Inclusiveness: Encouraging stakeholder participation in setting the research agenda
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Foreword

An old adage asserts that ignorance is bliss. Another advises that what we don’t know can’t hurt us. If such sayings were true, there would be little need for an organization like GFAR. The Global Forum on Agricultural Research is predicated on the idea that knowledge is power. We believe that systematic sharing of knowledge, particularly the innovations of scientific research, is essential to improve the lot of poor people in developing countries.

But as an advocate of empowering the less advantaged – whether they be small-scale farmers or urban consumers – GFAR believes that the exchange of knowledge alone is not necessarily enough to effect significant agricultural advancement. Farmer groups, private agribusiness, NGOs and government development workers must not be passive bystanders in the innovation process, waiting for technological handouts from formal researchers. That is an increasingly well-known recipe for failure, with many examples from recent decades. Instead, stakeholders should, from the outset, participate in setting research agendas at multiple levels of decision making – international, regional, sub-regional, national, and local. And, depending on the scientific and development objectives, they will often need to participate directly in the research or even lead it.

Such a strategy of inclusiveness – of encouraging broad participation in research agenda setting, beyond the often closed doors of institutional boardrooms – is not just a matter of equity. It also promotes the social relevance of research and a sense of ownership among our many stakeholders.

Inclusiveness is the theme of this, the third annual report of GFAR. Here, we describe recent progress in the priority areas and the crosscutting themes spelled out in our strategy for 2004–2013. The priority areas, which we sometimes refer to as the ‘pillars’ of our strategy, are inter-regional collaboration; collaborative research partnerships; advocacy, public awareness and strategic thinking; and management information systems. The two
inter-related themes that cut across the work of GFAR are, firstly, the active involvement of civil society in setting and delivering research agendas and, secondly, productive interaction between scientists, farmers and the private sector. In each and every case, these priorities and themes support the notion of an inclusive sharing of knowledge and participation in the decision-making process – across geopolitical, ecological, professional, cultural and economic boundaries.

Section 1 (The GFAR Year in Review) provides an overview of the year’s activities, including our Global Partnership Programmes. The second section looks at the rationale behind our strategy of inclusiveness and highlights some of the practical benefits – and potential challenges – associated with encouraging broad participation. In the third section, our Regional Forums and other key stakeholders report on their 2005 activities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and other GFAR donors for their valuable support during the year. Also, many thanks go to all GFAR stakeholders for their activities and achievements during 2005. I hope that this report will enhance our public’s understanding of what GFAR is all about and illustrate the added value that results from bringing diverse stakeholders together to tackle the many challenges associated with eliminating poverty and hunger.

Mohammad Roozitalab
Chair, GFAR
The GFAR Year in Review

The year 2005 saw development attention focus on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly on the goal to halve poverty and hunger by 2015. The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) believes that one of the main obstacles to achieving this – and other MDGs – is a lack of inclusiveness in agricultural research for development (ARD). In other words, at present, not all stakeholders are working together as equal partners.

GFAR has made significant progress towards greater inclusiveness during 2005, particularly in improving the representation of farmers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Three highlights this year demonstrate GFAR’s efforts to give these two groups a greater voice in decision-making. These are the establishment of a Committee on ARD by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), the further integration of civil society organizations (CSOs) into the governance structures of the Regional Forums, and the successful establishment of an Africa-wide NGO Consortium.

We also made significant progress towards the development of a Global Partnership Programme (GPP) in the area of information and communication management. And the GFAR Stakeholder Committee provided useful input into the management and activities of the Generation Challenge Programme (GCP) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Finally, GFAR contributed to the identification of major issues and research themes related to the development of high-value agricultural products as a strategy for contributing to poverty alleviation, especially among smallholder farmers.

Inter-regional collaboration

The main vehicle for achieving GFAR’s mission – to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the global agricultural research system – is inter-regional collaboration via its Regional Forums. These have made considerable improvements in 2005 in the type and range of stakeholders represented. They have also been involved in networking and other activities that promote the exchange of experiences, knowledge and information.
GFAR in a nutshell

GFAR is a stakeholder-led initiative that serves as a neutral forum for the discussion of strategic issues in ARD. It facilitates and promotes cost-effective partnerships and strategic alliances among ARD stakeholders in their efforts to alleviate poverty, increase food security and promote the sustainable use of natural resources. GFAR stakeholders include:

- Southern national agricultural research systems (NARS)
- International agricultural research centres of the CGIAR
- Northern agricultural research institutions
- Farmers’ organizations
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Private sector
- Donors and development agencies.

Activities take place on two levels. The first (outlined by the GFAR Business Plan) includes the programmes and projects undertaken by the stakeholders. The second level encompasses the support provided by the GFAR Secretariat, which facilitates and promotes the following:

- Flow of information and knowledge among ARD stakeholders
- Platform for dialogue on topics of common interest
- Networking and research partnerships among ARD stakeholders in the areas of genetic resources management/biotechnology, natural resources management/agroecology, commodity chains and policy management/institutional development
- Enhanced links between research and development
- Increased participation of civil society in regional research organizations.

The GFAR Secretariat is hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the GFAR Donor Support Group is chaired by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), both in Rome, Italy.

While the Regional Forums have made strong efforts to increase stakeholder participation, they recognize that there is still a long way to go. More stakeholders drawn from civil society, particularly NGOs and farmers’ organizations, need to be included in policy-level discussions. GFAR is employing a two-pronged approach to achieve this. Firstly, through advocacy and dialogue and secondly, through helping build the capacity of CSOs, for example through institutional development, so they can form mutually beneficial links and associations with other stakeholders, especially the NARS. The multi-stakeholder consultation convened by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) illustrates the scale of participation for which GFAR is aiming. This consultation engaged CSOs, the private sector, the CGIAR and three sub-Regional Forums in discussing and planning their integration into a sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)-wide ARD agenda (see page 40).
GFAR’s association with IFAP has helped increase farmer participation in Regional Forums in both Latin America and the Mediterranean region. Through GFAR, the Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technology Development (FORAGRO) invited the Latin American Farmers’ Committee of IFAP to participate in its 2005 annual meeting, held in Panama in April. In addition, the Chair of that Farmers’ Committee was invited to participate in the FORAGRO Executive Committee meeting, the first time that a farmer has interacted with this decision-making body. A reciprocal arrangement saw the FORAGRO Vice-President participating in the Farmers’ Committee annual meeting. The result of these initial interactions was to grant a representative of the Farmers’ Committee full membership on the FORAGRO Executive Committee, filling an important gap in stakeholder representation.

A similar process of consultation and dialogue between the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA) and the Mediterranean Farmers’ Committee of IFAP led to the farmer’s group being granted observer status on the forum’s Executive Committee. Full integration of farmers’ organizations and NGOs

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**Updating regional research priorities in Asia**

Broad stakeholder participation in research priority setting is vital if national and international ARD is to remain relevant to the needs of the rural poor. In 2005, the Asia–Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) – one of the Regional Forums affiliated to GFAR – carried out an update and research priority gap analysis for the South and West Asia sub-region. The objective was to identify neglected issues of regional importance that could be addressed and, where appropriate, used to promote further inter-regional collaboration and networking. Efforts were made to ensure participation and input from various stakeholder groups, including farmers, NGOs, the private sector and government agencies.

The participants examined emerging research priorities required in four agro-ecosystems: irrigated, rainfed (including semi-arid and arid areas), mountain and hills, and the coastal ecoregion. The exercise identified several areas of research that need greater emphasis, including agro-enterprise development with a focus on legumes, post-harvest technology for value-added products, integrated watershed management, soil fertility and water quality. Certain policy and institutional reforms were also flagged for continued attention, with special emphasis on strategies to encourage higher investments in infrastructure and enabling policies on marketing, credit and commodity pricing. The outputs will be published and disseminated to the various stakeholders using a range of media products. Different media have been selected to reach different audiences, which range from policymakers to farmers.

*Transplanting rice in India. Soil fertility and water quality were identified as research priorities in South and West Asia.*

*Photo: FAO/19480/G. Bizzari*
in the Executive Committee is likely to follow, once the usefulness of their current level of participation has been evaluated.

The Secretariat provided financial and intellectual support to IFAP in its efforts to constitute a Committee on Agricultural Research. The Committee will be the body that articulates and presents farmers’ views, concerns and priorities at various ARD platforms (see page 38).

We are also encouraging the participation of NGOs by establishing an international NGO Consortium. This will help NGOs play a more active role, exploit their comparative advantage and add value at all levels of ARD. In June, we coordinated with FARA in the establishment of a Sub-Saharan Africa NGO Consortium (SSA-NGO-C), and this will act as the pilot region (see page 41).

GFAR’s role in promoting the exchange of experiences, knowledge and information is demonstrated by the FORAGRO conference, which provided a useful opportunity for networking to the 150 people who attended (see page 35) and the European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD) meeting, which laid the foundations for greater North–South networking and collaborative activities (see page 30).

Collaborative research partnerships

GFAR supports global collaboration in ARD through its GPPs. These are shared research efforts that address challenges of global interest and encourage ARD stakeholders to interact. They are related closely to the regional priority-setting processes being carried out by the Regional Forums. The main purposes of the GPPs are to promote collaboration among ARD stakeholders, to facilitate exchange of information and experiences among them, and to empower people by integrating them into knowledge networks. The shape of a GPP can vary from a structured programme to a loose framework for action within which stakeholders simply agree to collaborate and exchange information, research results and experiences.

Conservation Agriculture

The Direct Sowing, Mulch-based Systems and Conservation Agriculture (DMC) programme aims to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders and to accelerate the adoption of conservation agriculture. Activities in 2005 focused on carrying out case studies in Brazil, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia. The main objective was to document and analyse past and current experiences in order to improve knowledge and understanding of the conservation agriculture farming system. Researchers collected data on the number of farmers practising the system and whether they were using established principles – including low tillage intensity, soil cover, and crop rotation. Although not all the cases studies have been completed, it is already apparent that many farmers do not fully apply the principles of conservation
agriculture. This is often due to conflict between on-farm realities and ‘text book’ conditions, for example, crop residues may not be available for use as soil cover if they are also needed to feed livestock. Lack of available equipment is another common problem. It appears that there is a need for a more participatory and flexible approach that puts the farmer in the driving seat, and for a more diverse system that responds to the social and practical realities faced by farmers. Interaction between farmers, extension systems (including NGOs) and researchers could be improved and more practical solutions developed if there was a global facilitating unit for conservation agriculture. To realize this, a global mechanism to facilitate an improved interaction between farmers, extension systems (including NGOs) and researchers may be needed. Participants at the Third World Congress on Conservation Agriculture discussed the re-launching of a GPP on conservation agriculture and expressed an interest to take the matter forward in the future.

**Promoting Local Innovation**

Prolinnova (short for ‘promoting local innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management’) is a GPP led by NGOs. It seeks to strengthen ARD partnerships, promote local innovation processes in agriculture and natural resources management, and integrate participatory innovation development (PID) approaches that build local innovation into agricultural research, extension and educational institutions.

