Summary report of an International Workshop

Global Post-Harvest Systems Initiative for the 21st Century:
Linking Farmers to Markets

FAO Head-Quarters
7-9 October 2003, Rome, Italy

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Introduction

Emerging global trends-urbanisation, changing consumer demands, developments in information technologies, globalisation, food safety and quality concerns of consumers and new players in the market place- present opportunities and challenges for both the traditional and the small-scale commercial food sectors in developing countries.

Many developing countries are unable to competitively market fresh produce and/or value-added agricultural products. Reasons for this include, among others, the inability to compete in terms of cost, quality, safety, volume and timeliness of delivery. Governments and support institutions need to make changes in policies, strategies, human resource skills, and organisational linkages in order to capitalise on the opportunities presented by emerging global trends, and to likewise meet the challenges which they present for the agricultural sector. At the same time, non-market driven post-harvest issues pertinent to the traditional post-harvest sector, which makes a tremendous contribution to the food security and nutrition of millions in developing countries, must be addressed.
1. Workshop background and objectives

In an effort to address the diversity of post-harvest issues and concerns of developing regions, within the context of the gradient of post-harvest capabilities that exist within countries and across regions, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) and the PhAction Network recently agreed to integrate their individual post-harvest initiatives, all of which were at various stages of development:

- The Global Initiative on Post-harvest, sponsored by FAO and implemented in collaboration with GFAR, which involved 5 regional consultations incorporating stakeholder representation from 67 countries;
- The “Linking Farmers to Markets” initiative of PhAction and
- Rural Innovation for the Support and Development of Rural Small and Medium-sized Enterprises initiative of GFAR.

In April 2003 these three initiatives were merged into one, entitled “A Global Post-Harvest Systems Initiative For the 21st Century- Linking Farmers to Markets”, wherein FAO, GFAR and PhAction agreed to jointly seek to foster efficient, equitable and sustainable development of the post-harvest components of agri-produce systems, in order to assist countries in attaining their developmental goals.

To this end, a Draft Strategic Plan was developed for the implementation of this New Global Post-Harvest Initiative, which included four main strategies areas organised around different levels of intervention. Within each strategy, ‘concept notes’ (CN) for action-oriented projects with development impact were identified (refer to ANNEX 1 for a revised version of the Strategic Plan).

As a follow up activity, FAO, GFAR and PhAction co-organized a Workshop held by FAO at its Headquarters in Rome, during the period 7-9 October 2003. This Workshop brought together a multi-disciplinary group of post-harvest stakeholders from around the globe, in order to further the development of this integrated initiative.

The Workshop objectives were to:

1. Review and refine elements of the Draft Strategic Plan.
2. Review Concept Notes on likely projects/programmes for joint implementation
3. Obtain consensus on an Institutional Framework for the operation and functioning of this new post-harvest initiative.
4. Obtain consensus on the way forward.

Working groups were established on a regional basis to discuss Objectives 1 and 2. Their conclusions were reported back to plenary sessions. Objectives 3 and 4 were achieved through facilitated card writing exercises and subsequent discussions in plenary. These are reported in detail below. Working group discussions are summarised by topic after integrating the results of each regional working group.

2. Summary of the Workshop

The goal and purpose of the proposed initiative were endorsed, but with modifications to make it more inclusive as regards target beneficiaries (urban and rural poor), the full range of markets (local to international), and a wider range of natural resource commodities/products (livestock, non-food
agriculturals, non-timber forest products etc) and to highlight the relevance of food security, the need for interventions to be sustainable, and the importance of training/education.

The revised goal and purpose now read:

**Goal:** to contribute to sustainable economic growth, poverty alleviation and food security in developing countries.

**Purpose:** to improve the livelihoods of the poor by enhancing agri-food systems for a range of local, national, regional and international markets, through sustainable and equitable post-harvest interventions

### 2.1 Strategies

The four strategies presented to the workshop in the draft Strategic Plan were also endorsed by participants, namely:

1. developing appropriate policies (macro level)
2. strengthening institutions through collaborative research and capacity building (meso level)
3. developing competitive and equitable agri-food systems (micro level)
4. fostering networks, communication and further programme development

The main comments from the workshop were:

**Strategy 1.** The initiative also needs to be concerned with implementing as well as developing new policies, with policies at local as well as national/international level (since these are now made possible through decentralisation in many regions), and also ensure that smallholders are not disadvantaged by the globalisation process. In addition, the existing trade policy and export subsidy regime that makes imported foods a threat to small farmers and food security needs to be addressed.

