HIGHLIGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING

I. BACKGROUND

One thrust in developing research partnerships for development is to link local and global knowledge in agro-ecology and natural resource management (AE/NRM). In order to achieve this, GFAR supports the development of partnerships that promote innovation processes at the local level through participatory research and extension, and systematising knowledge on innovative practices of natural resource management at the local level, combining this with relevant scientific knowledge in a “knowledge management” process aimed at disseminating and scaling-up these innovative approaches.

During the GFAR 2000 Conference, a large number of concrete proposals for research partnerships in the area of AE/NRM were presented. NGOs and farmers’ associations are playing a very important role in developing these proposals and seeking links with research and development organisations in the South and North and with international research centres. A framework for promoting local innovation, called Prolinnova, which is designed to link local and global knowledge in AE/NRM, was discussed by these various stakeholder groups in Dresden. Also in this meeting, numerous projects have been presented within this framework, such as (1) InterDev, a project for an interactive database on NRM (which is now in an initial pilot phase); (2) network PolicyNet for research into policy issues related to NRM (on planning stage); and (3) Direct Sowing, Mulch-based Systems and Conservation-Tillage (DMC) Program, which is into analysing and comparing experiences from local initiatives in DMC, extracting lessons, managing and disseminating information, and networking.

At the same time, the international agricultural research centers have built up a system-wide programme on participatory research and gender analysis (PRGA). One of the sub-networks is PNRM (Participatory Research for Natural Resource Management), a forum of researchers from the CGIAR and partner organisations who are developing and practicing approaches and methods for research and development in NRM. It aims to support, integrate and add value to the experiences of researchers and other practitioners in NRM.

Also, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), is has various activities addressing the development of sustainable agricultural systems while conserving the
environment through the development of agriculture's biological resources. It also has a
strategic programme on agricultural information management and dissemination

Given the high potential for collaboration and complementarity between these various initiatives
and the importance of assuring possible synergisms that can mutually enrich them, this informal
and open consultation meeting between GFAR NGO stakeholders, CGIAR-PNRM, and FAO
was organized.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The meeting aims to achieve the following objectives:

(a) To review progress made in the Prolinnova, InterDev and PolicyNet initiatives and to
revise plans, as necessary, particularly with a view to strengthening and broadening
linkages and acquiring support

(b) To exchange information about the on-going and planned initiatives on NRM and agro-
ecology of the GFAR NGO stakeholders (Prolinnova, PolicyNet and InterDev) and on the
various related initiatives of FAO and CGIAR-PNRM;

(c) To explore possibilities of linkages between the NGO initiatives and related initiatives of
FAO and CGIAR-PNRM.

3. MEETING PROPER

The meeting started with an informal get-together on Saturday evening involving the NGOs in
the Prolinnova, InterDev and PolicyNet initiatives. A daylong review of the progress and
further plans of these initiatives followed it on Sunday.

Day 2 (Monday) was devoted to information exchange among the NGOs, various FAO units
and the CGIAR PNRM network coordinator. In the morning session, there were brief
presentations on the various initiatives and on the emerging proposals for action by the
respective institution or group to ensure that all participants are acquainted with what each
one is doing.

From the NGO side, a presentation on Proposed Framework on Integrated Approach to
promoting Local Innovation in Agroecology and NRM was made by Ann Waters-Bayer,
ETC-NL, CGIAR-NGOC Chair. It was followed by a presentation on INTERDEV: An
Information Management System on Natural Resources Management by Didier Pillot, GRET-
France.

CGIAR’s PNRM Programme Coordinator Ann Braun shared with the participants CGIAR’s
Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis for Technology Development and
Institutional Innovation. It was then followed by a series of presentations from the FAO side.
To wit:

(1) Programme implications of an agroecological basis for Integrated Pest Management
(IPM/IPPM) by Kevin D. Gallagher (Global IPM Facility);
(2) Local indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Project by LarsOtto Naess (LinKs Project);

(3) Promoting Local Innovations by Linking Rural Radio and Information and Communication technologies (ICTs) by Mario Acunzo (Extension, Education and Communication Service-FAO);

(4) World Agricultural Information Center (WAICENT) Outreach Programme by Cristophe Brun (WAICENT Group); and

(5) Ecological Portal (Ecoport) by Dave Nowell (Industrial Crop Group-FAO).

Ms. Nora McKeon (TCDN-FAO) shared with the participants FAO Policies/Strategies for Cooperation with NGOs/CSOs. Jean-Marc von der Weid (ASPTA-Brazil) made short remarks about NGO participation to the World Food Summit Five Years After activities. A short Open Forum followed.

