring enduring linkages to other forums and the global system. The Executive Secretary of APAARI, Raj Paroda reiterated how some limited support from both the CGIAR-PFU office based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and the GFAR-Secretariat has helped in some way along these lines. He mentioned in particular the organization of an inter-regional cotton network workshop by the Forum. He pointed out, however, that a lot more support is now required from the Donor Support Group and the GFAR-Secretariat. He identified some support modalities such as the secondment of staff to the Forum secretariat, funding support to implement elements of the plan of work such as the needs assessment exercise and so on.

Asanbek Ajibekov the Executive Secretary of the Central Asia sub-Regional Forum echoed these sentiments, and called for an increased focus on and support to the forum. A final question that was raised by the IFAD representative was whether there are farmers' organizations actively working with scientists in the region. Ajibekov confirmed that currently these organizations are now free to organize themselves and collaborate with researchers and other stakeholders

4.2. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Monica Kapiriri, GFAR vice-chair and NGOs representative on the Steering Committee, presented the NGOs report entitled "From Mexico to Marrakech". In her introduction she indicated that usually, research groups work with individual NGOs that have no common organizational umbrella under which they work and to which they have some reporting relationship and accountability. No collective reports from the NGO group has therefore been presented in the past. She then proceeded to describe recent efforts NGOs have undertaken to organize themselves and create a much needed umbrella organization to which participating NGOs will be accountable and which will solve the problem of legitimate representation of NGO in other bodies. Her presentation traced the history of efforts made in this direction since the GFAR Mexico meeting in 2004, hence the title of her report.

It was during the Mexico meeting that the idea of forming an International NGO consortium was first mooted. During this meeting, the vision, objectives and priority areas of activity of such a consortium were developed with some funding requirements. The proponent realized shortly after that this approach of forming an active International consortium right away was rather ambitious, and that a more manageable strategy was to develop regional consortia one at a time to provide the operational base of an international consortium which would then have the support and ownership of the regional consortia.

The first of such regional consortia to be set up was the sub-Saharan NGO Consortium (SSA-NGOC) which was set up with some support and facilitation from the Secretariats of FARA

and GFAR during the 2005 FARA General Assembly in Entebbe. A total of 32 NGO groups from 15 countries mainly from Africa, but also from other regions (Europe and Asia) participated in the event leading up to the founding of the consortium. Participants drafted, debated and approved vision and mission statements of the consortium, and elected a steering committee to spearhead future organizational efforts.

The first of such efforts was the organization, under the auspices of FARA and with support from the GFAR-Secretariat of a multi-stakeholder consultation in October 2005 during which the new SSA-NGO-C developed a working document which spelt out objectives, activities and expected outputs including the following:

i) Objective: To enhance the credibility and accountability of NGOs in Agricultural Research

Output: A Code of Conduct for ARD in SSA that protects farmers' interests and secure their benefits developed

ii) Objective: To facilitate access to, and exchange of relevant information in order to influence agricultural research policies and priorities

Output: Collectively shared ARD agenda and priorities developed; improved policy responsiveness to stakeholder best practices and needs; effective utilization of regional agricultural research information and data.

iii) Objective: To build the Capacity of NGOs to collaborate and participate more effectively in ARD process and in resource mobilization.

Output: Improved competence in agricultural research for development of NGOs

In her concluding remarks, she indicated her that one of the targets of the consortium is to contribute to on-going efforts to bring back NGOs to the CGIAR. The task the SSA-NGOC has set itself is huge but with a great promise of contributing to improving ARD. She therefore called for support to ensure that the consortium implements its agenda. She challenged other RF to follow the example of FARA and set up other regional NGO consortia which will form the building blocks of the development of the international consortium.

Discussion

There was a general agreement on the need to better organize NGOs so that they can actively and consistently participate in ARD activities and present a legitimate body representing the constituency. The on-going efforts in this direction in SSA were commended, and other regions such as APAARI promised to undertake similar initiatives.

4.3. Private Sector report

The report presented by Arvind Kapur, the private sector representative on the Steering Committee, focused essentially on a number of on-going Public-Private Partnership (PPP) ventures especially in Asia. A number of such activities were:

- Policy issues such as the development of common or harmonized phytosanitary rules and regulations among 6 countries in Asia targeting some 130 pests
- Product development such as collaboration with AVDRC to develop vegetable products and seeds, or with NARS to establish Integrated Pest Management systems for Bt cotton
- Information and knowledge sharing illustrated with a seminar on partnerships

He concluded by indicating that a number of problems still need to be tackled to make PPP more effective. One of which is how to effectively disseminate results and products to farmers.