**Strategy 2,** which focuses on four areas (markets, enterprise and chain organization, post-harvest technology and food quality/safety) needs to pay more attention to capacity building, cooperation between regions, and to include food nutrition alongside quality and safety.

**Strategy 3,** needs a better balance of private and public sector roles – this balance may vary between regions. Case studies of successful development are needed.

**Strategy 4.** The workshop endorsed the need to foster and encourage collaboration at regional level, and across regions on various priority R&D themes. Networking should be built on existing networks at regional and sub-regional level and be inclusive of all stakeholders.

These comments were taken into account in the production of a revised strategic plan that is now in preparation, alongside this report

### 2.2 Concept notes

Each strategy area contained 1-4 concept notes (CNs). These were discussed in detail by each working group. Numerous suggestions and comments were obtained, and these will provide the raw material for preparing – in the near future - a revised and expanded portfolio of concept notes.

The 9 concept notes, which are explained in detail in the Strategic Plan document, are:
Strategy 1.
CN1 Trade and market access policy development
CN2 Business policy development

Strategy 2.
CN3 Development of a tool kit for market oriented decision making
CN4 Enhancing the competitiveness of rural agroenterprises through better integration of supply chains and delivery of effective business support services
CN5 Developing and disseminating post-harvest technology
CN6 Improving the quality and safety of food from smallholder producers and small/medium-scale agroenterprises

Strategy 3.
CN 7 Enhancing performance, equity and environmental sustainability of commodity chains
CN8 Promoting investment in post-harvest infrastructure

Strategy 4.
CN9 Regional post-harvest networks, communication and further program development

Two general comments were received on the concept notes as a whole:
- More attention should be paid to cross-cutting issues – gender, HIV/AIDS, environment and clean production, nutrition and peace.
- There may be scope to combine some concept notes e.g. CNs 7 and 8 (there was no general agreement on this)

2.3 Regional priorities

Almost all CNs were considered highly or very highly relevant to all regions. CN3 (market tool kit) was rated as the most important one for Asia, by both working groups from that region. CN5 was rated higher for dissemination than for research on new technologies (except for Latin America). There were strong regional differences of opinion on CNs 7 and 8. Asia ranked these lower- and recommended their revision, while other regions rated these CNs highly – CN7 was highest of all for E and S Africa - because of their relevance to achieving direct developmental benefits.

Greatest comparative advantage was detected for CN3 and 4, based on the existing activities of FAO and the CGIAR. In the policy area – CNs 1 and 2 – many other organizations are involved, but there is scope for this initiative to develop an important role as regards exchange of experiences and ideas between regions. In the technology areas (CN5) a role in dissemination methods, and in facilitating both regional exchanges and in integrating the private sector in the R&D process for small-scale technologies, could be useful. There was less experience in the working groups at the development level, hence it was difficult to assess comparative advantage of CNs 7 and 8. A wide range of additional specific comments was also received, which are synthesised in the main body of this report.

3. Next steps

Workshop participants were asked to write on cards their ideas for actions that are required to get the post-harvest initiative started, both in the immediate future (short-term actions, up to 9 months ahead), and in the medium term (actions over one year into the future). These cards (one idea/card) were collected and grouped. The results are presented below. There is some overlap between the short and medium term time frames.
3.1 Actions required in the short term (up to 9 months)

**Finalize and Disseminate Workshop Outputs**
- The strategic framework document for the initiative will be revised and finalised in line with comments and recommendations of the workshop working groups. This should be circulated to all workshop participants, along with a summary report of the meeting itself, and the documents should also be made available on the internet to assist dissemination about the initiative among public and private institutions associated with post-harvest.
- In order to ensure broad visibility of the strategic framework, and to inform other stakeholders (including potential partners and donors) of the initiative, an informative brochure and flyer will be produced based on a synthesis/summary of the workshop outcomes.
- A power-point presentation would also facilitate promotion of the initiative to a wider audience.

Other suggestions included the possibility of organising a stakeholder meeting to ratify and adopt the report, and the need to establish mechanisms for information sharing.