In the afternoon, there were two parallel working group sessions. One group focused on Integrated Approach to Promoting Local Innovation in agroecology and NRM, while the other one focused on ICT as Tool in NRM. This session served as a venue for specific dialogue and exchange of views to further understand the various stakeholder-led initiatives on NRM and agro-ecology.

Day 3 was allocated for an NGO-IFAD discussion and a wrap-up session between the NGO participants and the GFAR Secretariat.

4. HIGHLIGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Participants found the consultative meeting useful in that it facilitated the exchange of information about various on-going and proposed initiatives on NRM and agro-ecology between and among NGOs, FAO and CGIAR’s PNRM. Some promising collaboration between some of the participating institutions was discussed bilaterally after the meeting.

Working Group Discussions
Working Group 1: On developing linkage on Local Knowledge Management on NRM/AE

4.2 The first working group discussed the issue of what can be and should be accomplished through linkages in NRM/AE. It was recognized that there is a need to come up with a concrete mechanism in support of capacity building on knowledge management systems and information and communication. The group also see value in conducting an inventory of inventories not only in terms of tools and methodologies in participatory AE/NRM research but also in terms of experiences, and local innovation, among others. The idea of systematising tools and methods should go beyond the purpose of making it availability, but more in terms of making it widely understood and used. They also see the need to create opportunities to add value to NRM research and extension by finding ways to tackle common issues by building research partnerships as well as through validation of and recognition for farmer innovation. Developing linkages of these tools, methods and
experiences into policy and policy research provides another added value. Given these, the group agreed that there is a need to define the role of the GFAR in addressing these concerns.

4.3 In addition, the group also identified some research issues that need to be addressed by GFAR stakeholders. These include, among others, studying experiences on the extent by which farmers’ control (or significantly influence) research and extension as well as investments and resources allocated for this purpose. This should be complemented by analysing the ethical dimensions of collaborative research (and respond to questions such as Who owns research?) and relate it with policy issues. As part of the research-extension continuum, participants agreed on the necessity to look into the state-of-the-art of national policies for research-extension/communication linkages for NRM, including its impact at the local levels. They also recognised that market studies (e.g. supply-demand analysis) and research on relationship between investments and returns on agro-ecological research, is wanting. Finally, concrete mechanisms in support of capacity building on knowledge management systems and information and communication should be developed, supported and pursued.

4.4 The group also took note of some inventories that are currently taking place. To wit: (a) Tools/methods in PNRM (by PGRA); (b) Case studies on local innovation (by ASPTA); (c) Best practices in communication for NRM (by FAO); (d) African farmer innovation database (by the Free University of Amsterdam); (e) Collection of experiences on institutionalising PR/PE (by IIRR/ETC); and (f) Transforming bureaucracies, annotated bibliography (by IIED), among others.

4.5 Discussion on the role of the GFAR Secretariat in facilitating and ensuring the development of linkage on Local Knowledge Management on NRM/AE was also discussed. (See paragraphs 4.13 to 4.15).

Working Group 2: On ICT as a Tool in NRM/AE

4.6 There was also recognition that the strategy for information and communication in NRM/AE should not depend largely on the new ICTs but should be integrated with other appropriate media channels such as rural radio, especially because of weak rural connectivity in the internet, high (internet) access costs, and low ICT skills in most rural areas. The need to support field experiences and methodologies on integrating ICTs, radio and other media for NRM, as well as support for the development of local communication networks for NRM was underscored in the meeting.

4.7 NGOs to send their input

On Policy Research Network

4.8 The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is being tapped by the GFAR NGO stakeholders to take the lead in the Policy Research Network (PolicyNet). As IIED is rather new in the process, its objectives in participating in the meeting is basically (1) to clarify vision on PolicyNet; (2) to be familiar with the proposed activities; and (3) initiate contact with the various NGO partners. IIED representative in the meeting will report back in its office the discussions on PolicyNet.
On developing a framework on NRM/AE

4.9. The Concept Paper *New Mechanism in Promoting Research Partnerships in NRM and Agro-ecology* will be refined to include main points raised in the meeting. Essentially, refinements will be in the form of highlighting the linkages between and among Prolinnova, InterDev and PolicyNet. A new name for this integrated approach will also be identified.

4.10 There was also a recognition that an “umbrella” programme on NRM can be conceived to include not only those initiated through the GFAR process but also those programme developed “outside” of GFAR. It was recalled that during the initial phase of and immediately after the GFAR Conference held in May 2000, one of the four main lines of action that emerged and was adopted by the GFAR Steering Committee is the promotion of research partnerships. As such, GFAR favours the emergence of initiatives from its stakeholders that could lead to the formulation and implementation of Global Programmes (GPs) in the four thematic areas of GFAR, including Natural Resources Management & Agro-ecology.

