3RD PROGRAMME COMMITTEE MEETING

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Progress report: AARINENA
Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA)


November 2007
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Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA)


1.0. Introduction

The Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA), was established in 1985 as an autonomous body on the basis of the recommendations of the 14th and the 16th FAO Regional Ministerial Conferences. Its main goal is to act as an instrument of change for strengthening national and regional agricultural research capacities in order to reverse the downward trends in agricultural productivity and the deterioration of the natural resources.

AARINENA’s Mission is to contribute to the enhancement of agricultural and rural development in member countries through fostering agricultural research and technology development and by strengthening collaboration among them and with the outside world. AARINENA endeavors to assist member countries in creating effective national agricultural research systems that serve the goals of sustainable agricultural development, as well as strengthening regional and sub-regional scientific collaboration. In accordance with its mission, the association has acted as a collaborator and partner with other relevant regional and international institutions and recognized by the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) as an important and formal regional association representing the WANA region in global research community.

This report includes the main activities of the progress that was achieved during 2006/2007 on the Regional Agricultural Information System (RAIS) and Regional Networks. The report also includes the actions taken by AARINENA secretariat in response to the recommendations of the Executive Committee meetings in addition to the list of publications, workshops, training courses and future plans.

* For presentation by Dr. Ibrahim Hamdan, AARINENA Executive Secretary, at GFAR Statutory meetings to be held in Peking November 2007
Highlights of the Progress

2.0. AARINENA Work Plan 2006/2007

AARINENA 10th General Conference held in Sana’a-Yemen in June 2006 adopted the following work plan for 2006/2007:

2.1. Strengthening Regional Agricultural Information System (RAIS) through:
- Enhancing AARINENA Web Site
- Publication of AARINENA Newsletter
- Implementation of RAIS Priority Projects:

2.2. Networks:
- Supporting the activities of commodity networks (Date-Palm, Cotton, Olive and Medicinal & Aromatic Plants)
- Establishing New Networks on Water Use Efficiency and Biotechnology

2.3. Publication of Success Stories

2.4. Support the ongoing Global Post Harvest Initiative (GPHI) in linking farmers to markets.

2.5. Supporting the initiative of the Global Crop Biodiversity Trust for the development of a Regional Conservation Strategy for the WANA Region, with the widest country representation from the region.

3.0. AARINENA Executive Committee Meetings

3.1. AARINENA Executive Committee Meeting, New Delhi November 2006:

AARINENA Executive Committee held its meeting in New Delhi, India on 8 November 2006. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Ahmed Al Bakri President of AARINENA.

The Committee discussed and recommended the following:

1. Present the following amendments to the constitution to the next general conference for adoption:
- The reference of the pronoun “he” in the Constitution Articles will be amended to “he/she” and “chairman” to “chairperson”.
- Rule XIV of the general rules of procedures will be changed to: “amendments or additions to these general rules may be adopted by “a simple majority of...” instead of “a two thirds majority” to be in line with Article XII of the Constitution.
- The term for Executive Committee members be for three years renewable once instead of two years.
- To add one new member to the Executive Committee for the position of the “President” in addition to the five sub-regional representatives and the Executive Secretary.
- Add three new members to the Executive Committee to include representatives of GFAR, CGIAR centers and civil society organizations.

2. Recommends Pakistan representative, Dr. Mohamed Afzal to represent West Asia sub-region on the Executive Committee as an observer up to the next General Conference.

3. Request Dr. Mohamed Roozitalab to serve as an advisor to the Executive Committee
3.2. AARINENA Executive Committee Meeting, ICARDA-Aleppo, 5 May 2007

- AARINENA Executive Committee held its meeting in Aleppo, Syria at ICARDA on the 5th of May 2007 in conjunction with ICARDA Presentation Day. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Ahmad Al Bakri, President of AARINENA, and attended by executive committee members and representatives of ICARDA and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR). The agenda included: a) Approval of the minutes of New Delhi meeting, b) AARINENA priority settings and country profiles, c) Success stories, d) Support to Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) Network, e) Near East and North Africa Rural Agricultural Knowledge and Information Network (NERAKIN) f) GFAR business plan, and g) Financial status.

- AARINENA Executive Secretary underlined the constitution amendments proposed during the last meeting in November 2006, in New Delhi, which included: increasing the members of Executive Committee by four members, and to hold the general conference every 3 years. The Executive Secretary and Dr. Roozitalab were requested to draft the amendments into the articles of the constitution. Such amendments will be circulated to all full members before 60 days of the 11th General Conference for adoption.