**Institutional Framework**
Participants agreed on the idea of establishing of a Coordinating Committee (CC) to advance the initiative, with membership from the regional stakeholders (one for each region), together with FAO, GFAR, PhAction and a donor representative. Comments related to this included:
- Solicit representation of major donor groups on the CC
- Confirm the initiative as a GPP under GFAR

Organisation at a regional level was also seen as important, as was the need to establish mechanisms for exchanges between regions, with ideas including:
- Identify and designate regional focal point institutions/partners
- Creation of CCs/associations for each region
- Create linkage mechanisms for information exchange between regions
- Create a committee to turn available information into an on-line information service

**Promotion of the Initiative**
One aspect of the initiative is to raise the profile of post-harvest, both as regards its potential to contribute to the delivery desired development goals and to alert the present generation of decision makers to allocate funds to post-harvest commensurate with its capacity to deliver those goals. Some ideas here were:
- Promotion of the initiative at the policy level through regional missions
- Stakeholders to alert national governments
- Promote the initiative globally and with the private and public sector
- Present strategic framework to CGIAR meeting (Nairobi) as a GPP
- Inform stakeholders in countries about the initiative
- Promote the initiative among interested sector/stakeholders
- Urge countries to focus interventions within the framework

**Action Plan**
Many people suggested the need to develop an Action Plan for the activation of the different strategies and concept notes contained in the strategic framework. This was seen as a means to maintain the momentum that has been generated by the workshop, and something that would be attractive to donors. Elements of the action plan include -
- Validate priority areas with non-research organisations in developing countries
- Develop a framework where stakeholders can position themselves along the continuum from supply to demand
- Identify target groups and invite proposals
- Identify cost per activity
- Identify major regional programmes to be developed
- Establish regional entry points for policy, technology and market interventions
- Specify actions, i.e. are we going to develop projects, guides, manuals, training
- Implement projects in the regions, funded by regional stakeholders/partners, start at least one activity

Stock-Taking
This initiative does not start from zero. It is important to conduct an inventory of what has been done or is being done in the post-harvest and marketing arena by the different stakeholders (e.g. stakeholder matrix) and then revisit priority actions identified by the CN in the light of this – i.e. to identify where this initiative has the greatest comparative advantage, or potential to add value to what is already being done. Other relevant comments were:
- Avoid re-inventing the wheel
- Identify successful organizations and experiences through umbrella organizations
- Conduct needs assessments

Establishment of Contacts
The initiative (through it’s CC) should identify additional potential cooperating institutions, and secure their involvement in the process. It is also necessary to define the concrete commitments of all the partners – see the concluding section of this report for details of commitments offered by workshop participants. This needs to be complemented by additional partners not present at the workshop.

Resource Generation
Obviously, the initiative needs to mobilise additional resource in order to accomplish the ambitious agenda set out in the strategic framework document. Ideas to assist in this endeavour were:
- Hold a donor meeting to elicit funding interest in strategy and project brief
- Develop a flyer and present the idea at major meetings- starting with the CGIAR- AGM (also mentioned earlier)
- Obtain seed funds for development of proposals
- Identify interested donors
- Analyse the match between this initiative and main donor priorities

Miscellaneous
Several comments were made about the need to keep momentum going by swiftly starting one or more high priority activities. Some suggestions for these were:
- Capacity building for small farmers
- Establish market linkages
- Strengthen R&D capabilities
- Establishment of national technology transfer centres (TTCs)
- Focus on policies

3.2 Actions required in the medium term (1+ years)

Organization of the Initiative
In the medium term, organisational suggestions made by workshop participants were quite varied and constructive, and included -

- Establish a clear and effective governance structure
- Identify key partners in different countries
- Convene meetings at the regional level to flesh out full project proposals from the concept notes and initial project briefs that were developed earlier
- Identify activities related to coordination work in the field
- Convene a stakeholder round table to evaluate progress and refocus efforts
- Hold follow up meetings at the regional level, taking advantage of meetings that are already organised for other purposes (e.g. CBN 7, CIAT, March 2004)

There were also a number of suggestions concerning organisation of stakeholders and different interest groups, in order to facilitate their interaction with the initiative and their capacity to become involved in specific projects as these develop. These include -

- Organize stakeholders in associations and societies
- Establish a network of institutions and countries with specific programs
- Establish links to private businesses
- Select priority commodity groups in countries/regions, that could be suitably organized under a commodity association

**Project Ideas**

Some specific ideas for projects were suggested, including

- Macro-economic studies on trade and market access issues
- Diagnostic studies on market access and penetration
- Research on packaging
- Establishment of pilot plants
- Post-harvest technology development

These will need to be discussed by relevant CN convenors and regions in due course.

Project proposals, based on the priorities determined by those involved in development of each region and CN, should be prepared for submission to donors.