Discussion

Some other examples of the support from the private sector were cited such as the support for the participation of researchers in a recent travelling workshop on Bt cotton in India. It was also remarked that perhaps there is a need to work and develop models of PPP in order to develop useful products for farmers and consumers, that successful cases of PPP should be documented and shared, and that follow up activities to those described should be pursued.

5. Updates on GPPs and other initiatives

5.1. Direct Sowing, Mulch-based and Conservative Agriculture (DMC) GPP

Bernard Triomphe, the Coordinator of this GPP, presented an update on activities carried out in 2005, and provided some insight into plans for 2006 in a report entitled: "2005 report & perspectives for 2006 and beyond". He acknowledged support from the GFAR-Secretariat and other organizations such as FAO, which made it possible to implement activities planned for 2005. These activities were focused on carrying out case studies in a number of countries including Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia and Brazil, and participating in the Third World Congress on Conservation Agriculture (3rd WCCA).

The main objective of the case studies was to document and analyze past and current experiences in order to improve knowledge and understanding of this farming system approach which is now currently referred to as conservation agriculture (CA) rather than DMC which apparently was a compromise description of the approach adopted during the Dresden 2000 meeting. A second objective was to present the information so gathered as input into discussions on the approach during the 3rd WCCA.

The central questions asked by the case studies were to ascertain if farmers are practicing CA, how they are doing it, and if they are using the established principles of CA including low tillage intensity, the use of soil cover and crop rotation. He reported that although the case studies have not all been completed and the results fully analyzed, a clearly observed trend was that many farmers are not practicing or fully applying the principles of CA for a variety of reasons including:

- i) A conflict between on-farm realities and the rigid application of the principles of CA. such as:
 - the use of crop residues as soil cover, when the material needs to be used for other essential purposes such as for livestock grazing, and export off farm to reduce the threat of termite invasion or to earn additional income.
 - Overcoming important technical and organizational challenges linked to achieving effective soil cover through cover crops or the use of crop residues, a serious challenge especially in the drier areas.
 - Routine use of herbicides by farmers for very important economical and practical reasons.

- ii) One other hurdle to the utilization of CA by farmers was poor access to and non-availability of required equipments.

He suggested that some soul searching on the part of strict advocates of CA principles might be needed to improve the adoption and utilization of the approach. Firstly the need for a more

participatory and flexible approach that puts the farmer in the driver seat, and secondly, the need to consider and adopt a more diverse system that responds to the social and practical realities faced by farmers. He concluded that CA would gain acceptance and be more utilized if less emphasis and focus were directed at field scale technical CA issues, and more on non technical social issues that allow the integration of CA to other approaches.

With regards to the prospects for 2006 and beyond, he briefly reviewed the current status of CA networking and indicated that although there are currently, different types of projects and networks on CA at national and regional levels scattered through out the developing world, there is no single global entity or network with a mandate to facilitate and coordinate these scattered initiatives except perhaps this GFAR affiliated global program. The issue was discussed during a session of the 3rd WCCA, and although the idea of setting up a Global Facilitating Unit for CA was in general accepted as the way forward, the task lies in clearly demonstrating the added value of such a facilitating unit. Some of the functions it could carryout to demonstrate its added value include:

- serving as a clearing house for collecting, sharing and disseminating information
- putting people into contact with one another (facilitating networking)
- organization of workshops and meetings
- provision of training and education
- provision of a Question and Answer Service
- policy advocacy at the global level
- fund raising for CA work at field level

The issue was therefore to examine the role DMC could play towards the establishment of such a global facilitating unit. The first sets of activities envisaged for 2006 will be to complete the on-going case studies and share the information and then in collaboration with other partners, work towards the establishment of a facilitation unit through a number of actions.

Discussion

While there was some appreciation of the report on past activities and future plans, the main concern expressed was the lack of involvement of RF in this GPP, and how to ensure that they will in future play a more active role. The coordinator acknowledged that RF involvement had in the past been minimal and although plans were made to ensure a greater level of involvement in 2005 the plan did not materialize. He further suggested that RF involvement should perhaps be pursued by continental CA groupings such as the African Conservation Tillage network (ACT) which nevertheless currently requires support and funding to play such a role. The general feeling was that although there is some merit in GFAR participating in the establishment of a global facilitating unit that will serve to share information and knowledge, compile success stories and carryout other activities that will promote the adoption and utilization of CA, more effort would need to be made to involve the RF if this was to continue as a GFAR GPP.