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

- From a total of seven profiles, the committee selected two success stories on improvement of wheat production in Syria, and the outreach seed program in Yemen for publication in 2007. Consequently, the committee recommended that the terms of reference for a good success story should include a multi-stakeholder approach, an impact on development and on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and regional implication for scaling out and scaling up.

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

- A concept note on Near East Rural and Agricultural Knowledge and Information Network (NERAKIN) prepared by FAO was presented. The committee approved the network taking into consideration that the network be linked, facilitated, and monitored by AARINENA while its implementation will be supported by FAO and GFAR; the activities of the network should be NARS driven.

- Dr. Abdelmajid Slama, GFAR Acting Executive Secretary presented GFAR business plan and covered various steps for its preparation starting with 2006 triennial conference and ending to GFAR Donor Support Group for approval. Dr. Ibrahim Hamdan presented the financial status of the association up to 30 April 2007, and showed the status of annual membership fees.

- The next Executive Committee meeting will be held in Muscat-Oman, 7th of January 2008 in conjunction with the ICT focal unit’s workshop training.
4.0. AARINENA Regional Agricultural Information System (RAIS)

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become an essential component for development, not only of the agricultural sector, but also of industrial, environmental, and service sectors as well.

Addressing the development of the agricultural sector through the enhancement of information and communication technology was put as an urgent priority for AARINENA. The formation of the ICT Steering Committee, which proved to be fruitful, launching a set of databases, and addressing the training needs are good examples of the continuous efforts of AARINENA to improve the abilities and enhance the capabilities of its member countries, to achieve sustainable agricultural development. There is no doubt that information system development requires intensive and integrated efforts by all countries to achieve the goals and objectives set by the steering committee. The fact that cannot be denied is that the development of the ICT sector must be backed-up and supported by political commitment of all members.

4.1. AARINENA RAIS Activities:


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

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

The participants formulated three groups to discuss the constraints and themes on the development of national systems; advantages and disadvantages of options of the establishment of the regional network. During the workshop two important projects have been introduced to the participants: The first project was NERAKIN which was developed by the FAO/RNE. During the training session of NERAKIN, participants were informed about its main possibilities and benefits that offer to the region to improve the ICT knowledge. It has several modules and their Front end and Content Management System which allows the regional countries to build their information systems.

The second project was on National Agricultural Research Information Management System (NARIMS) which developed by the Central Lab for Agricultural Expert Systems (CLAES). Dr. Ahmad Rafea, addressed progress made in NARIMS, he informed the participants about the main possibilities and benefits of the system. A
A review was made on the Egyptian case study on NARIMS, including system demonstration. During the NARIMS training session, installation tools of all modules introduced to the participants.

- A training session relevant to the Arabic AGRIS Application Profile (AP) for indexing and cataloguing and inserting the appropriate metadata was presented which was aimed to improve the participants' knowledge on AGRIS-AP so that they could index publications and documents.

4.2. ICT Steering Committee:

The ICT steering committee was established to strengthen AARINENA RAIS. The Committee includes representatives from AARINENA five sub regions and representatives from AOAD, FAO, GFAR, BI and ICARDA. The committee held two meetings to prepare RAIS strategy and to review the achieved progress.

4.2.1. ICT-RAIS General Assembly meeting was held, in Amman-Jordan, April 2006:

- The Assembly elected new ICT Steering Committee members and chairman.
- Updated ICT-RAIS country profiles
- Working plan for the coming three years adopted as follows:
  - Identifying focal points in the member countries
  - Preparation of terms of reference for the concerned focal points
  - Use of GIS in improving data processing and data use
  - Consolidating the preparation of ICT national strategies and policies
  - Articulating outputs from the former steering committee particularly suite of tools for NAIS.
  - Thematic linkages with RAIS
  - Human capacity building programs
  - Measure impact of ICT on agricultural development
  - Advocacy issues.

4.2.2. Fourth AARINENA-ICT Steering Committee Meeting, India 10 November 2006

In the framework of GFAR 2006 Conference, AARINENA - ICT Steering Committee meeting was held on 10 November, 2006, and attended by representatives of AARINENA sub-regions and Network Coordinators. The participants highlighted the establishment of focal units in AARINENA member countries, and possibilities of improving National and Regional Agricultural Information Systems (NAIS-RAIS). Dr. Mohamad Sallam Chairman of the Steering Committee mentioned that official letters have been sent to the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) to encourage them to establish their focal units. He said that weakness of national agricultural information systems can affect RAIS and without a strong NAIS, a proper RAIS can't build. Terms of reference for the focal units were discussed and drafted. Mrs. Taraneh Ebrahimi, underlined kinds of support to be given to the regional networks, and indicated that some pages on the AARINENA website were especially designed for the regional networks. The participants agreed that AARINENA should act as a portal in the future, so all networks; members can upload their data directly on the web from their countries.
4.2.3. Fifth AARINENA ICT-RAIS Steering Committee Meeting, Egypt, 29 May 2007