Local innovators are farmers (or other natural resource users) who develop new techniques on their own initiative, building on local knowledge and using ideas from various sources. They are often curious and willing to take risks but, in some cases, they have their backs to the wall and have no choice but to innovate in order to survive. They are not ‘model farmers’ groomed by research or development projects to adopt transferred technologies.

The Prolinnova programme believes that analysing local innovations provides a focus for groups or communities to examine opportunities and set an agenda for ARD. In addition, recognizing local capacities and creativity is a prerequisite for true partnership in ARD. Engaging in the PID process strengthens community organization for development as well as the capacities of agricultural services to support development from within the community.

In 2005, funding from the Government of the Netherlands allowed six additional countries (Cambodia, Nepal, Niger, South Africa, Sudan and Tanzania) to join the original three (Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda) involved in Prolinnova. The initiative set up its ‘Oversight Group’ as a governance mechanism to ensure accountability.

*Local innovation in South Africa – using the heart of an agave plant as a safe nest for poultry.*  
*Photo: R. Alcock*
Prolinnova also supported a range of learning-based activities, from documenting local innovations and distributing the information among development agencies and farmers to hosting an international workshop on building multi-stakeholder ARD partnerships. More details are available from the Prolinnova website (www.prolinnova.net).

**Underutilized Species**

One of the main objectives of the Global Facilitation Unit (GFU) on Underutilized Species is to raise the profile of underutilized plant species, which are currently near the bottom of most donor, policymaker and research manager agendas.

A principal highlight of 2005 was a joint activity with the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) and the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation. This was an international consultation on the role of agricultural biodiversity in achieving the MDG of halving poverty and hunger by 2015. About 100 people attended, including the Ministers of Agriculture of Ghana, Kenya, Sri Lanka and the Indian State of Tamil Nadu. The main output was a ten-point action plan (The Chennai Platform for Action) that stressed the urgent need for internationally based action and identified some areas of activity that will

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**Nuts for profits**

On the islands of Vanuatu in the South Pacific, the nangai nut (*Canarium indicum*) season has always been met with enthusiasm. But while the islanders’ appreciation of the nuts used to be due simply to their delicious taste, another advantage has emerged. The nuts now provide a major source of income, which is all the more useful since the value of more traditional exports such as coffee, cocoa and copra has plummeted. Grown organically, the nuts have a special texture and can be eaten by people with nut allergies. Exports reach Australia, Hawaii and Japan, although the European Union (EU) has yet to open its markets to nangai.

Nangai nuts are not only economically attractive, growing them makes ecological sense too. *Canarium indicum* is a fast-growing tree that flourishes beneath the natural forest canopy, encouraging villagers to retain natural forest areas. However, it also grows well in a food garden clearing. The challenge for the islanders is to produce nuts of reliable quality and quantity. The challenge for the GFU and its partners is to ensure islanders have access to the knowledge and markets they need to maximize the crop’s potential.

*Propagation of superior nangai nut varieties for establishment of gene conservation/seed stand in Vanuatu.*

*Photo: Lex Thomson*
contribute to meeting the MDG. The document was also fed into the MDG review process carried out in September, with the expectation that it will contribute to the implementation of favourable decisions and policy actions towards biodiversity research and the agricultural sector in general.

The GFU set up multi-disciplinary teams (with participants from the GFAR Regional Forums) in Jordan, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Their job will be to analyse national policies that have an impact on the wider use of currently underutilized species and make recommendations on the development of supporting policies and legal frameworks for these crops. The GFU also joined forces with trade and development organizations to lobby the EU for amendments in official regulations on novel food products (EC 258/97). This should make EU markets available to a wider range of producers of underutilized species, such as the nangai nut (see box on page 6). More information is available from www.underutilized-species.org.

**Non-Timber Forest Products**

The idea developing this GPP came from an observation made during the 2003 GFAR Conference in Dakar, that most of the existing GPPs were focused on crop production systems. That conference recommended that programmes should be developed in other areas of agriculture, including forestry and forest ecosystems.

A series of consultations throughout 2005 led to pledges for support being obtained from Ecuador (field sites), India (hosting of the Secretariat and field sites) and Mozambique (field sites). In December, the 16 founding members signed a declaration to lay the foundations for the initiative to become a GPP during 2006. The institutional framework envisaged for this GPP will have four components: local action research sites, Regional Forum focal points, a global facilitating unit based in India, and an information communication group.

**The Global Post-harvest Initiative (GPhI) – Linking Farmers to Markets**

GPhI is a demand-oriented, holistic and integrated approach to post-harvest development. It aims to improve the livelihoods of producers and consumers by enhancing agri-food systems for local, national, regional and international markets. The initiative will form the basis for a GPP – Linking Farmers to Markets – that builds on strong regional and sub-regional networks, linking related projects and brokering suitable partnerships.

In March, AARINENA held a workshop in Turkey to identify the crosscutting needs of its commodity networks (olive, date palm, cotton and medicinal plants). Discussions focused on post-harvest handling, processing, marketing and enterprise development. The participants also prioritized three project ideas and established how to develop 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 FORAGRO conference, held in Panama in April, provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the GPhI and to involve additional stakeholders in planning future activities for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Executive Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Rural Agro-industrial Program (PRODAR) led the discussions.

At the FARA General Assembly held in Entebbe in June, the Secretariat organized a pre-plenary workshop to inform potentially interested stakeholders about the GPhI initiative and to discuss possible areas of synergy with the Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme (SSA-CP). This resulted in a series of recommendations being presented to the FARA General Assembly. These centred around the need to mobilize the experiences and skills of GPhI stakeholders in support of the activities that will be undertaken in the SSA-CP’s pilot learning sites.

The year 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 so great as we had hoped. The lag is due partly to setting over-ambitious targets; it is also related to a misplaced strategy of attempting to develop independent regional programmes as part of a global initiative. It has now become clear that, within the strategic framework established for the GPhI, the GFAR community needs to carve a particular niche where a clear inter-regional need has been identified. The GPP can then be developed around this niche. However, the work accomplished during 2005 has given us a clearer idea of potential cross-regional themes for collaboration. The need to promote smallholders’ access to high-value agricultural markets (see box on page 10) is one example. The development issues in this area, and research required to provide knowledge and technology to overcome constraints, are very close to the components of the GPhI agenda.
Promoting sustainable development in Southern agricultural research systems: The DURAS project

Promotion du développement durable dans les systèmes de recherche agricole du sud (DURAS) is a GFAR–Agropolis project supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It aims to contribute to strengthening the involvement and enhancing the scientific potential of Southern stakeholders in agricultural research for sustainable development. DURAS Competitive Grants currently support 12 projects. These have the common features of encouraging innovation and promoting North–South research partnerships and capacity building. They are active in over 20 countries in Africa and three countries in Asia, all of which are included in France’s Priority Solidarity Zone.

Of the 12 funded projects, two address agro-biodiversity and genetic resources management for food security and four tackle local knowledge in natural resources management. Another three deal with agro-ecology and other sustainable farming practices and three more look at how to link farmers to markets through small- and medium-sized agro-enterprises. The award size varies from 90,000–150,000 Euros over two years.

Project leaders attended a workshop in October to help them develop common project monitoring and reporting procedures and identify indicators to establish their project’s contribution to sustainable development. The workshop also laid the foundations for a networking and information-sharing culture among the project personnel.

DURAS has elicited some interest among additional donors and efforts are in progress to attract them to collaborate in a second phase. See DURAS website (www.duras-project.net) for more.

Caption: Project team in Koro, Burkina Faso preparing a proposal for submission to DURAS.

Photo: E. Vall
Advocacy, public awareness and strategic thinking

An important advocacy and public awareness activity planned for 2005 was that of sensitizing FAO senior management to the ‘value-added’ effect of the GFAR Secretariat within FAO, and thus to strengthen collaboration between them. A meeting of the GFAR management team and the Deputy Director General of FAO in September laid the foundation for an event to showcase past, present and future collaborative activities between FAO and GFAR, illustrating their synergistic effect. Such activities include collaboration between the Secretariat and FAO services or divisions at headquarters (e.g. information and communication

Helping the poor to benefit from high-value agricultural products

Enterprising smallholders around the world are poised for a radical overhaul of their marketing approach. While they used to ask: “Where can we sell our vegetables and how much can we get for them?” they are now saying: “What does the market want that our farmers’ association can provide at a profit?”

In an effort to provide stronger and more coordinated support for forward-thinking farmers, a group of about 40 experts met in October at the Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT) in Colombia. The participants, specialists in all aspects of high-value agricultural products – from production and post-harvest handling to processing and marketing, examined the question of how poor farmers, especially those in such neglected groups as rural women, can benefit from expanding markets for high-value products. Convened by the Secretariats of GFAR and the CGIAR Science Council, the workshop was organized in collaboration with CIAT, IPGRI, The World Vegetable Center (AVRDC) and IFAP.

Specialists in high-value agricultural products (including fruits, flowers, vegetables and livestock products) acknowledge that it is not easy for small-scale farmers to access new market opportunities. Although they enjoy some advantages, such as indigenous knowledge and appropriate agro-ecological niches for production, they also face significant challenges, particularly the need for better organization, new knowledge and skills, and access to business support services.

The workshop helped participants to reach a shared understanding of high-value agricultural products and to review strategies used in different regions for linking smallholders to high-value markets. The delegates also identified high-priority issues for a shared research agenda and began creating informal networks and alliances for addressing key themes.

Overall, the workshop helped establish a solid framework for moving forward with realistic actions.

Vegetables on sale at Sucré market, Bolivia.

Photo: FAO/19364/R. Jones
approaches with the Library Information Services and Linking Farmers to Markets with the Agricultural Support Services Division) and between FAO Regional Offices and GFAR Regional Forums (e.g. implementation of the FAO Africa Region conference recommendations by FARA and the FAO Regional Office in Accra and a high level dialogue on biotechnology for food and poverty alleviation organized by APAARI and the FAO Regional Office in Thailand). The sensitization effort had a direct and immediate output when FAO restored its contribution to the Secretariat to the original pledged level.

Two sets of activities were designed to draw attention to critical emerging issues that could affect ARD. The first included the organization of a high-level panel discussion on the role of biodiversity in achieving the MDG of halving poverty and hunger by 2015 (see page 6).

The second was the continued support and facilitation given by the Secretariat to the GFAR Stakeholder Committee of the CGIAR’s GCP. The objective of the GCP is to capitalize on advances in molecular biology, harnessing the rich global heritage of plant genetic resources and creating a new generation of crops that meet the needs of resource-poor people. The Stakeholder Committee’s work programme focused on four issues: the composition and functions of the GCP consortium, the communication strategy of the GCP, product delivery mechanisms, and collaboration with the private sector. The Committee made strong recommendations to the GCP on each of these issues, drawing attention particularly to the need for NARS to play a central role in the programme.

Management information systems

The GFAR website (www.egfar.org) is our principal ‘face’ and main method of communicating with our stakeholders. One of the main features is a regular newsletter, which aims to encourage stakeholder participation and inclusiveness by reporting on local activities around the world.