5.2. Promoting Local Innovations (PROLINNOVA) GPP

Beatriz del Rosario a member of PROLINNOVA oversight group, who recently joined the APAARI Secretariat staff, presented the PROLINNOVA report. She started her presentation with a short overview of the objectives, mission, working hypothesis and organizational structure of PROLINNOVA, followed by a summary of activities carried out during the year, with the following main highlights:

- Two meetings of the PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG) were held during the year (February and June). During the second meeting held in Uganda the POG
 - Established various criteria and procedures for the future development of the GPP
 - Defined mechanisms for financial transparency
 - Defined approach to fair recognition of partners' contributions (IPR, copyright)
 - Drafted code of practice for Participatory Innovation Development (PID) which was to be tabled for a discussion at the next international PROLINNOVA workshop
- Start-up of program in the third group of countries: Niger, Sudan, Tanzania (staggered start because limited funds)
- Identification and inventories of local innovations
- Commencement of PID in some countries, and agreement on code of practice in PID
- Broadening, strengthening and regionalisation of multi-stakeholder platforms in Country Programs
- Learning about building R&D partnerships and Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation during a workshop organized by PROLINNOVA-Uganda

In her concluding remarks, she indicated that the funding obtained so far has not been sufficient to allow full implementation of rather ambitious country programs. She added, however, that a number of donors have expressed interests in supporting farmer-driven and development oriented research pursued by these programs.

DISCUSSION

The discussion was focused on the following issues and questions:

- i) Given that PROLINNOVA is an NGO led GPP, is there a strong linkage with researchers and research institutions, or is there still some resistance to such desirable collaboration? The response was that there is some level of on-going collaboration with researchers, but joint research and experimentation is yet to be initiated in a number of country programs.
- ii) Another question raised was on the criteria used to select research sites. The three initial locations were apparently selected because they were sites of on-going IFAD projects. Subsequently, guidelines such as an established focus on PID and strong belief in and practice of the approach, were developed as selection criteria.
- iii) The question of RF and SRF involvement in the GPP was raised and extensively discussed. Concern was expressed that perhaps activities pursued by this GPP do not reflect SRF and RF priorities. Some recommendations were made following the discussion on this issue. Firstly, that PROLINNOVA should develop a clear plan of how to link to RF; secondly that all GPPs should in future take into account discussion and recommendations of the PC, thirdly that in the future minutes of the PC should indicate such recommendations, follow up actions with the roles, responsibilities and who does what clearly indicated in the minutes; and finally that in the future GPP reports should reflect more of outputs and outcomes of their activities rather than meetings held and attended.

5.3. Under Utilised Species (UUS) GPP

Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon, coordinator of the Global Facilitating Unit (GFU) of UUS, indicated that following a successful donor commissioned review, the GPP received

additional funding for another 2 years, and a second phase of the GPP started in March 2005, with three main focus areas of activities.

a) Policy analysis and advice to policy and decision makers: Planned activities will include analyses of both national and international policies and legislation with the objective of making recommendations to address gaps in policies for the development of a more conducive policy environment for UUS.

b) Information, communication and documentation: In this area, a number of tools will be developed to improve available information, including: a web portal serving as an information gateway; a database on who is doing what ; information on donors active in the area; publication of success stories and guidelines for the development of UUS.

c) Public awareness: In this area, efforts will be made to inform policy makers, research managers, donors and the general public on the value and importance of UUS, and to change the current negative image associated with them.

Some of the achievements realized since the beginning of this second phase were then briefly described as follows:

a) Policy analysis and advice to policy and decision makers: Multi-disciplinary teams identified with the participation of RF were set up in Peru, Papua-New Guinea, Nepal, Vietnam, Jordan and Uzbekistan, and terms of reference developed to enable them analyze national policies related to UUS and make recommendations the development of policies and legal frame works that will enhance the utilization of UUS. In addition, the GFU is collaborating with partners in Peru, Nepal and Vietnam already working on policy gaps and capacity building needs in the context of work on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Some outputs from these activities are expected by mid 2006, and efforts will be made to present them to national policy makers. The GFU plans to carryout a synthesis of these country studies, and combine this with on-going efforts supported by IPGRI to examine a number of international agreements and legislation in other to make globally valid recommendations for policy initiatives that will feed into public awareness raising efforts.