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

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

The meeting discussed and adopted the following:

- NERAKIN as a platform for knowledge sharing and collaboration for development in NENA region. AARINENA will champion its implementation and decide on the course of actions required.
- NERAKIN should focus on the thematic regional network module while NARIMS should focus on national level
- Feed information on NARIMS and NERAKIN to AARINENA-RAIS website and electronic versions of both reports to circulate.
- Provide member countries with beta copies for testing prior to implementation of NARIMS and NERAKIN.

4.3. AARINENA Website

- Since 2002, all activities related to the AARINENA web site, are managed by AARINENA-RAIS secretariat with the assistance of GFAR hosted by AREO-Iran.
- In 2004 the 3rd version of the Website has been presented. It has been enhanced in collaboration with GFAR
- Enhancement of Arabic version of the website by the efforts of FAO Regional office.
- Developing the Western Asia Agricultural Researchers Information System.
- Developing the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Webpage on the AARINENA Web site: http://www.aarinena.org/MHPWeb/.
- National Agricultural Research Information Management System (NARIMS) which has been developed with support of GFAR; it is a Web based bi-lingual (Arabic/English) information system aimed at capturing and disseminating information
- Near East Rural and Agricultural Knowledge and Information Network: (NERAKIN) application has been developed by FAO to enhance information and knowledge access and exchange within the region for ARD in Near East and North Africa and at the global level

4.3.1 Future Website Activities
Enhancement of New version of AARINENA Web site (English and Arabic versions) using a Content Management System (CMS).

Identifying focal points in the member regional countries to exchange information through the new AARINENA website.

Strengthening the Regional Agricultural Information System, through strengthening the National systems, using NARIMS & NERAKIN.

Collaborating with Regional Networks and support them to have their own space on AARINENA Website and to add their contents.

Enhance close collaboration with GFAR and other Regional FORA

5.0. Networks

Technical cooperation networks have become an increasingly important means of action which was initiated and supported by AARINENA in collaboration with GFAR. These networks have become a generic model for the establishment of functional mechanisms for collaboration and enhancement of communication and exchange of experiences among different countries in one region and/or different regions of the world.

Networks are found to reduce duplicative efforts among national institutions in several countries and to provide a cost-effective instrument for information exchange and institution building (including training). When the resources are limited, networks become more effective means for the optimal utilization of indigenous expertise and available resources among the countries themselves.

Given the current status of some important commodity crops, and in the absence of a coordinating body for the promotion of cooperation among these countries for the optimal utilization of limited available resources for the development of the commodity crops agro-industry, the establishment of a Technical Cooperation Network on these crops is a matter of urgency.

AARINENA established four commodity crops of particular importance to this region: Date Palm, Cotton, and Olive and Medicinal & Aromatic plants; in addition to Water Use Efficiency Network. The highlights of the progress on these Networks are as follows:

5.1. Date Palm Global Network (DPGN):

AARINENA and FAO organized an expert consultation to study the feasibility of establishing a Date Palm Network for technical cooperation and to draft the objectives and guidelines of the network. The meeting took place in Tehran, Iran, during the period 13 – 14 October 1999, with the participation of scientists from: Egypt, Iran, Libya, Morocco, Namibia, Tunisia, U.A.E., Sultanate of Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Pakistan. The outcome of the meeting was presented in the Date Palm International Symposium that was held in Namibia, February 22-25, 2000.

The Network’s establishment meeting, held during 7–9 April, 2002 in Al Ain/UAE, finalized the terms of reference of each the coordinating board, the general coordinator, the working groups and regional coordinators. During the same meeting, the structure of the network was also adopted. The constitution document, as well as the project document of the DPGN, were adopted during the first technical meeting of the Coordinating Board, which was held in Cairo, Egypt during 10–11 June, 2003.
Network Activities:

5.1.1 The Network organized the Third International Date Palm Conference that was held 19-23 February, 2006 under the Patronage of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahayan, President of United Arab Emirates under the auspices of UAE University. The Conference was attended by approximately 300 participants, recommended to give attention to an important crop with significant production and marketing issue. The proceedings of the conference were published in Acta Horticulture and distributed to all participants.

5.1.2 The establishment of the Khalifah International Date Palm Award, which was officially announced by the UAE Ministry of Presidential Affairs (Decree No. 2/2007 dated 01/07/2007).