This year saw the completion of a database of farmers’ organizations, which currently has over 250 records. We obtained the information partly through a website survey and partly thorough individual contacts. The database is organized on a regional basis and will be updated regularly to reflect the growth and activity of farmers’ organizations.

Several activities were geared towards the development of regional agricultural information systems (RAISs). In January, the FARA–RAIS Task Force was launched. This Task Force will work closely with the African sub-regional organizations. In February, we initiated collaboration between AARINENA–RAIS and InfoSys+ (the web-based information system on European ARD). The plan is to develop a global agricultural information system providing data on institutions, experts, research activities and outputs of research through a relational database. This will complement the activities of the Information and Communi-
cations Management for Agricultural Research and Development (ICM4ARD) programme (see box).

Further progress towards the global information system was made when RAIS managers from the Regional Forums and experts from other organizations (including FAO and InfoSys+) came together in May. The RAIS managers’ workshop was preceded by a study on existing information tools and approaches for the provision of information on institutions, experts, activities and research outputs. The resulting work programme will make an additional contribution to strengthening the RAISs.

ICM4ARD: a GFAR Global Partnership Programme

The Information and Communications Management for Agricultural Research and Development (ICM4ARD) programme arose from the fact that GFAR stakeholders suffer significant inequality in the availability, access and ability to use agriculture-related information. The programme aims to respond through providing advocacy for sensitization, awareness and resources mobilization; offering capacity development; promoting integration of information and communication technology (ICT)-enabled information systems and services; and supporting improved governance.

Activities in 2005 included:

• Status report on ICM4ARD in the APAARI region.

• Inter-regional workshop in Cairo, where participants exchanged knowledge and experiences to help strengthen their national and regional information systems and developed the 2006 plan of work.

• AARINENA–RAIS and InfoSys+ consultation for inter-regional collaboration in Bonn that developed a strategy for a prototype national information system.

• Training programme for national agricultural information system (NAIS) managers from the APAARI region held in Bangkok.

Concluding remarks

The year 2005 was an eventful one for the Secretariat and the Regional Forums. We have highlighted some of the most important activities carried out, all of which were driven by the common objective of promoting partnership and inclusiveness, and built around issues of importance to our target beneficiaries.

The governance machinery of GFAR functioned well during the year, lubricated by the same drive for inclusiveness. Important decisions were taken during GFAR’s regular meetings held during the year, including the approval of a revised GFAR Charter. This will provide an important foundation on which to consolidate GFAR as an institution.
Theme Feature

Inclusiveness: Encouraging stakeholder participation in setting the research agenda

The famine in Niger that hit the headlines in 2005 was a depressing reminder that decades of international aid have failed to lift millions of people in the developing world – particularly in SSA – out of extreme poverty and hunger. Although dramatic increases in food production have occurred in parts of the developing world in the past 30 years, global efforts to address poverty and food insecurity through agricultural development still too often fail to take sufficient account of the big picture – from the needs of marginalized rural communities to the demands of policy- and decision-makers. In Niger, the reason people starved was only partly because locusts and severe drought decimated the harvest. Decades of low and declining productivity had left the rural poor highly vulnerable to any shock. Thus, although food was available in the towns, the poor just could not afford to buy it. Shortages, combined with government policies encouraging competition and a free market economy, had sent prices through the roof.

The major challenge facing the development community now is how to introduce greater stakeholder participation – the principle of inclusiveness – into international ARD, both in setting the agenda and throughout the planning, implementation and monitoring/evaluation phases. Inclusiveness goes hand in hand with empowerment. If nations like Niger can become more self-reliant, they will be better able to avert crises on their own, improve their citizens’ lives and become bigger, more successful players in the world economy.

What is inclusiveness?

In its broadest sense (within the development context), inclusiveness means the involvement and participation of different types of organizations and segments of society in the decision-making process. Inclusiveness implies that all stakeholder groups – regardless of their status – will have equal opportunities to influence decisions. “If they are fully included, even weak stakeholders will be encouraged to take ownership of a process and its outcomes,” says Nur Abdi, GFAR’s Programme Officer for NARS and Civil Society Organizations Liaison.
Averting famine: FARA learns lessons from Niger

Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world and its people are highly vulnerable to such shocks as locusts and drought. The country’s rumbling food security problem erupted into crisis in 2005, when a general lack of response from the international community led to Niger being described by the media as the world’s number one neglected emergency.

In November, representatives from the African Union (AU), FARA, the Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricole (CORAF) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) visited the affected areas of Niger with a view to learning how they could alleviate the current crisis and be more pro-active in response to similar situations in the future. The team talked to national and local government officials, representatives of the national research institute and stakeholders from NGOs, producers’ groups and community-based organizations (CBOs).

The visit confirmed that pre-existing low levels of productivity, lack of health knowledge, chronic malnutrition, poor markets for agricultural products, ineffective policies, and lack of communication among major institutions had amplified the country’s food insecurity problems. The multiple perspectives of the different stakeholder groups improved the team’s understanding of the country’s complex food security problems. On the basis of this understanding, the team were able to propose concrete new initiatives. Most of these were based on the principle of active stakeholder involvement, since this will allow more accurate problem identification, more rapid needs assessment and, most importantly, a more timely and holistic approach to future disaster mitigation.

“Broad stakeholder participation is an important mechanism for building mandates, consensus and cooperation, whether at local, national or global level.”

Resolutions from all the major United Nations conferences over the past decade, including those relating to the MDGs, call for the full mobilization and inclusion of civil society in the implementation of development programmes and projects. In addition, the new priorities of the CGIAR (CGIAR, 2005) are based on an underlying theme of greater inclusiveness, emphasizing the need for, and benefits of, participatory research and partnerships between stakeholder organizations.

The concept of inclusiveness is related closely to that of partnerships. To be effective, partnerships have to be organized, planned and implemented by the participating organiza-

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1The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines civil society organizations (CSOs) as “organizations that are engaged in development but are neither part of the government nor a business” (Petersen et al. 2006). CSOs encompass many different types of NGO.
Partnerships between different types of stakeholder organizations, such as farmers’ organizations, NGOs, private-sector companies, universities, national and international research organizations and donors, are central to effective ARD (see box for an example). This is because today’s researchers have to address a much wider range of issues than simply developing and delivering a new technology. They have to consider such aspects as enterprise profitability, food quality, sustainability and global market conditions, in addition to the social issues of food security, poverty and equitable access to resources. Partnerships allow stakeholders to benefit from a broader set of skills and insights in dealing with this wide array of problems.

**Partnership success for small-scale cassava processing in Uganda**

Cassava is a major food staple in Uganda. The roots are usually dried, then pounded or milled into flour, which is rich in starch and can be used in a variety of ways. A FoodNet project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), aimed to increase food security and income-generating opportunities by introducing farm-based cassava processing and setting up a small-scale cassava processing centre in the Luwero district of Uganda. The project set out to provide efficient, safe methods of cassava processing, develop high-quality cassava products and improve local opportunities for cash enterprise and employment.

Partners included IITA, Plan International (a humanitarian development organization without religious, political or governmental affiliation) and Ezinunula Omunaku, a Ugandan farmers’ organization. This combination of scientific expertise, NGO community-level connections and farmer participation played a large part in the project’s successful outcome.

The project first established 10 hectares of cassava fields. Local people were then trained how to process the cassava and market the flour. Village-level processing was successfully integrated into the farming system and farmers played an active role in marketing their goods. The main factor limiting scaling up of the project was the need for capacity building among the farmers and the high interest rates charged to farmers for loans. However, a teamwork approach helped address such constraints, and those who could participate saw their employment opportunities and incomes rise.

The project generated interest from the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and CSOs. As a result, similar processing systems have been set up by organizations such as Appropriate Technology Uganda, Sasakawa G-2000, the Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development (ACORD), Serere Research Station and the national post-harvest programme.
Why does it matter?

When it is successful, inclusiveness creates synergy and maximizes the resources, skills and competencies of different stakeholder groups. Inclusiveness also ensures genuine participation, giving all stakeholders an equal voice. However, there are many challenges to effective inclusiveness, not least those related to rigid institutional structures, limited institutional and human capacities, the sheer diversity of actors, and long traditions of power-led relationships.

Inclusiveness also matters for the efficient operation of institutions. If they are not inclusive, institutions will find it difficult to fulfil their key functions of assimilating information, balancing different interests and implementing decisions. Setting out to improve inclusiveness may imply radically reforming institutions and policies to establish equal rights, equal access to opportunities and equitable ownership of assets.

Promoting inclusiveness through GFAR

GFAR was created to bring ARD stakeholders together to meet the challenges of today’s more complex research and development (R&D) agenda. Encouraging CSOs, the private sector and donors to work together with public-sector research institutions is a fundamental GFAR target.

The concept of inclusiveness thus guides GFAR’s mission and strategy and underpins virtually all of its activities. “Our internal organization, governance and management reflect the participation of many different stakeholder groups,” says Ola Smith, GFAR’s Executive Secretary. “At the same time, we operate at the global, sub-regional and regional levels to facilitate and promote ARD.”
GFAR’s inclusive structure

The GFAR concept of inclusiveness includes several dimensions and levels. The GFAR Steering Committee governs GFAR’s activities and guides the Secretariat strategically on matters of governance, information flow and management, including approval of annual financial and technical reports. It has members from six Regional Forums, Northern research institutions and universities, international agricultural research institutes, NGOs, farmers’ organizations, the private sector and donors to ARD (who form the Donor Support Group). In addition to facilitating the Forum’s day-to-day operations and activities, the Secretariat maintains the Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research (EGFAR), a webspace where its stakeholders can share and exchange information, and produces an electronic newsletter. Both resources provide valuable access to information – an element necessary for inclusive processes.

At the global level GFAR adds its voice and perspective to global and regional debates and initiatives on issues that affect agricultural development. It plays an advocacy role in sensitising policy- and decision-makers to the need for commitment and long-term support for agricultural research. It also facilitates priority setting at this level.

Through its Regional Forums, GFAR promotes inclusive NARS. These play a pivotal role in national decisions about policy, trade, investment in technology development and organization of public-sector research. This broad base of partner organizations and groups reflects GFAR’s inclusive strategy.

GFAR supports setting the regional ARD agenda through periodic priority setting and research needs assessments. These activities include the NARS and representatives of ARD stakeholders at national, regional and global levels.

The GPPs are a specific mechanism that has been adopted by GFAR to promote and learn about collaborative research partnerships at both global and regional levels (see GFAR Annual Report, 2004). The GPPs are based on extensive consultations and comprehensive priority-setting exercises, with activities carried out by stakeholder partners including all categories of ARD actors. GPPs can be led by any of GFAR’s seven stakeholder groups. While it is recognized that not all partners have to be involved in all activities, decision-making bodies or steering committees must have multi-stakeholder participation to ensure a client and beneficiary orientation to the programmes.

In addition, GFAR’s principal support for dialogue and information sharing at the regional level is channelled through the Regional Forums. Strengthening global ARD-related information systems and information and communication management (ICM) is the key to facilitating greater participation of different stakeholder groups. A specific GPP, the ICM4ARD Project (see box on page 12) is aimed at fostering information flow among researchers and between researchers and other actors involved in ARD, with particular emphasis on how farmers can gain access to the information they need to respond to a rapidly changing environment.