The GFU joined forces with organizations such as UNCTAD to continue work on the European Novel Food legislation which presents some contradictions with WTO agreement and some current EU regulations, with negative impacts on UUS trading. One of the activities already carried out was a recent joint workshop in Brussels attended by a variety of actors including exporters, and representatives of the EU Directorate on Trade and Enterprises Development. A paper on the impact of novel food regulations on trade with developing countries was presented at this workshop.

b) Information and communication and documentation: The UUS website was regularly updated with new information such as a database on UUS projects, institutions, and experts added. Other activities going in this area include a user survey, the development of information on donors, and a strategy paper on sourcing for funds. It was pointed out that since the interest of farmers and small enterprises in UUS lies mainly in their economic potentials, efforts will be made to analyze and document successful cases in order to identify critical success factors and intervention points along the supply chains so that guidelines for the development of new successful supply chains could be developed.

c) Public awareness: The coordinator noted that in order to raise the profile of underutilized species, which currently is close to the bottom of many donors as well as southern policy makers and research managers agenda, the GFU launched a number of advocacy campaigns this year. An important one was the Chennai International Consultation on the “Role of Biodiversity in Achieving the UN Millennium Development Goal of Freedom from Hunger and Poverty, which was organized in collaboration with the M.S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), IPGRI and the GFAR-Secretariat, and funded by the Swiss Development Corporation, IFAD, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Ford Foundation, and the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (SFSA). The main output of the consultation was the **Chennai Declaration** which contained a Platform for Action with 10 recommendations to sensitize the international Community. The Platform for Action was published in 7 languages and distributed on the occasion of the UN Summit in September 2005 held in New York.

Other public awareness activities include the publication of a fact sheet on EU Novel Food Regulations, an issues paper produced in collaboration with UNCTAD, CBI, GTZ, IPGRI, and an article for GENEFLOW 2005, as well as the featuring of UUS on the IPGRI 2006 calendar.

Discussion

Some of the comments raised focused on the concern that RF have not been adequately involved in the activities of this GPP. It was indicated that although the GPP was initiated by GFAR during the Dresden meeting, GFAR appears to have lost control and ownership of it, that participation of stakeholders was minimal, and that it was too donor driven. It was also thought that IPGRI where the GPP is based now considers the GPP as one of its programs. A clarification was, however, provided on this latter point that the UUS is not considered nor treated as an IPGRI program, but remains a separate entity which benefits from some support from and collaboration with IPGRI. The confusion in certain minds probably arose from the fact that IPGRI is implementing a project – the global network on UUS financed by IFAD, and that IPGRI does have a corporate program called the Global Partnership Program, not to be confused with GFAR’s GPPs. A number of statements and conclusions were made to conclude the discussion. Firstly that within the context of GFAR, a donor driven initiative is as legitimate as other stakeholder driven initiative, given that an important constituent of GFAR is the Donor Support Group. Secondly, that if a CG Centre adopts a GFAR terminology e.g. GPP, this should not be viewed as a problem, but as a positive impact on the CG. Thirdly, that GPPs can be housed within any of GFAR stakeholders including CG centres and NARs and this should be encouraged, and finally, that the on-going GPP evaluation will provide guidelines for the development and implementation of future and even current GPPS to take care of some of the issues raised.

5.4. NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS (NTFPs) INITIATIVE

J.V. Ramanja Rao, Program Manager, gave a brief presentation on the progress made in the development of this initiative indicating that the idea to develop a GPP on Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) originated as a follow up to the observation made during the 2003 GFAR conference in Dakar, that most of the then current GPPs were focused on crop production systems, and the recommendation that programs should be developed in other areas of agriculture including Forestry and Forest ecosystems.