**Identification and Mobilisation of Resources**

Building on the short-term actions identified in the previous section, the following additional activities were suggested to ensure medium/long term funding of the CNs and projects to be carried out within them -

- Development of a funding strategy
- Identify key donors, and obtain commitment from them
- Identify key partners and their roles
- Ensure that the importance of this initiative is recognised by donors and policy makers (i.e. promotion is essential)

**Project Implementation**

Building on the action plan developed earlier, the following actions should be possible after a 12 month establishment period for the initiative. These have been arranged in an approximate logical order:

- Continued raising of awareness with the public and with donors, and gathering support from developing countries
- Obtaining seed funds for the initiative to support the development of proposals
- Identify leading national and regional institutions, formulate initiatives with them
- Consolidate PhAction initiatives that fit with the different strategies/concept notes
- Solicit project proposals from partners (including consortia of organisations)
- Finalize discrete projects/programs, and seek funding for their implementation
- Start project implementation – many (12) participants highlighted the need to get concrete activities underway with a definite time table
- Impact assessment

4. Rockefeller Contribution to the Workshop

One of the mandates given to GFAR is to facilitate the strengthening of stakeholder constituencies and to ensure their participation and involvement in various opportunities in ARD.

Thanks to Rockefeller contribution, the GFAR Secretariat was able to facilitate attendance to the workshop of participants other than researchers. Specifically, funds were used to sponsor the participation of a Private Sector representative, Ms. Fadima Siby a small scale entrepreneur based in Mali, Mr. Timothy Nzioka an NGO representative from Kenya and Mr. Demba Kebe a Research Institute representative from Mali. The three participants actively contributed to the discussions in the regional working groups and also during the plenary sessions. To ensure the effective participation, of these and other participants, part of of the contribution was used to fund simultaneous translation (see ANNEX 2 for a detailed table of expenses).

Another important aspect was the opportunity given to GFAR to enhance it’s visibility during the workshop. As a result the Global Partnership Programme concept (GFAR’s main tool for action) was endorsed as the conceptual framework under which the initiative would have to move forward: lowest level of implementation, complementarity, additionality and multi-stakeholder involvement.

5. Conclusions

The workshop achieved its stated objectives. The strategic framework for a global post-harvest initiative was revised and endorsed by the participants.

An institutional framework for the initiative was also endorsed by the meeting, comprising the establishment of a Coordinating Committee with membership from the regional stakeholders together with FAO, GFAR, PhAction and a donor representative.

Future actions are proposed that include dissemination of workshop outputs, preparation of promotional material, identification of regional focal points, development of an action plan and resource mobilization strategy, revision and further development of concept notes and projects derived from them, with possible provision of seed funds to initiate project development.
ANNEX 1 : The Strategic Framework

Title: A Global Post-Harvest Systems Initiative for the 21st Century: Linking Farmers to Markets

Goal: to contribute to sustainable economic growth, poverty alleviation and food security in developing countries.

Purpose: to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor by enhancing agri-food systems for a range of local, national, regional and international markets, through sustainable and equitable post-harvest interventions

Important dimensions of this Initiative were identified as:
- Degree of market orientation along a continuum from subsistence, local, national to international markets
- Regions and sub-regions and their priorities
- Four thematic priorities, covering market-based decision making; commodity chain performance and business development services; post-harvest technology; and food quality and safety.
- Types of stakeholders and other actors
- Levels of intervention (macro/policy, meso/institutional, micro/household/enterprise level)

Three operational strategies were identified around interventions at policy, institutional and micro (development) levels, plus an additional strategy for network development. Within each strategy, “concept note” ideas for collaborative, action-oriented R&D projects were identified.

Strategy 1. Developing appropriate policies (macro-level)
CN1 Trade and market access policy development
CN2 Business policy development

Strategy 2. Institutional strengthening through collaborative research and capacity building (meso level)
CN3 Development of a tool kit for market oriented decision making
CN4 Enhancing the competitiveness of agroenterprises through better integration of supply chains and delivery of effective business support services
CN5 Developing and disseminating post-harvest technology
CN6 Improving the quality and safety of food from smallholder producers and small/medium-scale agroenterprises

Strategy 3. Development of competitive and equitable agri-food systems (micro level).
CN7 Enhancing performance, equity and environmental sustainability of commodity chains
CN8 Promoting investment in post-harvest infrastructure

Strategy 4. Fostering networks, communication and further program development
CN9 Regional post-harvest networks, communication and further program development
## ANNEX 2 : GFAR Statement of Expenditures (USD)

**Workshop on a Global Post-Harvest Systems Initiative for the 21st Century**  
"Linking Farmers to Markets"  
FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy 7-9 October 2003

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