Computerized market data information, Ministry of Agriculture, Zambia.

Photo: FAO/17818/A. Conti
Although a number of civil society stakeholder groups exist, they tend to be less well-represented at international gatherings than traditional ARD stakeholders. Whereas the larger international NGOs are often quite well organized and have a relatively high profile, many grassroots organizations (such as farmers’ groups, women’s and youth organizations, water user and producer associations) are comparatively weak and cannot easily form or gain access to stakeholder groups. As a result their participation in Regional Forums is unimpressive in terms of both numbers and diversity. As this report shows, GFAR is making a special effort to increase the participation of such CSOs in its activities.

Broadening regional-level participation

GFAR’s six Regional Forums were set up to strengthen cooperation among national, regional and international research institutions and centres through the dissemination and exchange of information, experiences and research results. All are making efforts to increase the representation of civil society and the private sector.

AARINENA is the longest-established of the Regional Forums and was set up to increase collaboration between the Near East and North Africa region’s NARS. This forum also supports international networks on important crops in the region such as date palm, cotton, olive, and medicinal and aromatic plants.

Ibrahim Hamdan, AARINENA Executive Secretary, explains that the structure of each network calls for participation from CSOs, and AARINENA will continue to promote more inclusive partnerships by increasing CSO involvement in its activities. The AARINENA constitution now allows farmers’ organizations and NGOs to participate in its governing bodies as observers. “The advantage of opening up the Executive Committee and general conference to them is that they will be able to state the priorities for research in their institutions,” he says.

FARA has also embraced the principle of inclusiveness, particularly in its role as coordinator of the SSA-CP. “The SSA-CP allows for a cross-section of stakeholders to contribute to research and development,” says Monty Jones, FARA Executive Secretary. “This is a substantial deviation from what’s been done in the past, when partnerships were encouraged only among scientists and excluded other stakeholders.”

The SSA-CP Steering Committee is chaired by FARA and strives for inclusiveness by inviting representatives from sub-regional organizations and other key stakeholders, including the CGIAR centres, other international research groups, Northern research institutions and universities (including Cornell, Hohenheim, Texas A&M and Wageningen), NARS, NGOs and private-sector organizations. Jones is particularly pleased about the programme’s relationship with the sub-regional organizations: the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), CORAF and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). “This is an example of a regional organization adding value to the work of sub-regional organizations and helping NARS to get involved – so often they don’t have the
resources for effective research when they operate by themselves,” he adds. FARA still sees room for improvement and has organized consultations and workshops to foster greater inclusiveness of CSOs and the private sector in ARD (see Stakeholder Highlights).

Bringing together sceptics and believers in the debate about new technology is another facet of inclusiveness – one that can help improve understanding of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). APAARI found that a number of NGOs, mainly based in India, were refusing to participate in any initiative involving GMOs. Its response was to invite stakeholders from cotton-growing countries to a travelling workshop held in India in November 2005. The event featured several sessions on hybrid cotton and Bt cotton technology. Raj Paroda, APAARI Executive Secretary, believes workshops like this are an invaluable means of creating consensus and laying the foundations for partnerships between public-sector research and private companies such as Monsanto. “You need a neutral platform for this kind of dialogue,” he says. “The GM debate exemplifies the need for inclusiveness. Bringing the private sector, NGOs and farmers together allows concerns over biosafety and other issues to be discussed and clarified, or studied further before the formal release of new products.”

Jones agrees: “We need to involve both believers and non-believers in GMOs. Inclusiveness is the best way to reduce suspicion between these two groups.”

Getting the NGOs on board

In recent years, NGOs have become increasingly active in the international development arena. Between 1914 and 2000 the number of international NGOs increased from 1,083 to more than 37,000. Nearly a fifth of these were formed in the 1990s (UNDP, 2002).

NGOs provide a vital two-way link between farmers and researchers, and can thus have an important input into research agenda setting. However, since the ‘freezing’ of the CGIAR NGO Committee, which broke up in acrimony over the GMO issue, they do not have a voice in the debate on agricultural research at the level of the CGIAR. GFAR is attempting to fill this gap by establishing an international NGO consortium.

However, getting the NGOs on board is not a straightforward process and several obstacles must first be overcome. Monica Kapiriri, GFAR Vice-Chair, says donors are not keen to fund NGO representatives to attend discussion groups like the GFAR Regional Forums and that GFAR itself needs to allocate more resources to supporting NGO participation. Paroda agrees, adding that NGOs and their donors sometimes have a rather short-term view of development. “NGOs are looking for quick value-addition,” he says. “They think it’s too time-consuming and expensive to attend meetings with no obvious short-term benefit.”
APAARI always invites NGOs but it’s never the same person who comes. In some cases, they pull out of the process soon after they start, or perhaps don’t participate at all.” The experience of the Asia–Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology (APCoAB) is a case in point. APCoAB gave a seat on its Steering Committee to a representative from the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), but ANGOC’s participation in the Steering Committee has not been sustained, thus depriving APCoAB of an NGO perspective.

In addition to lacking funds, many NGOs also lack the necessary knowledge to participate fully in ARD discussions. FARA has addressed this issue through an active programme of capacity development, and NGO participation has grown as a result. Another approach within the FARA-coordinated SSA-CP is to team up weaker stakeholders with stronger ones, allowing them to learn from each other.

GFAR’s NGO consortium approach is being piloted in sub-Saharan Africa. Kapiriri believes it is an efficient way to identify the right NGO for the right job. “It can serve as a matchmaker in the creation of partnerships between NGOs and research institutions,” she says. Ola Smith is equally positive. “We are half way to our goal of having NGOs participate more fully in the research activities of their regions,” he says. “If we get it right, and the Consortium functions appropriately, we can learn from that experience and perhaps apply it to help re-engage NGOs in the work of the CGIAR as well.” This is a true model for a bottom-up approach to constituency building. The NGOs themselves proposed the initiative to strengthen their institutional capacity. The role of the GFAR Secretariat has been limited to providing some financial resources and mentoring in the establishment phase.

**Listening to farmers**

When farmers in Uganda were facing starvation due to an epidemic of cassava mosaic disease, they were eternally grateful to the researchers who gave them resistant varieties. But once the disease outbreak had passed, they were less satisfied with these varieties, which did not have good taste and cooking characteristics. In this case, the researchers had good links with the farmers and were able to listen to their problems and to develop a wider choice of varieties. However, this kind of interaction does not always occur and GFAR consultations
often highlight problems related to poor links between research providers and technology users – particularly farmers and small businesses. Without farmer participation in research agenda setting, there is a real risk that new technologies will not be relevant to farmers’ or market needs and will not be widely adopted.

GFAR is working closely with IFAP to improve farmer participation through an international farmers’ research committee (see page 38). This aims to get farmers fully involved in the ARD process, identifying the types of research needed and evaluating progress.

Ron Bonnett, President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and a member of the IFAP Research Committee, acknowledges that it will not be easy to ensure full farmer participation on high-level research committees. This is because small-scale farmers, in particular, are generally not well organized and their representatives tend to lack experience with partnerships and with the kinds of decisions that need to be made. “There has to be a mechanism to make farm organizations stronger,” he says. “Whether the aim is to contribute to the research agenda or to organize so as to earn more in the marketplace, it’s very difficult to get good representation from the farming community if you don’t have strong farmers’ organizations.”

In addition to building capacity for participation, farmers’ organizations need to be motivated to take part. In other words, they need to see a financial benefit. “Everyone wants to participate in the development of new techniques and technologies, but they also want to make a decent living,” says Bonnett.

Farmers’ inputs into GFAR stakeholders’ ICM4ARD initiatives are also vital. A large number of new agricultural information services (e.g. community radio, cable TV, digital video/audio and Internet resources) in Africa, Asia and Latin America are NGO-led. GFAR is supporting linking of national and regional agricultural information systems (NAIS and RAIS) to these grassroots ones by making it possible for stakeholders to participate in the appropriate policy- and decision-making bodies. For the NGOs, GFAR is advocating and supporting development of their own ICM strategies to improve the sharing and exchange of information and knowledge between all stakeholders, especially farmers and researchers. This is likely to be a prominent component of the Linking Farmers to Markets GPP (see page 7).
When farmers’ organizations do participate on equal terms, they may be able to promote joined-up thinking between the research and policy communities at both the national and international levels. What so often happens at present is that money is spent on research that helps farmers boost their productivity, only to find that they cannot sell their surplus harvest due to unfavourable trade policies or a lack of transport. The IFAP Research Committee will help get farmers’ voices heard as a vital starting point in changing this.

The private sector: friend or foe?

Recent years have seen increasing collaboration between governments and profit-oriented organizations. Such public–private partnerships are encouraged by most donors and by the United Nations system. They have many advantages, such as the availability of additional resources and knowledge, greater sustainability and less need for donor support, and better access to markets for small-scale producers. But private-sector involvement in ARD has also met with criticism, generally related to difficulties in reconciling profitability with poverty reduction and the distortion of trading conditions for the more traditional small-scale farmers. Nevertheless, public–private partnerships are gaining ground. Their continued success depends on key conditions being met: the collaboration should be defined by a contract; the partners’ contributions should complement each other so that both sides are able to achieve their goals more efficiently than on their own; and each partner needs to formulate clear goals, communicate them to the other partners and negotiate an agreement on the joint mission of the partnership.

Arvind Kapur, Managing Director of Nunhems Seeds Pvt. Limited in India, is the Private-Sector Representative on GFAR’s Steering Committee. He believes that private-sector participation in the global ARD agenda is important because private enterprise is often closer to its customers – technology users – than are public research institutions. In his company, he insists on two-way communication between farmers and the company’s crop breeders. He also ensures there is some mechanism for multiplying seed of the new varieties released by the company. He enjoys going to the field: “The farmers come to garland you and show respect, saying you have helped them to earn money. This makes us happy that we have delivered something to our society.” He believes that when both partners are making a profit, it is a clear sign that the collaboration is working: “Yes, making a profit is part of our job. The profits flow back to research. The scientists we hire are expensive. If the company does not generate a profit, the research contribution will go down.”

In his view, the main disadvantage of GFAR’s strategy of inclusiveness is that it makes for slow progress. “When decision-making is given to so many people with such diverse views, sometimes the debate delays the process. Mostly nothing is concluded and the initiation of progress delayed indefinitely.” However, he believes GFAR plays a valuable role by
advocating better policies, by helping to create research partnerships, and by eliminating hurdles to research – and here he gives the example of advocacy for clearer, more practical material transfer agreements.

Kapur is motivated by both altruism and profit, which are clearly not mutually exclusive, as some NGO commentators would have it. Indeed, both ingredients are vital if greater private-sector participation in global ARD is to be encouraged. This is especially true of the GFAR forums, where participation is not directly linked to profitability. “There has to be a prospect of profit,” says Kapiriri. “If the company’s participation doesn’t deliver money, you’re not going to get that private-sector person back at the next event.”