The following milestones were highlighted:

- Agreement between GFAR and INBAR to go ahead with the GPP development process (March 2004)
- Concept developed and discussed between GFAR-Secretariat, FAO and INBAR at a meeting in Rome (August 2004)
- A limited electronic polling of partners in Asia to determine interest in such a GPP, that showed strong interest
- Presentation of a proposal at the GFAR Steering Committee meeting in Mexico 2004, where it was supported by APAARI and FARA; AARINENA requested for more information, and FORAGRO suggested that the initiative should have a global coverage and not be limited to Asia
- Further consultations undertaken in response to the recommendation of the GFAR Steering Committee during the Mexico meeting. These consultations were carried out as follows

a) Consultation with RF:

- **APAARI:** Presentation made to APAARI General Meeting in Bangkok (December 2004). APAARI welcomed the GPP on NTFPs
- **AARINENA:** Presentation made to Executive Committee Meeting in Marrakech (December 2004). AARINENA endorsed the initiative with a suggestion to link it up with the Medicinal and Herbal Plants Research Network.
- **FORAGRO** (April 2005): Presentation made to the International Meeting in Panama in April 2004. Further development of the initiative recommended with PROCINDINA and PROCITROPICOS indicating interest.
- **FARA** (June 2005): Side-event and plenary intervention, no objections to further development of the initiative.

b) Consultation with various governments with official statements of endorsement and pledges for support received from the following countries:

- Ecuador (offered field sites)
- India (offered to host Secretariat, its activities, support field sites)
- Mozambique (offered field sites)

The latest milestone in the development of the initiative was a formal launch just prior to the current Steering Committee meeting (December 1-2) here in Marrakech during which a declaration was signed by the 16 founding members which included private sector and donor representatives (IFAD), with the expectation that the final step would be the approval of the GFAR Steering Committee that the initiative becomes a formal GFAR Global Partnership Program. The institutional frame work envisaged for this GPP would comprise four components: local action research sites, regional forum focal points, a global facilitating unit to be based in India and an Information Communication group.

The final part of the presentation briefly described a two-phased program of work and budget as the development of the initiative continues.

Phase I (2006) scenario, based on in-kind contributions

- Secretariat function handled by INBAR staff
- Consolidation of ongoing activities and results

- Coordinated information and knowledge collection, collation, sharing and dissemination
- Establishment of minimal institutional system; electronic meetings of NTFP and Thematic Working Groups
- Establishment of linkages to existing/emerging global agricultural information systems and to other relevant initiatives (GPPs e.g. ICM4ARD, Under-utilized Species; CGIAR System-wide initiative on Under-utilized Crops, etc.)
- Fundraising

Phase II scenario (2007-), with additional funding

- Secretariat established in India (Indian government offer), with full-time technical coordinator
- Global NTFP Knowledge System and management, linkages with other global/regional/national systems, ODL materials, local learning and replication support services
- Adding-on of partners, ARP sites, NTFPs
- Development of the institutional system (working groups, thematic groups, regional focal points); annual meeting back-to-back with CG AGM
- Operational funds for Regional Focal Points
- Additional action research programs in existing and new sites

Following a brief question and answer period, it was decided that the development process should continue until it can be checked against new guidelines for the development of GPP being prepared by a review team, for a final review by the SC for approval.

5.5. Information and Communications Management for Agricultural Research for Development (ICM4ARD) GPP

Ajit Maru, Senior NARS Officer at the GFAR-Secretariat, gave a brief update on the ongoing development of the ICM4ARD program, with emphasis on activities carried out in 2005, and those planned for 2006.

5.5.1. 2005 achievements

The following activities were carried out in various regions, with technical and financial support from the Secretariat.

- Production of a Status Report on ICM for ARD in the APAARI region. The report highlighted the ICM status of APAARI member institutions including weaknesses and strengths
- An Inter-regional Workshop was held in Cairo, during which participants refined the component elements and activities to be carried out within each of the focus areas of the ICM4ARD program (Advocacy, capacity development,, Integration of ICT enabled information systems and services and governance) in order to strengthen the ICT enabled agricultural information systems at national and regional levels.
- An AARINENA-RAIS and InfoSys+ Consultation for Inter-Regional collaboration was held in Bonn to develop a strategy for the development a prototype NAIS dealing with information on institutions, experts, research activities and outputs of research and capacity development to manage it
- A training program for National Agricultural Information Systems Managers from the APARI region held in Bangkok

Some of the activities carried out by the Secretariat as a contribution to the implementation of the ICM4ARD during the year include the following:

- the development of a study of 9 Agricultural Information Systems providing information on Institutions, Experts, Research Projects and Project outputs
- participation in a CGIAR-CTA-FAO-GFAR-INASP Expert Consultation on Coherence and Integration of Agricultural Information Systems
- On-going discussion with FAO, IAC, and RWC in order to launch a Pilot Study on integration of NARS Database of FAO, farmers' organizations database (FODATABASE) and NGO Database of GFAR, WISARD of IAC and PRISM of RWC.
- Consultation with RAIS managers and other ICT experts to set up an EGFAR Task Force which will oversee the Integration of Agricultural Information Systems (at the global level); capacity development of ICM Managers in Agricultural Institutions; and Content Management for Agricultural Research and Development. The EGFAR Task Force will act as a governing body for all RAIS projects.