4.11 In this context, a proposal was made by the GFAR Secretariat to convene an *Experts Consultative Group (ECG)*, under the aegis of GFAR, which is envisioned to provide scientific advice to the GFAR Steering Committee on issues concerning Research Partnerships for the different themes, particularly on the soundness and feasibility of the proposed partnership programmes. However, while recognizing that there are a number of NRM/AE programmes having a global nature, participants thought that a *Working Group on NRM/AE* was more appropriate.

On developing a Working Group on NRM/AE

4.12 The *GFAR Working Group on NRM/AE* is envisioned consisting of, initially, three (3) to five (5) practitioners representing various initiatives on the topic with a balanced North-South representation (e.g., Prolinnova-InterDev-PolicyNet, Global Programme on DMC, CGIAR-PNRM, FAO LinkKS Project, WAICENT), GFAR Secretariat representative and possibly, a representative from the Regional/Subregional Fora. This membership may be expanded gradually depending on the discussion/interaction among the ad-hoc/core members. The WG will discuss among them and develop their Terms of Reference (TOR) which includes, among others, the following:

    a) **Platform function**, i.e., working out a strategy to link all (if possible) decentralised initiatives (including those not initiated by GFAR and its stakeholders)

    b) **Facilitator function**, i.e., make possible the communication and interaction among these initiatives, including the sharing of information and experiences and coordinating these initiatives and upscaling linkage strategies

On the role of the GFAR Secretariat

4.13 As its role, the GFAR Secretariat, is expected to kick off the process. For the “Launching Phase”, the Secretariat was tasked to do the following:
a) To draft the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the WG, consult with the participants of the meeting by soliciting comments and integrating all the inputs
b) To assist in identifying and “convincing” prospective individuals and initiatives to be involved in the WG, in consultation with the stakeholders

4.14 The GFAR Secretariat is also expected to bring in regional dimensions in the discussions of the WG by facilitating the interaction and exchange of information and experiences between and among regional initiatives and link them with the WG. In addition, it tasked (1) to communicate to the WG all activities to be undertaken in the regions (invite/inform WG of the “happenings” in the region); and (2) to help promote local innovation, partnerships and participatory research and extension. Towards this end, the NGO stakeholders (c/o JeanMarc von de Weid, ASPTA) will be forwarding a formal request to the GFAR Secretariat seeking its assistance in this process.

4.15 If deemed needed, the GFAR Secretariat can also facilitate the conduct of preliminary inventory of “inventories” mentioned in paragraph 4.2 above.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1. The Concept Paper *New Mechanism in Promoting Research Partnerships in NRM and Agro-ecology* will be refined to include main points raised in the meeting. It will be complemented by a Strategy Paper which will articulate the linkages between Prolinnova, InterDev and PolicyNet.

**Action:** NGO workshop participants, Didier Pillot (GRET) to integrate comments
**Deadline:** 12 May 2001

5.2 The Inception Phase of the Prolinnova Proposal will be refined to reflect discussions in the meeting. It will also highlight that the regional consultation component of the proposal will also include discussions not only on Prolinnova but on InterDev and PolicyNet as well.

**Action:** Ann Waters-Bayer and Laurens van Veldhuizen (ETC)
**Deadline:** 01 May 2001

5.3 The InterDev group will rework/develop regional proposals for InterDev. It will be designed to allow interface with the Prolinnova proposal and to highlight regional focus and submit the proposals to regional donors. It will also develop a comprehensive second phase proposal which will be designed in collaboration with NOVIB, HIVOS, DGIS-NL. In the process, InterDev group will coordinate with regional organisations who can serve as their regional partners and who can commit to be co-proponent of InterDev in their region.

**Action:** InterDev Group (in coordination with Laurens van Veldhuizen (ETC))
**Deadline:** May 2001

5.4 Follow-up work with the Belgian Survival Fund for the funding of Prolinnova’s Inception Phase

**Action:** Ann Waters-Bayer and Laurens van Veldhuizen (ETC)
**Deadline:** May 2001

5.5 Identify a new name for the integrated Prolinnova-InterDev-PolicyNet “programme”

**Action:** Luce Ruault (Gret)
**Deadline:** 11 May 2001
5.6 GFAR Secretariat to kick-off discussion re: GFAR Working Group on NRM and Agro-ecology; NGOs to send formal request to GFAR Secretariat)  
**Action:** Jean Marc von der Weid (AS-PTA)  
**Deadline:** Upon receipt of the NGO request

5.7 Follow-up on PolicyNet  
**Action:** Simon Ferrigno (IIED)  
**Deadline:** May 2001

**ANNEX LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**  
*To be attached*