In efforts to encourage and promote the participation of small- and medium-sized enterprises in ARD, GFAR has allocated two seats to private-sector representatives in a multi-stakeholder committee that advises the governing structure and management of the GCP. However, it is proving difficult to sustain private-sector participation.

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**Building on GFAR’s experience**

Multi-stakeholder partnerships represent relatively new and controversial ground, over which the development community is still feeling its way. There are no hard and fast rules for the formation and management of these more inclusive partnerships, the benefits of which are difficult to assess and even harder to quantify.

Conditions for success include getting proper agreement between the partners at the start, with sufficient involvement of legitimate but previously marginalized partners. In addition to a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, this means building in some flexibility. “Maturity in partnerships requires us to realize that not all parties are going to have identical outlooks,” says Kapiriri. “We need to appreciate the differences in perspective, but also the synergies created as a result of those differences. It is important that stakeholders understand and respect the motivations, attitudes and behaviour of other types of partner.” The different values and motives should be understood sufficiently to build a platform for the partnership, and enough time must be allowed in stakeholder meetings to reach agreements on shared objectives, benefits and costs. Facilitation and guidance from experienced organizations such as GFAR can be invaluable in the often difficult and time-consuming early phases, when the impatient might be tempted to give up.
The transaction costs of multi-stakeholder partnerships are high, so donors need to be convinced of the benefits. Anne Germain, Policy Analyst at the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) appreciates the fact that GFAR brings different perspectives to discussions on common development issues. She also highlights GFAR’s role in knowledge sharing. “GFAR has many interesting aspects, including knowledge sharing, peer learning and the ability to constructively advance debate on the international research agenda. One example is its work on underutilized species. GFAR looks at ways of tapping more resources for these secondary products and gets people together to discuss how to exploit their potential.”

One way to reduce transaction costs is to identify a lead organization for all new partnership initiatives. This can also help to improve communication between stakeholders – another prerequisite for full participation.

An enhanced focus on monitoring, evaluation and accountability will enable GFAR to draw lessons from current multi-stakeholder initiatives and to develop advice and guidelines for others. A logical next step for GFAR is the development of a framework that can help stakeholders guide, plan and manage partnership challenges, including the basic ingredients, processes and procedures that promote success. The paper by Petersen et al. (2006) makes a good start.

Inclusiveness is essential in today’s ARD environment, bringing multiple perspectives to bear on difficult problems that cannot be solved by one organization or type of stakeholder alone. Inclusiveness also goes some way towards filling the gap left by the decline in public-sector spending, since it brings in new partners such as the private sector and NGOs. But perhaps most importantly, it offers hope for breaking down the non-technology barriers to poverty reduction – those of the policy and institutional environments – that cannot be tackled by research and extension organizations working alone.

References


Stakeholder Highlights

Regional Forums

The Regional Forums are GFAR’s platform for dialogue with its stakeholders. They were set up to strengthen cooperation among national, regional and international research institutions and centres through the dissemination and exchange of information, experiences and research results. The first (AARINENA) was established in 1985. Advances in information and communication technology (ICT) have made it much easier to share information, but there is still a need for the networks to include additional stakeholders, particularly those representing civil society.

Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa
AARINENA

Over the past 20 years, AARINENA has worked closely with the GFAR Secretariat, the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and FAO to support NARS in the region through training programmes, scientific workshops/conferences, and by establishing a regional information and communication system. One of the forums’ main objectives now is to increase the participation of diverse stakeholders, particularly to involve more NGOs, farmers and private-sector groups.

AARINENA took a major step towards greater inclusiveness by deciding to institutionalize the participation of farmers’ organizations and NGO representatives as Associate Members of the Executive Committee, pending a

“We want to involve more NGOs, farmers and private sector groups in our activities. We are doing it through the established networks and their participation in the governing bodies of the Association.”

Ibrahim Hamdan, Executive Secretary, AARINENA
constitutional amendment to give them full membership status. The issue will be discussed during the forum’s General Assembly scheduled for May 2006.

The RAIS is the latest development in AARINENA’s programme of information sharing. This is intended to serve as an information repository and exchange mechanism at the regional level, which will help strengthen, coordinate and add value to agricultural research initiatives undertaken by both national and international programmes. In 2005, this resource was made available to a wider audience by the launch of an Arabic website, developed with the help of the FAO Regional Office for the Near East.

At an international ICT workshop, held in Cairo in May, plans were drawn up for collaboration between AARINENA RAIS and InfoSys+, the web-based information system on European agricultural research for development. Through this collaboration, AARINENA aims to promote further inter-regional sharing of experience, skills and tools and to help member countries develop their own NAISs. The next step will be to develop appropriate software tools that can be used by the different NARS and to train staff how to use them.

**Promoting olives and olive oil**

AARINENA established its olive network to increase productivity, improve quality and develop innovative marketing techniques for olives and olive products. Members of the regional network are drawn from olive-producing countries in West Asia and North Africa and the network links stakeholders from these regions with those from Europe through the European System of Cooperative Research Networks in Agriculture (ESCORENA). The olive network brings together different stakeholders involved in growing, processing, marketing and research in olives, including NGOs, private enterprise, research institutions, universities and donor agencies.

There are several different levels of activities, from creating awareness among policymakers of the need to develop the olive production and marketing chain, through to promoting a cooperative approach to conservation of olive germplasm. Olive oil is an important product, and the network is working to develop consensus on technical standards and laboratory procedures as part of a quality control programme for international marketing. Network members are also working to promote the nutritional and health benefits of olive oil. Information exchange and enhancing cooperation for addressing common problems are additional activities.
AARINENA continues to support commodity crop networks for date palm, cotton, olive, and medicinal and aromatic plants. Additional regional networks on water-use efficiency and biotechnology are due to become active during the next two years.

The date palm network held an international workshop on ‘true-to-type’ tissue culture-derived plants in Morocco in May and agreed to provide updates about tissue culture abnormalities in the form of a web page linked to the network’s existing site.

Working closely with APAARI, the cotton network organized a travelling workshop on hybrid and Bt cotton in India (see page 28).

The olive network (see box on page 26) held an international conference in Tunisia in May, which attracted participants from both northern and southern Mediterranean countries. The agenda included sessions on improving productivity, quality and partnership. Participants requested support for research to develop new varieties with improved quality and for the creation of an olive gene bank. They also voiced their appreciation of the network’s efforts to improve partnerships between organizations in the northern and southern Mediterranean basin. Other network activities included a workshop in Cyprus in December for preparing guidelines on good agricultural practices.

One of the main objectives of the network for medicinal and aromatic plants is to provide members with the information they need to produce products that will meet EU quality standards. At their first meeting in Malta in November, the participants prepared a work plan for 2006/7 and familiarized themselves with EU rules of agricultural practice, manufacturing and marketing.

A joint AARINENA, GFAR and FAO training event on post-harvest technology, held in Turkey in March, supported the GPhI GPP Linking Farmers to Markets. The participants initiated the development of a region-specific proposal in support of the AARINENA olive, date palm, cotton, and medicinal plant networks. They identified three priority areas: a) market orientation for network members; b) training for extension services to ensure they are market-oriented and demand-driven; and c) production and marketing of organic products.

Asia–Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions

APAARI

APAARI was set up in 1990 with a focus on strengthening the NARS. It does this through sharing information, networking research knowledge, building the skills of researchers and promoting an enabling policy environment for ARD. APAARI supports four networks (crops, livestock, fruits and fibre) and two programmes: the Asia–Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS) and APCoAB. APARIS promotes ICT in agricultural research and helps build the capacity of NARS personnel to develop their own information
systems. APCoAB coordinates capacity building, policy advice and information dissemination in agricultural biotechnology.

The year’s activities began with two brainstorming sessions, one on the role of science and society in plant genetic resources management and another on public–private partnership in agricultural biotechnology. APCoAB also organized a high-level policy dialogue that focused on improving food security and alleviating poverty by taking the benefits of biotechnology to resource-poor farmers. Participants identified the major priorities in biotechnology on which FAO and its partners need to focus in their efforts to enhance food security and reduce poverty. A status report on *Commercialization of Bt Corn in the Philippines* was launched by the Philippine Minister of Agriculture Mr. Domingo Panganiban.

In December 2005, APAARI facilitated (with IPGRI) a roundtable meeting of NARS leaders, which aimed to: a) heighten awareness among the participants of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) implementation process at international and national levels; b) recommend activities to develop harmonized regional approaches to outstanding implementation issues; and c) identify modalities for the delivery of technical assistance to countries in the implementation of the Treaty. The participants highlighted the need for national-level technical/legal assistance for the implementation of the Treaty and endorsed the joint programme for technical assistance to countries that is being developed by FAO and IPGRI. They recommended that APAARI and IPGRI jointly provide a forum for Asian National Negotiators, preferably before the next meeting of the Contact Group to Develop the Standard Material Transfer Agreement, in April 2006.

In November, APAARI hosted a travelling workshop to India for representatives of cotton-growing countries. The participants travelled to different locations so they could observe the field performance of hybrid and Bt cotton in the three major cotton-growing
zones of India. At each site they met different scientific experts (including some from the private sector), research site managers and farmers. They also attended a national dialogue on cotton in Mumbai. All were impressed by the scientific achievements of the Indian cotton industry and considered their visit to have been highly rewarding.

In 2004, APAARI conducted a detailed study of the current status of ICT in ARD in the Asia–Pacific region. The results allowed us to rank member countries according to their level of NAIS development. Lack of human capacity is the main factor limiting the countries identified as 'least developed'. We have organized several training programmes to address this need, including one held in Thailand in November 2005. The event was designed to expose the participants to current global and regional ARD information resources and then to explore how they could create better links between available resources and their respective NAIS. We demonstrated some of the internet tools, databases and other applications we have developed to integrate decentralized information resources and participants joined in hands-on exercises to learn how to use them. They also developed individual action plans, which included identifying how APAARI can help them further.

The role of ICT in linking farmers to researchers and ensuring that scientific knowledge and new technology reach the end user was the subject of national workshop held in India in January. The workshop highlighted the fact that if farmers can access market and other information and network with each other through a well-coordinated national system, they will be able to make more informed choices that will allow them to increase their incomes and climb out of poverty.

Rainbow trout in Nepal: an APAARI success story

Nepal’s mountainous topography means that options for agricultural diversification are limited. Water resources, however, are plentiful and Nepal’s National Agricultural Research Council (NARC) focuses many R&D efforts on this major resource. One of their successes is the development of new technology for the farming of rainbow trout (*Onchorhynchus mykiss*). Commercial fish farming, mainly of carp species, has been successful on the Terai plains of southern Nepal for many years. Expanding aquaculture to the upland areas will increase the amount of protein in the diet of the rural poor as well as providing new opportunities for generating income.

Scientists involved in the project over the past 10 years have had to consider many different aspects of trout farming, including developing an appropriate high-protein feed based on locally available ingredients and teaching farmers how to smoke the fish so it will keep longer. Despite the high cost of feed, net profitability of 40% can be achieved and trout farming is emerging as a technology with significant potential for poverty reduction. Close collaboration between NARC and its partners in Japan, including the private sector, has been fundamental to the project’s success.