5.5.2. Planned activities for 2006

Planned activities for 2006 were grouped under four main headings: advocacy, capacity development, ICM integration, and ICM governance, and comprise the following:

Advocacy

- Regional Status Reports on ICM for ARD for AARINENA, CACAARI, FARA, and FORAGRO
- Global Status Report on ICM for ARD
- Advocacy Workshops for Senior NARS Management in each of the RF
- Set up a Task Force for Advocacy for ICT enabled Agricultural Information Systems

Capacity Development

- Further development and re-engineering of RF Websites (FARA, AgroWeb CAC) and EGFAR
- Training Workshops for NARS ICM Managers by all RF
- Inter-regional Workshop on Coherence and Integration of NAIS and RAIS to be organized by APAARI

Integration

- AARINENA – INFOSYS + NAIS Prototype Development
- INFOSYS + AARINENA Web based Collaboration Platform Development
- Evaluation of FAO-GFAR-IAC-RWC Pilot Study on integration of NARS Database of FAO, FODATABASE and NGO Database of GFAR, WISARD of IAC and PRISM of RWC
- Restructuring of EGFAR

Governance

- EGFAR Task Force recommendations on Integration and Governance Mechanisms
- Steering Committees and Task Forces meetings of all RF

DISCUSSION

The main point made after the presentation was the reiteration by the SC that the development of the ICM4ARD program is a good example of how to develop a GPP because of the extensive consultation that ensured active RF participation. The next crucial step it was

pointed out will be adding value to the past investment through concrete activities and the provision of much needed information to stakeholders. A question was raised as to whether the new program officer charged with managing the ICM portfolio as well as serving as the liaison person with the NARS would be able to cope with such a wide mandate. The Executive Secretary responded that there is little prospect of increasing Secretariat staffing profile beyond the present level and that the officer would just have to find some way of coping with the responsibility. He added, however, that he will be supported by a junior officer in the Secretariat.

5.6. Global Post-harvest Initiative – Linking Farmers to Markets

Rupert Best, Senior Program Officer at the GFAR-Secretariat, provided an overview of the activities undertaken since the November 2004 Steering Committee Meeting in Mexico when the SC decided and recommended that work should continue on the development of a Global Partnership Program within the framework of the Global Post-harvest Initiative – Linking Farmers to Markets.

5.6.1. Activities in 2005

The strategy adopted was to build the initiative on strong regional and sub-regional networks, new and existing programs and projects, and partnerships created across disciplinary and organizational divide.

This process was initiated in December 2004 with an Expert Consultation on Post-harvest Technology organized in Bangkok by APAARI where specific needs were identified across all the four strategies of the GPhI Strategic Framework. It was noted that there is an excellent institutional infrastructure in some countries for undertaking post-harvest research and development (R&D). However, in general R&D has benefited the better-off farmers who have the resources to access technology and information.

In the AARINENA region a workshop was held at the University of Akdeniz in Antalya, Turkey from 24 to 25 March. The objectives of workshop were to: a) identify cross-cutting needs of four commodity networks (olive, date palm, cotton and medicinal plants) in the AARINENA region, in the area of post-harvest handling, processing, and marketing and enterprise development; b) prioritize three project ideas; and c) establish a plan of work for the subsequent development of the ideas into full proposals. Commodity network coordinators, leaders of the respective post-harvest working groups for each commodity, resource persons and selected national experts including farmers and NGOs, attended the workshop. The main output of the workshop was the prioritization of 3 out of 9 project ideas presented. These were: a) Market-orientation for the AARINENA networks and their members, b) Innovative and effective market-oriented and demand-driven extension services, and c) Organic production of olive, cotton, dates and medicinal and herbal plants. For each of the selected idea a draft project profile was developed. These have been subsequently transformed into concept notes that will be used as the basis for further project proposal preparation.