5.1.3 Preparation for the third International Date Palm Exhibition (March 2008);

5.2. Inter-Regional Cotton Network in Asia and North Africa (INCANA):

AARINENA, the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutes (APAARI) and Central Asian and Caucasian Association of Agricultural Research Institutes (CACAARI), recognizing the importance of cotton production in a number of developing countries in Asia and North Africa, producing more than half of the world's cotton production, and considering the prime role and importance of cotton in the agricultural economy with the support of GFAR and ICARDA established the Inter-regional Cotton Network, in October, 2002. The Cotton Research Institute of Iran at Varamin was selected to host the Network Secretariat. The objectives of the network are:

- Increasing cotton yield in member countries through research collaboration and exchange of scientific knowledge, success stories and new technologies.
- Providing a data base on cotton research production, and other related issues to be used by the member countries.
- Increasing the knowledge through implementation of collaborative research activities and training workshops on cotton related issues.
- Establishing close cooperation with other research networks on cotton in the world.

Network Activities:

5.2.1 Cotton Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Traveling Workshop:

IPM has been successfully implemented in several cotton growing countries in the world including Syria. By using IPM strategies, Syria has achieved the second highest cotton yield in the world (1300 kg/ha). Following this success story, the workshop on cotton IPM was held in Aleppo, Syria during 16-21 August 2006, and cosponsored by INCANA, APAARI and AARINENA with the collaboration of General Establishment for Agricultural Scientific Research of Syria. The participants coming from 8 INCANA member countries: Egypt, India, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The participants discussed and adopted the following recommendations:

- Use Syria success story in IPM program to overcome their cotton pest problems.
- The use of biological and agricultural practices is the most important components of cotton IPM programs.
Farmers Field Schools (FFS) are an important part of IPM programs
- Encourage the transfer of biological control technology among INCANA countries.
- Encourage the use of natural and plant products, and transgenic cotton (Bt) with consideration of environmental safety

5.2.2 The Third Steering Committee Meeting of Inter-regional Cotton Network in the Central Asia and North Africa (INCANA) 19-20 June 2007:

- This meeting was held in Damascus, Syria during the period 19-20 June 2007 and was organized by the General Commission for Scientific Agricultural Research (GCSAR) and INCANA Secretariat, and co-sponsored by AARINENA and APAARI

- Twelve participants from Egypt, India, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan attended the meeting. In the opening session, Dr. Majd Jamal, Director General of GCSAR addressed the opening session and stated the importance of cotton crop in the Syrian economy, where about one million of people depend heavily for their livelihoods. Moreover, Syria is a leading country with high productivity (more than 4 tons/hectare) using IPM techniques and biological control.

- The Executive Secretary of AARINENA highlighted the importance of exchanging of knowledge and information among the stakeholders of agricultural research of the region and the role of the networks in achieving such goal. He asked the participants to formulate technical working groups in order to optimize the limited resources available and to streamline and focus on the problems in each of the areas identified as priority areas, prepare work plans, enhance and coordinate technical collaboration among relevant institutions and provide INCANA web page and newsletter with information for dissemination among member countries. The Coordinator of INCANA presented a report on INCANA activities and achievements including the network expectations from the member countries and the establishment of active workgroups.

- In the first session, the country reports of Egypt, India, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan addressed the problems and results in cotton research and development, Bt cotton, and IPM program on cotton. During the second session, a round table discussion on network plan 2007-2009 and the establishment of working groups were established as follows:
  - Biotechnology application including development of transgenic cotton for biotic and abiotic stresses (India)
  - IPM on cotton (Syria)
  - Mechanization of cotton cultivation (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan)
  - Soil and water management (Pakistan and Egypt)

The participants discussed and adopted the following:

- Budgeting for the network: The INCANA Secretariat will be supported by APAARI, AARINENA, GFAR, ICARDA, CACAARI and FAO regional office in Turkey.
- Organize advanced training workshop on IPM in one of the Central Asian countries.

- Planned activities:
  - The working groups will prepare four proposals including capacity building and training to be presented to donors for funding.
  - Organize workshops on IPM, seed technology, cotton quality assessment and evaluation, drought and water management.

- Publish the network newsletter biannually, where, members and representatives should participate in the newsletter content.