"IPM technology for rice, developed in Indonesia, is now being recognized and accepted in most of the rice-growing countries of the region. We were the first to flag this and many other success stories."

Raj Paroda, Executive Secretary, APAARI
APAARI also publishes a range of ‘success stories’ that highlight how NARS-led research partnerships and information sharing have brought significant benefits to needy farmers. Twenty-four stories are now available on a CD. The story of hybrid rice in India is one example of how APAARI’s promotion and dissemination has stimulated policymakers to take action. Rainbow trout in Nepal is another example (see box on page 29).

Central Asian and Caucasian Association of Agricultural Research Institutions

CACAARI

This Regional Forum for eight countries was set up in 2000 as a neutral platform for scientific interface and partnership. There were various reasons for creating CACAARI. Firstly, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were major difficulties in obtaining scientific and technical information; there was a need to get the region linked to the international mainstream and to strengthen its relations with international organizations. In the past, agriculture was based mostly on large State and collective farms, and information and technical advances were geared to serving them. But with the switch to private agriculture, in which there are far more producers but much smaller holdings, a totally different approach was needed.

CACAARI works closely with the CGIAR system and has formal links with ICARDA, Centro Internacional de la Papa (CIP), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Centro Internacional del Mejoramiento de Maíz y Trigo (CIMMYT), IPGRI and International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). The idea is that the CGIAR centres conduct the research and develop the technologies, while CACAARI establishes links with local stakeholders to improve the relevance of their research.

In 2005 we launched our new web-portal (www.cacaari-forum.narod.ru). It has both English and Russian versions, including a database on agricultural research institutions in the eight member countries.

Language is a major problem for the forum. While Russian serves as the lingua franca of the region, for many scientists it is a second language. In addition, scientists need English language skills if they are to be part of the international scientific mainstream. The forum is beginning to address this problem, for example, the ICARDA office in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, has recently organized English language training courses for younger agricultural researchers.

“One of the very interesting achievements of CACAARI is the establishment of an information system for the countries of our region…the exchange of information is currently the main question for scientists.”

Asanbek Sarmashaевич Ajibekov, Executive Secretary, CACAARI
EFARD

EFARD was constituted in 1997 at the Montpellier Colloquium on ARD. All EU Member countries (plus Switzerland and Norway) are participating in EFARD, which is a joint undertaking by all ARD stakeholders (researchers, NGOs, farmers’ organizations, policymakers and the private sector). The mission and overall goal of EFARD is to strengthen the contribution of European ARD to poverty alleviation, food security and sustainable development in developing countries by providing a platform for strategic dialogue among European stakeholder groups and promoting research partnerships between European and Southern research communities. EFARD’s mission follows the principles of GFAR and contributes to GFAR’s Global Plan of Action, in partnership with the other Regional Forums. In this context, EFARD has an important advocacy role to play in maintaining ARD as a high priority on European, regional and international political agendas.

The objectives of the EFARD work programme are to:

• Strengthen the links between European stakeholders with a view to stimulating a real European ARD community that can contribute to poverty alleviation, food security and sustainable development
• Ensure the proactive participation of European ARD competence in research programmes at the global level
• Develop further collaborations and partnerships between European and developing countries within the GFAR framework
• Make the European ARD community more visible at the political level
• Develop a demand-driven research agenda responding to the needs of the South.

EFARD Conferences, which are held every three years, constitute the core element of EFARD’s activities by enabling strategic research planning between European and Southern partners. The first three EFARD conferences, which were held in Montpellier (1997), Wageningen (1999) and Rome (2002), were directed towards the identification of common research themes and interests at the European level. The EFARD Conference in Zurich (2005) focused on how current global trends imply changing needs for European ARD. This conference served as a platform to discuss and elaborate a position on how European ARD should respond to these changing global needs. GFAR was represented on the Programme Committee of the Conference and facilitated and ensured the participation of representatives from other Regional Forums, including farmers’ organizations and NGOs. Farmer representatives from IFAP and the Union of Small- and Medium-scale Farmers Association of...
Nigeria (USMEFAN) took a leading role and presented plenary session speeches on farmer perspectives on ARD. The conference also included a workshop on North–South research partnerships. The event was successful in initiating a regular exchange of experiences, information and knowledge between Regional Forums. It provided additional visibility for GFAR within the European context and will no doubt stimulate support for future North–South GFAR-mediated collaborative activities.

Participants at the 2005 EFARD Conference, Zurich, Switzerland, discussed how current global trends imply changing needs for European ARD.

Photo: ZIL, ETH Zurich

Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa

FARA

FARA, which is now three years old, has three main areas of action: advocacy, partnership and learning/information exchange. FARA advises the AU and its Heads of State on policy for agricultural research and has an agreement with New Partnerships for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) to provide technical support for its Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). FARA also works at policy level to help countries cope better with disasters, such as drought, which can have a devastating effect on agriculture and food security (see page 14).

During the FARA General Assembly in Uganda in June, the Regional Forum signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with AARINENA. This allowed stakeholders in northern Africa to be members of AARINENA as well as of FARA and increased FARA membership from 45 to 53 states, representing the entire African continent. As part of its advocacy role, FARA has also signed an MoU with the AU as its technical arm on ARD (see box on page 33). The agreement will allow FARA to play a more active role in advising AU Member States on issues related to ARD.
A major event in 2005 was the launch of the implementation phase of the SSA-CP, an integrated approach to natural resource management. The SSA-CP brings together a range of global resources to address agricultural and natural resources constraints to Africa’s development. FARA is the hub that links the SSA-CP with other challenge programmes active in Africa. Its role is to promote cohesion, avoid duplication and add value to investment in research and capacity building in Africa. This is the only challenge programme run by an organization other than the CGIAR.

Activities are planned at nine sites and work has begun at three of these (one in West, one in southern and one in eastern Africa). At each site we are working closely with the relevant sub-regional organization. This type of collaboration ensures broad stakeholder participation in setting the research agenda and implementing activities, something that has not often been achieved in the past. At least 12 CGIAR centres are participating in activities at each site, with IITA acting as the lead institution in West and southern Africa and CIAT in eastern Africa. We also have strong participation from advanced research institutions (ARIs), although we hope that much of the research will be accomplished by the NARS. Local capacity building is being provided through service partnerships with various agencies, including

**“The SSA-CP has got off the ground with the active participation of all the stakeholders that we anticipated would join in. This includes the sub-regional organizations, which are leading the initiative in their corresponding sub-regions.”**

Monty Jones, Executive Secretary, FARA

FARA was officially recognized as the AU’s technical arm on ARD with the signing of a formal MoU in Rwanda in November. The MoU recognizes the following:

- Agricultural and rural development is the basis for Africa’s development; and Africa must have the capacity to capitalize on science, research products or develop its own innovations to catalyse economic development in the region.

- Biotic and abiotic stresses and diseases are not contained by national boundaries; and cooperation between nations will build critical mass and accelerate the production of science-based controls and remedies.

- NEPAD’s CAADP stresses the need for a comprehensive and coherent approach to agricultural research for development.

The MoU gives FARA the responsibility to improve the effectiveness and impact of ARD in several different ways. These include adding value to the work of the sub-regional organizations and NARS, identifying centres of excellence to spearhead the application of science for improving the livelihoods of the poor, promoting dissemination of new agricultural technologies, developing tertiary education, advocacy for increased investment, and establishing and managing a continent-wide competitive fund for ARD.
Entry points are defined through broad stakeholder consultation, for example in West Africa over 80 different organizations have chosen to participate. Projects are likely to focus on soil degradation, fertilizer management, deforestation, conservation and use of germ-plasm, and water management. Social science aspects, such as agricultural policy and the marketing of farm products, are also represented. Although the focus of activities is geared towards local priorities, several crosscutting issues are being considered. One example is the problem of declining soil fertility, which is perhaps the most fundamental constraint of all to the development of African agriculture.

Other FARA activities are intertwined with the forum’s role in the SSA-CP and are guided by the Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP), which helps link FARA’s activities to NEPAD’s CAADP. These activities include the Building Africa’s Scientific and Institutional Capacity (BASIC) programme. The main purpose of this programme 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 programmes. Others are the African Initiative on Biotechnology and Biosafety and the regional agricultural information and learning systems (RAILS).

African Agricultural Science Week and the FARA General Assembly were held in Uganda in June and provided an opportunity to showcase FARA’s activities. The event attracted almost 500 participants, including scientists from national and international organizations, university staff, extension workers, farmers and representatives from regional organizations and forums. The theme of the conference was ‘Innovations to transform agriculture and improve livelihoods’. Sessions concentrated on the ‘how to’, i.e. how to enhance capacity for accelerated development, develop appropriate technology for equitable wealth creation and distribution, address policy and institutional constraints affecting agricultural development, promote business opportunities for the private sector, and share information through networking and partnership.
The fourth FORAGRO conference was held in Panama in April and attracted 150 participants from varied backgrounds. They included representatives from universities, NGOs, public research institutions, producers, the private sector, the global research system, technical and financial agencies, advanced research systems and members of the Latin American Parliament (PARLATINO). Hosted by the Instituto de Investigación Agropecuaria de Panama, the focus of the event was technological innovation and agribusiness priorities and its purpose was to stimulate ideas and dialogue for the formulation and implementation of national- and regional-level policies and activities. These will be used to develop an innovative, knowledge-based agricultural sector, driven largely by agribusinesses.

Among the most important outcomes of the meeting was the reaffirmation of the importance of the agricultural and agriculture-related sectors of the economy of Latin American and Caribbean countries. Taking into account both backward and forward linkages, the agriculture–agribusiness sectors represent up to 30% of gross domestic product (GDP) in several countries of the region. While agribusiness developments were recognized as the driving force behind the sector, the farmer and NGO representatives called for renewed attention to the family farm sector, which is in danger of being excluded from the opportunities afforded by new domestic and export markets.

The conference also saw the culmination of a process of engagement between FORAGRO and a very important stakeholder group: the Latin American Parliament. The presence of 22 parliamentarians and the signing of an agreement between FORAGRO and PARLATINO represent a significant step forward in raising awareness of the importance of the agricultural and agribusiness sectors for the economic development of the region and of the role of research in sustaining the competitiveness of these two sectors.

A session on global and regional knowledge systems examined potential areas for collaboration between stakeholders from FORAGRO and other regions, while a panel discussion on inter-continental cooperation under the aegis of GFAR and the Regional Forums
that were present prompted a lively stakeholder debate. Of particular note was the outward-looking stance of several Latin American NARS, which are looking to engage proactively with their counterparts on other continents.

In response, the representatives of the Regional Forums then highlighted the characteristics of their respective regions, including areas of research focus, strengths and opportunities that could be made available to or shared with other regions. The Executive Secretaries of AARINENA, FARA and FORAGRO later held a brainstorming session on how to capitalize on the information gathered and move forward with collaborative activities.