The FORAGRO Triennial Conference in Panama was used to initiate the process of establishing a plan of action in Latin America and the Caribbean for 2006. Discussions were held with the Executive Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Rural Agro-industrial Program (PRODAR) and contacts were made with potential stakeholders and the sub-regional Executive Secretaries were informed about the Initiative. Of particular relevance to the Linking Farmers to Markets Initiative are two of the six lines of action prioritised by

FORAGRO: a) promotion of innovations aimed at the development of agribusiness and b) promotion and development of innovations applicable to family agriculture. The concern, in the latter case is how to avoid the situation in which small family farmers are left out of the significant advances being made in agribusiness and the vertical coordination and integration of supply chains.

At the FARA General Assembly held in Entebbe in June, a pre-plenary workshop was organised by the GFAR-Secretariat to inform potentially interested stakeholders about the GPhI initiative and to discuss possible areas of synergy with the Sub-Saharan Challenge Program. A series of recommendations were presented to the FARA General Assembly. These centred around the need to mobilize the experiences and skills of those involved in the GPhI in support of the activities that will be undertaken in the pilot learning sites.

Rupert Best mentioned that 2005 was a learning experience for the GFAR-Secretariat personnel in the promotion of the GPhI, and progress towards the intended 2005 outputs has not been as great as was hoped for. This lag is partially due to setting over ambitious targets, but also related to a misplaced strategy of attempting to develop independent regional programs as part of a global initiative. It has now become clear that within the strategic framework established for the GPhI it is necessary for the GFAR community to carve out a particular niche where a clear inter-regional need has been identified, and develop around this a global partnership program. The work that has been developed this year has permitted a clearer idea of potential cross-regional themes for collaboration that can be the basis for developing a well-focused GPP.

Complementing the above, the GFAR-Secretariat recently collaborated with the CGIAR Science Council to undertake a workshop that addressed the question of how the poor, especially neglected groups such as rural women and ethnic minorities, can benefit from growing markets for high value agricultural products (HVAP). The workshop, held in Cali, Colombia, moved toward a shared understanding of HVAP and their potential contribution to poverty alleviation, reviewed strategies used in different regions for linking smallholders to HVAP markets, identified high-priority issues for a shared research agenda, and began creating informal networks and alliances for addressing key themes. Both development issues and research required to provide knowledge and technology to overcome constraints are very close to components of the GPhI agenda. Of immediate relevance to GPhI, is the alliance being convened by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers on “Partnerships to Share the Benefits from High Value Agriculture”.

With respect to funding opportunities, several donors, such as IFAD, Italy and the Rockefeller Foundation, have in the past actively contributed to the GPhI. IFAD and the Rockefeller Foundation have manifested the possibility of further support. On a new front, interesting opportunities are coming from CIDA, which recently indicated interest in activities that engage the private sector. The GPhI would provide such an opportunity. There is therefore potential of obtaining renewed support from the above donors if in 2006, we are able to develop 1 or 2 projects around the GPhI theme. These would need to base themselves on involvement of the private sector (CIDA), the organisation of partnerships – among supply chain actors, or for support to supply chains (IFAD), small and medium enterprises (Italy), and also represent an opportunity for inter-regional collaboration (a GPP principle).

There are a number of potential common regional cross-cutting areas of interest that could fall under the strategic framework. For example:

- Supporting the transition of smallholder farmers from subsistence to a greater level of commercially-oriented production. This meets the needs manifested especially in APAARI, FARA and FORAGRO.
- Commodity differentiation and diversification; differentiation (e.g. organic products) can be an opportunity for farmers to generate higher incomes, while there is a growing demand for higher value agricultural products. This meets the needs of AARINENA in particular, but is also important in the other regions.

These two areas fall under Strategy 3 of the GPhI Framework, particularly “Enhancing performance, equity and environmental sustainability of commodity chains” and would appear to be of high interest for all regions, especially if it is focused on more marginal areas where farmers are confronted by many barriers to greater levels of commercialisation.

Rupert Best proposed that the focus in 2006 be on preparing an inter-regional project proposal so as to fully develop these ideas and to ensure active participation of those institutions from the regions that will be active in implementing project activities.

DISCUSSION

The approach followed by this initiative so far was commended with the observation that the initiative is targeting an area of relevance and high priority for many RF and stakeholders. It was recommended that on-going efforts to identify common and high priority areas of relevance to several RF and around which a GPP could be developed should continue to the logical end of developing and implementing such a GPP.

5.7. DURAS Project

Oliver Oliveros, the Project Coordinator, presented an overview of the DURAS project briefly describing the four components of the project. With regards to component 3 of the project, the Competitive Grant Scheme (CGS) he briefly described the design of the CGS and the outcome of the first and second calls for proposal which was mainly the selection of 12 projects for funding. Coordinators of the 12 projects participated in a project leaders’ workshop held in October. The objective of the workshop was to lay the foundation for a networking and information sharing culture among the 12 project personnel. The participants were able to:

- share information on their respective projects, and acquire an understanding and better appreciation of the various projects that constituted the cluster of funded projects, thus contributing to the building up of a network of collaborators.
- discuss and agree on a set of indicators that could be used to estimate projects contribution to Sustainable Development.
- develop a common project monitoring and reporting system (progress and financial reporting)
- reflect on ways and means of ensuring results dissemination (e.g. publication, seminars)

A second part of the presentation was devoted to a rapid description of a number of activities that could benefit from support from the DURAS project under two other components of the project. Some of these are:

Component 1

- Support to the establishment of the SSA NGO Consortium
- Support to the development and/or refinement of regional research priorities

- Mobilization of a DURAS Scientific Partnership Committee to monitor the 12 funded projects
- Organization of a 2nd DURAS Project Coordinator's Workshop towards the end of 2006
- Support to special activities such as an E-discussion and workshop on lesson learning on the CGS (held during the GFAR statutory meetings in Marrakech, December 2005)
- Implementation of a mid-term DURAS project review in 2006.

Component 2

- Continued support to the development of various RAIS and ICM4ARD
- Support the development and hosting of website of projects financed under the DURAS Competitive Grants
- Continued development and update of GFAR web-based medium of communication (EGFAR)

He concluded his presentation by indicating that efforts have started to develop a strategy that will bring other donors to collaborate with the current donor of the DURAS project (the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to support a second and follow up phase of the DURAS project. He then invited members to attend the round table discussion on CGS scheduled for the following day Saturday 3rd of December.

ACTION POINTS

1. Participation of RF in GPPs: In general it was suggested that many of the on-going GPPs (UUS, PROLINNOVA and DMC) have not sufficiently involved the RF in their activities, and that such GPPS should take steps to rectify this situation and adopt a modus operandi that will ensure a greater participation of RF in all of their activities. (UUS, PROLINNOVA AND DMC to note)

2. Stronger participation of CSO in RF activities: Some of the RF (AARINENA and APAARI) complained that in spite of a demonstrable willingness on their part to engage CSO and make them full fledged constituencies of the Forum, the latter have not always responded adequately and consistently to achieve this goal. The **Secretariat** may need to examine together with the **stakeholders (RF, NGOs and Farmers Organizations)** the underlying reasons for this and implement appropriate solutions.

3. Future reporting process: It was suggested that in the future, reports from stakeholders should focus more on activities with outputs and outcomes and even impact and less on processes and the organization of meetings. **(All stakeholders to note and take action for future reports)**

6. Concluding Remarks

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking the members of the committee for their active participation and expressed the hope that in future meetings, the committee will focus increasingly on the programmatic aspects of GFAR agenda, rather than a simple account of activities by different stakeholders and programs.

The meeting was adjourned at 14h00

Annex 1: Meeting Agenda

Thursday, 1st December

NARS Programme Committee Meeting

14:00 – 18:00

- 14:00 Welcome Address
by Dr Mohammad Roozitalab, Chair of GFAR
- Adoption of the agenda
 - Approval of minutes of the 14th NARS Sub-Committee meeting
- 14:15 Progress report from Regional Fora (*15 min presentation + 15 min discussion*):
AARINENA, APAARI, CAC
- 15:45 *Coffee break*
- 16:15 Progress report from Regional Fora contd.:
FARA, FORAGRO
- 17:15 Stakeholder groups updates (15 minutes each: ARIs, IARCS)

Friday, 2nd December

NARS Programme Committee Meeting

9:00 – 13:00

- 09:00 Stakeholder groups updates (15 minutes each: NGO, FOs, Donors)
- 09:45 Discussions
- 10:15 Updates on GPPs and other Initiatives (15 minutes each: DMC, Prolinnova)
- 10:45 *Coffee Break*
- 11:15 Updates on GPPs and other Initiatives (15 minutes each: UUS, NTFPs
,NTFPs,ICM4ARD, GPhI, DURAS)
- 13:00 Closing Remarks

Annex 2: List of Participants

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