As a result of the event, stakeholders identified six priority themes for the forum:

• Conservation, characterization and use of genetic resources
• Sustainable management of natural resources: soil, water and biodiversity
• Development and use of new agricultural biotechnologies
• Development of scientific and technological information systems
• Promotion of innovations aimed at the development of agribusiness
• Promotion and development of innovations applicable to family agriculture.

Other developments in 2005 include further consolidation of FORAGRO’s web-based information sharing tool (INFOTEC), which now provides up-to-date information on agricultural science and technology with a range of e-forums and weekly e-bulletins. While INFOTEC may be among the most advanced of the RAIS, there is still considerable work to be done in raising awareness among national decision-makers and research institutions of the importance of investing in ICM as a crucial tool for enhancing the innovation process.

As a pilot case for the Global Forum, FORAGRO also organized regional and inter-regional workshops on strengthening institutional innovations for ARD. These will be used as the basis for initiating an interchange of experiences between regions.
Civil Society, Private Sector, and Donor Perspectives

One of the main crosscutting issues highlighted by the GFAR 2004–2006 Business Plan is the need to increase the involvement and participation of the private sector and CSOs in discussions on research priorities. This means ensuring they participate, not only in implementing ARD programmes and projects but also in agenda-setting and decision-making. GFAR stakeholders recognize that effective collaboration (or functional linkages) between CSOs and the research establishment cannot be achieved if the former lacks the capacity to articulate its vision and communicate its expectations and requirements. The GFAR Secretariat’s support for farmers’ organizations, NGOs and the private sector aims to overcome this obstacle.

Farmers’ organizations

The world’s domesticated livestock and cultivated crops originate from generations of farmers selecting strains with the qualities that best suit the local environment and market requirements. Traditionally, this was enough to maintain livelihoods, but today’s increasingly competitive global market is placing new demands on farmers, particularly on smallholders. Now, they need the capacity to take advantage of research results, identify opportunities and tap into markets. All this requires them to act collectively. An individual farmer with a 1- or 2-hectare plot will find it difficult to access new technology or locate a market for increased production, but a group of farmers will fare much better. Being organized is perhaps more important for smallholders in Africa, Asia and Latin America, who often face unfair competition from their counterparts in the industrialized world. At the same time, there is a need to sensitize research institutions to the benefits of involving farmers in ARD processes: from defining agricultural research priorities and projects to implementing, monitoring and evaluating them. It is equally important to convince national governments of the value of a strong, well-organized agricultural community. Without local-level organization, it is very difficult to get meaningful results from a new technology or initiative.

IFAP – a global farmers’ organization representing 110 farmers’ groups in 75 countries – aims to improve links between farmers, extension services and researchers, and to help
farmers get organized for collective action. IFAP’s mission is to contribute to the improvement of farmers’ livelihoods through technology that is designed, monitored and implemented by the farmers themselves. So, how is this achieved? Firstly, by working to influence agricultural research priorities so they take account of farmers’ needs; secondly, by helping farmers’ organizations to participate in research and to access its results in an adaptive way; and thirdly, by linking farmers to the wider research environment, including sub-regional, regional and global organizations like GFAR.

In 2005, IFAP and GFAR boosted their collaboration by focusing on improving the involvement of small-scale, family farmers in agricultural research debates and programmes. An important landmark was the launch of the IFAP Farmers’ Committee on ARD. The mission of this committee is to contribute to the improvement of farmers’ incomes and livelihoods by ensuring regional-level agricultural research priorities are tailored to farmers’ needs and requirements. IFAP holds that agricultural research should include socio-economic dimensions and involve a multidisciplinary approach. For example, are the labour demands of a new technology beyond the reach of a farming family stricken by HIV/AIDS?

The farmers’ research committee will spearhead IFAP’s activities, focusing on the practical (how to contribute more effectively to field-based research), the realistic (how to make the best use of resources) and the innovative (what new actions can be implemented). A work plan for implementing IFAP farmers’ priorities has been established under five headings:

- The lobbying of regional and international agricultural research structures
- Looking at good practices and positive processes that already exist between researchers and farmers
- Capacity building programmes
- Drawing up a farmers’ documentation kit on agricultural research
- Facilitating and coordinating farmer representation at agricultural research meetings (e.g. the GCP and other challenge programmes of the CGIAR).
The research committee is represented in each of the Regional Forums. In 2005, committee members participated in several regional general assemblies, for example, the third General Assembly of FARA, where participants agreed to increase the representation of farmers’ organizations in research structures. Another example was the fourth FORAGRO meeting, held in Panama in April, where the role of family farmers in ensuring food security and protecting natural resources was recognized. This led into discussion that priority research themes should reduce the technological divide and increase innovation in family farming.

Involvement with EFARD was in the form of participation in a survey to canvass the views of stakeholders on the current strengths and weaknesses of European ARD and how it should respond to changing global needs. IFAP representatives also participated in the EFARD Zurich meeting in April.

**Building a farmers’ market in Paraguay**

One of the main factors limiting small-scale farm income is a lack of access to markets. Smallholders all too frequently have no choice but to sell their produce through middlemen, rather than direct to the consumer. In this situation they cannot get the best price.

The National Agricultural Union of Paraguay is a member of IFAP and has received IFAP financial support to build a dedicated marketplace for smallholder farmers to sell their produce directly to consumers. The market is situated in the central market area of the city of Asunció. It allows smallholders to sell as a group and get better prices for their produce. When they come to market, the farmers can also benefit from training in product grading, cleaning, packaging and transportation, and in production planning. Over 10,000 farming families are already benefiting from the project.

*The new farmers’ market in Asunción, Paraguay.*

*Photo: IFAP*
Another approach for IFAP is to work towards better collaboration with other GFAR stakeholders. The IFAP President is now the Farmers’ Representative on the GFAR Steering Committee, where he can ensure farmers’ voices are heard at the highest level. This inclusion should promote additional participation of farmers within the governing bodies of regional research structures.

IFAP has increased farmer participation in research in various projects during the year. For example, DURAS (see page 9) had received few demands from farmers until the initiative was publicized to IFAP members. Similarly, IFAP helped to identify additional means of collaboration between farmers’ organizations and the Linking Farmers to Markets GPP. It has also increased representation on the stakeholder committee of the SSA-CP, allowing a greater contribution by farmers to the policies, strategies, research priorities and activities of that programme.

The GFAR High-Value Products Research Workshop, held in Colombia in October, aimed to establish strategies to improve farmers’ incomes in developing countries as a result of better access to markets with high added value. IFAP was represented at this workshop and will continue to be involved with the group’s initiatives in the future.

**Non-governmental organizations**

NGOs provide an effective link between researchers and farmers and, particularly in Africa, provide an essential dissemination service to support often under-funded government extension systems. In recent years, developing countries have seen an increase in the number of domestic NGOs due to changes in development thinking and practice. GFAR is promoting NGO inclusion by strengthening their institutional capacity and organizing them into regional consortia so that they can play a more active role and exploit their comparative advantage at all levels of ARD. Once this is achieved, the GFAR Secretariat hopes to launch a consultation during which it will bring all these regional NGO consortia...
together to launch a global NGO Consortium. The Consortium, which will act as coordinating body for the regional NGOs and add value at all levels of ARD, also goes some way towards filling the communication gap between ARD agencies at these levels.

The initiative is being piloted in sub-Saharan Africa. The first stage of this institution-building process was carried out during the FARA General Assembly in June 2005, where the GFAR Secretariat, in collaboration with FARA, supported a group of NGOs to enable them to establish a Sub-Saharan Africa NGO Consortium (SSA-NGO-C). The aim is to help them relate better to their well-organized counterparts in other regions, and to work towards

**APAARI brings NGOs on board**

APAARI has been successful in getting NGOs and farmers’ organizations involved in its General Assembly and Expert Consultations and has instigated partnerships with eight NGOs:

- Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)
- Gene Campaign, India
- Forum for Biotechnology and Food Security, India
- Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals
- Asian Farmers Regional Network, Indonesia
- Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) Bangladesh
- Federation of Free Farmers, the Philippines
- Angat Farmers Association, the Philippines.

The Regional Forum and its NGO constituencies expressed a desire to replicate the SSA NGO model in the Asia–Pacific region. The GFAR Secretariat will support and work with APAARI towards this goal. The first step will be a consultation between APAARI and NGOs, which will take place during APAARI’s General Assembly to be held in November 2006 in New Delhi, India.
development and utilization of appropriate and sustainable agricultural technologies, while providing support to farmers where needed. About 30 NGO leaders participated in the meeting, representing all the African sub-regions and NGOs from Asia and Europe. The Asian and European groups networked with and provided support and experience to their African counterparts. Participants successfully established the Consortium and developed its vision and mission statements, a code of conduct, and a draft plan of action describing how they intend to interact with FARA. The SSA-NGO-C vision is one of an inclusive ARD system generating appropriate innovations that result in sustainable livelihoods. This will be achieved by NGOs working collectively to influence research, policy and priority setting and promote innovative partnership approaches. To do this, NGOs need to be mobilized, have access to information and gain the capacity for effective dialogue.

Representatives from the Consortium have already taken part in a multi-stakeholder consultation, held at FARA headquarters in Ghana in October. This brought NGOs together with other GFAR stakeholders (the private sector, farmers' organizations, Regional Forums and international agricultural research centres) to discuss and plan the regional ARD agenda. There were two noteworthy outcomes of the meeting. Firstly, the plan for fuller integration of Africa-based NGOs in national, sub-regional and regional agricultural research initiatives, and secondly, a formal action plan for Consortium activities up to 2008.

**Private sector**

The private sector has become much more involved in agricultural research over the past 20 years, particularly in Asia. Here, high-yielding hybrid varieties of cereals and vegetables developed by the private sector have made a significant contribution to the region’s increased production and food security.

*Samples of new, high-yielding rice varieties, India.*

*Photo: FAO/19484/G. Bizzarri*
agricultural productivity. The private sector is therefore an important partner and stake-
holder in efforts to achieve the MDGs. Private-sector participation in GFAR activities is
invaluable since it brings a unique dimension to knowledge sharing and decision-making.
Networking with the private sector also encourages development of public–private partner-
ships. The private sector is particularly important in GFAR activities aimed at increasing
awareness and use of biotechnology. Bringing NGOs and other stakeholders together with
the private sector is the only way to resolve doubts and counter misinformation.

Arvind Kapur, the Private Sector Representative on the GFAR Steering Committee,
manages the Indian private company Nunhems Seeds Pvt. Nunhems has worked hard to
create better links between farmers and the food industry. This not only helps the farmers to
get better prices for their produce, but also helps the food industry to source products with
the desired quality. For example, Nunhems provides training and seed for high-yielding hy-
brid pickling cucumber to more than 5000 farmers, who are keen to invest in the technology
because they know they will be able to sell their produce at a good price.

GFAR is keen to promote the benefits of public–private partnerships such as the
Collaboration for Insect Management in Brassicas for Asia and Africa (CIMBAA), led by
AVRDC. The project has been initiated to develop varieties of cauliflower and cabbage that
are resistant to diamondback moth. Nunhems is the private-sector partner and brings its
expertise in Bt technology to the project. Such partnerships are valuable because they in-
troduce biotechnologies – which are often available only to large-scale producers of cotton,
soybeans and cereals – to small-scale crops like vegetables.
GFAR: A donor’s perspective

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has been one of GFAR’s main donors and has provided funds of CA$1 million annually for the past three years. The aim of this funding was to help GFAR put in place the basic organizational mechanisms and practices it needs to secure additional funding from a wider range of sources. CIDA has also been supporting FARA directly.

“CIDA has been supporting GFAR because of its agricultural focus. Agriculture is important for economic development, income generation, poverty alleviation and food security, particularly in rural regions of developing countries. At the same time, farming practices have very strong links to the environment – sustainable development, biodiversity, land and water management, and so on – as well as to basic human health and nutrition.”

Anne Germain, Policy Analyst at CIDA, has found GFAR to be an attractive proposition because it supports agricultural development, an important route to economic progress, environmental conservation and improved human health. The involvement of stakeholders has been an additional draw. “A mechanism like GFAR is very interesting because it enables participation of a range of stakeholders in decision-making and policy dialogue,” she says. She believes GFAR is a true forum that provides an opportunity for the NARS to talk to other international ARD stakeholders. This can serve as valuable input, notably to the CGIAR system, providing feedback to ensure its research strategy remains relevant to farmers and organizations that use the end products of its research.

Other aspects of GFAR of interest to CIDA are its focus on knowledge sharing and peer learning, and its ability to advance debate on the international research agenda, particularly in more marginal areas such as that of underutilized species.

The way forward, says Germain, is to identify GFAR’s key strengths and build on them. “It’s important to know what institutional size, shape and modus operandi can be sustained. I do hope that GFAR continues to be a successful forum for dialogue, making agricultural research relevant and effective. GFAR has the potential to establish a real global partnership.”
Donor contributions to the GFAR Secretariat for budget year 2005 (US dollars)

Cash contributions for GFAR activities

Canada (Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA) 823 900
Canada (International Development Research Centre, IDRC) 8 400
CGIAR (Science Council) 15 000
CGIAR (Systems Office) 11 000
FAO 49 400
France (Ministere des affaires étrangères, MAE) 505 200
Italy 250 000
European Commission (DG Development) 58 000
European Commission (DG Research) 51 600
United Kingdom (DFID) 31 100

Total income 1 803 600

In-kind contributions for staffing the GFAR Secretariat

France (secondment from CIRAD) Senior Officer (six months)
CIAT Senior Officer (shared position, six months)
Canada (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade) Intern (three months)
GFAR Steering Committee

Mohammad H. Roozitalab (Chair)
Deputy Director General
Agricultural Research and Education Organization, Iran

Monica Kapiriri (Vice-Chair)
Independent consultant, Uganda

Olanrewaju B. Smith
Executive Secretary
Global Forum on Agricultural Research, Italy

Abed Al-Nabi Fardous
Director General
National Centre for Agricultural Research and Technology Transfer, Jordan

Papa Abdoulaye Seck
Directeur Général
Institut sénégalais de recherche agricole (until June)

Njabulo Nduli
Deputy Director
National Department of Agriculture, South Africa (from July)

Reynaldo Perez-Guardia
Director General
Instituto de Investigación Agropecuraria de Panama

Herath P.M. Gunasena
Executive Director
Council for Agricultural Research Policy, Sri Lanka

Abdushukur Khanazarov
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Agriculture and Water Management, Uzbekistan
Bryan L. Harvey  
Special Advisor to the Vice-President (Research)  
University of Saskatchewan, Canada

Christian H. Hoste  
Délégué aux institutions internationales, à la Méditerranée et à l'Europe bilatérale, Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement, France

Emile A. Frison  
Director General  
International Plant Genetic Resources Institute, Italy

Marc Debois  
Head of Sector Agriculture, Food Security and Rural Development  
Directorate General Development, European Commission, Belgium

Arvind Kapur  
Managing Director  
Nunhems Seeds Pvt. Ltd., India

Eduardo Sabio  
Country Director  
Heifer International, the Philippines

Jack Wilkinson  
President  
International Federation of Agricultural Producers, France

Dietrich E. Leihner  
Director, Research, Extension and Training Division  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Italy

Shantanu Mathur  
Coordinator of Research Grants  
International Fund for Agricultural Development, Italy

Rodney D. Cooke  
Director, Technical Advisory Division  
International Fund for Agricultural Development, Italy
Executive Secretaries of the Regional Forums

Rajendra Singh Paroda
Asia–Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions

Ibrahim Hamdan
Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa

Asanbek Ajibekov
Central Asian and Caucasian Association of Agricultural Research Institutes

Enrique Alarcón
Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technological Development

Monty P. Jones
Forum on Agricultural Research for Africa

GFAR Secretariat

Olanrewaju B. Smith
Executive Secretary

Jean-François Giovannetti
Visiting Senior Expert, Information and Communication Management (left June)

Rupert Best
Senior Programme Officer, Research Partnerships

Ajit Maru
Senior Programme Officer, NARS and Information and Communications Management (from October)

Oliver Oliveros
Coordinator, Promotion du développement durable dans les systemes de recherche agricole du sud (DURAS) Project

Antonio Schiavone
Programme Officer, Research Partnerships
Nur M. Abdi
Programme Officer, NARS and CSO Liaison Officer

Valeria Pesce
Information Officer (part-time)

Steve Crittenden
Intern (from September)

Gianna de Cesare
Secretary

Maria Cristina Esuperanzi
Secretary (left June)

Felicia Kiragu
Secretary (August–September)

Leighla Bowers
Secretary (from November)

Publications

GFAR Secretariat’s publications issued in print and digital formats in 2005 were:

- Three EGFAR quarterly newsletters available online in PDF and HTML versions
- The GFAR 2004 Annual Report

For copies of all print outputs, contact the Secretariat at the address on the back cover.
Who's Who in GFAR?

1996
- GFAR Chair: F. Chaparro

1997
- GFAR Vice-Chair: M. Kapiriri
- GFAR Executive Secretary: O. Smith
- NARS Executive Secretary: J-F. Giovannetti
- Donor Support Group: R. Cooke

1998
- GFAR Vice-Chair: H. Rouillé D’Orfeuil
- GFAR Executive Secretary: F. Chaparro
- Donor Support Group: A. Slama

1999
- R.S. Paroda
- 1st GFAR Conference (Dresden): A. Derevier

2000
- F. Chaparro
- 2nd GFAR Conference (Dakar): J-F. Giovannetti

2001
- F. Chaparro
- R. Cooke

2002
- M. Roozitalab
- W. van Vuure

2003
- O. Smith

2004
- M. Kapiriri

2005
## Acronyms and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AARINENA</td>
<td>Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACORD</td>
<td>Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANGOC</td>
<td>Asian Non-governmental Organizations Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>APAARI</td>
<td>Asia–Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions</td>
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<td>APARIS</td>
<td>Asia–Pacific Agricultural Research Information System</td>
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<td>APCoAB</td>
<td>Asia–Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARD</td>
<td>agricultural research for development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARI</td>
<td>advanced research institution</td>
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<td>ASARECA</td>
<td>Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa</td>
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<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>AVRDC</td>
<td>The World Vegetable Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>BASIC</td>
<td>Building Africa’s Scientific and Institutional Capacity</td>
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<td>CAADP</td>
<td>Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>CACAARI</td>
<td>Central Asian and Caucasian Association of Agricultural Research Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>community-based organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGIAR</td>
<td>Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIAT</td>
<td>Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (International Center for Tropical Agriculture)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIMBAA</td>
<td>Collaboration for Insect Management in Brassicas for Asia and Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIMMYT</td>
<td>Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maíz y Trigo (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIP</td>
<td>Centro Internacional de la Papa (International Potato Center)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORAF(WECARD)</td>
<td>Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricoles (West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>civil society organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMC</td>
<td>Direct Mulch-based Systems and Conservation Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DURAS</td>
<td>Promotion du développement durable dans les systèmes de recherche agricole du sud (Promoting Sustainable Development in Southern Agricultural Research Systems)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECART</td>
<td>European Consortium for Agricultural Research in the Tropics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFARD</td>
<td>European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGFAR</td>
<td>Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIARD</td>
<td>European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERA</td>
<td>European Research Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESCORENA</td>
<td>European System of Cooperative Research Networks in Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAAP</td>
<td>Framework for African Agricultural Productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARA</td>
<td>Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORAGRO</td>
<td>Foro de las Américas para la Investigación y Desarrollo Tecnológico Agropecuario (Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technology Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>gross domestic product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCP</td>
<td>Generation Challenge Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFAR</td>
<td>Global Forum on Agricultural Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFU</td>
<td>Global Facilitation Unit for Underutilized Species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPhI</td>
<td>Global Post-harvest Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMO</td>
<td>genetically modified organism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPP</td>
<td>Global Partnership Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICARDA</td>
<td>International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM</td>
<td>information and communication management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM4ARD</td>
<td>Information and Communication Management for Agricultural Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICRA</td>
<td>International Centre for Development Oriented Research in Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICRISAT</td>
<td>International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>information and communication technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFAD</td>
<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFAP</td>
<td>International Federation of Agricultural Producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IITA</td>
<td>International Institute for Tropical Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILRI</td>
<td>International Livestock Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPGRI</td>
<td>International Plant Genetic Resources Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITDG</td>
<td>Intermediate Technology Development Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITPGRFA</td>
<td>International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAIS</td>
<td>national agricultural information system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARC</td>
<td>National Agricultural Research Council (Nepal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARO</td>
<td>National Agricultural Research Organisation (Uganda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARS</td>
<td>national agricultural research system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>New Partnerships for Africa’s Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARLATINO</td>
<td>Latin American Parliament (Parlamento Latinamericano)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PID</td>
<td>participatory innovation development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODAR</td>
<td>Latin American and Caribbean Rural Agro-industrial Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prolinova</td>
<td>Global Programme on Promoting Local Innovation in Ecologically-Oriented Agriculture and Natural Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAILS</td>
<td>regional agricultural information and learning system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAIS</td>
<td>regional agricultural information system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>research and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSA</td>
<td>sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSA-CP</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSA-NGO-C</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa NGO Consortium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USMEFAN</td>
<td>Union of Small- and Medium-scale Farmers Association of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
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</table>
ABOUT GFAR

Established in 1996 and operational since 1998, the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) was framed as an initiative to promote cost-effective partnerships and strategic alliances among all who hold a stake in agricultural research and know-how for development, from the grassroots up. It offers an arena where the ingenuity of many can outwit persistent problems that appear to defy conventional solutions.

The anti-poverty Millennium Development Goals have lent this challenging agenda fresh momentum, after a spell of economic upheaval that shrouded the future direction of world agriculture in uncertainty. This report sums up GFAR's contributions during 2005 to the universal cause of curbing food insecurity, the breakdown of vital natural resources and the social injustice and inequality that arise from rural poverty. This year we focus especially on the topic of inclusiveness; in other words, how to encourage all stakeholders in agricultural research for development to participate in research agenda-setting and decision-making.