5.3. Regional Olive Oil Network:

AARINENA has organized an expert consultation meeting at the olive tree Institute at Sfax-Tunisia during 16-18 of February, 2004. The meeting was supported by GFAR, FAO and ICARDA. Olive experts from research institutions and private sector of AARINENA olive producing countries; Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and from the European side: Spain, France, Turkey, Italy, Portugal and Cyprus, attended the meeting which aimed to: a) Reviewing the current status of olive research in the participating countries; b) Electing a new coordinator for the olive network at ESCORENA; and c) Establishing AARINENA olive Network for the Near East and the North Africa countries. The meeting approved the establishment of regional cooperative Network for Olive to be hosted by the Olive Tree Institute at Sfax and recommended strengthen inter-regional cooperation by establishing linkages to the European System of Cooperative Research Networks in Agriculture (ESCORENA). The participants formed three olive technical working groups as follows:

- Olive production and protection group to be hosted by Egypt.
- Post-harvest processing technologies to be hosted by Jordan.
- Socio-economic and commercialization group to be hosted by Syria.

The focal points were selected from NGOs, Private sector, research institutions and universities. They will constitute the coordinating board of the network which met in Marrakech, Morocco, December 20-23, 2004 to elect the chairman of the board and to approve the work plan for the network.

Network Activities:

5.3.1. Guidelines on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for Olive Producing Counties

A workshop was organized by AARINENA, GFAR & FAO/RNE and hosted by the Agricultural Research Institute in Cyprus. The meeting was attended by participants from 11 counties: Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran, Palestine and Cyprus. Most the participants were members of AARINENA Olive Network and representative’s form ICARDA and ESCORENA.

The workshop was mainly dedicated to finalizing the guidelines on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for AARNENA olive producing counties. There were presentations on country profiles by Olive Network Focal Point Members and extensive discussions on the various chapters of the draft handbook on GAP by several working groups in order to modify and adapt the guidelines to the existing conditions of AARINENA countries.

5.3.2. Olive GAP manual under publication by FAO
5.3.3. Success story for linking farmers to market was prepared

5.4. Regional Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Network (MAP):

AARINENA organized an expert consultation meeting on medicinal and aromatic plants in conjunction with “the 11th International Conference on Marketing Strategies for Medicinal Herbs, Essential Oils and Functional Food Ingredients”. The meeting was held in Cairo, Egypt on September 30, 2004 under the patronage of H. E. the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation and was supported by GFAR. The meeting was attended by experts from Egypt, Malta, Morocco, Jordan, Oman, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. It was also attended by representatives from AARINENA, ESMAP, ICARDA, IPGRI, Private sector and NGO and universities. Participants presented the status of medicinal and herbal plants in their own countries, constraints on research and production and recommendations to support the establishment of a Regional Medicinal & Aromatic Plants Network.

The Participants adopted the proposed AARINENA Regional Network on Medicinal & Aromatic plants and selected the four technical working groups on: 1- Conversation and Sustainable Use, 2- Agricultural Practices, 3- Post Harvest Technology Group, and 4- Commercialization and Scio-economic Group.

Network Activities:

5.4.1. In its first general assembly meeting the Network members met in Malta and adopted the working plan and agreed to be carried in 2006/2007:

- Formulation of a questionnaire that covers the current projects and tools present in member countries, including information related to the four working groups (key points – strengths and weaknesses). This will lead to the drafting of concept notes, at least one per working group, before February 2006.

- Building the capacity of NARS in the area of MAPs through provision of technical advice and training on MAP operations.

- Increase support to conservation, use of MAPs through public awareness strategy; [Website for MAPs and publishing it at AARINENA website info to be concluded by end of Dec. 2005]

- Produce a brochure and a poster targeted at policy makers in order to attract new members to AARINENA.

- Empowering/Strengthening of local communities to better use of MAPs to improve the livelihoods through provision of MAP information systems that document, analyze and share traditional knowledge and socio-economic studies on MAPs. IPGRI-GRIS can be used as modelling tool to establish this system.

- Establishing contact lists for MAPs.

5.4.2. The 12th International Conference on Recent Trends in Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, Egypt, 21-23 November 2006

Under the auspices of His Excellency Mr. Amin Abaza, Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation of Egypt, and due to Egypt's achievements in the medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) industry (about 90% of Egyptian MAPs are produced for the export market, exports volume about 50,000 tons per year), the 12th International Conference and Exhibition of the Egyptian Society for The Producers, Manufacturers
and Exporters of Aromatic Plant (ESMAP) was held at the International Center for Agriculture in Giza, Egypt during the period 21-23 November 2006.

The conference theme was Recent Trends in Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, Production, Manufacture and Marketing (Current and Prospective Status). About 120 participants coming from Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Mexico, and USA attended the meeting. It was co-sponsored by AARINENA, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Desert Research Center.

The participants highlighted crucial topics on: International Standards for Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISSC-MAP), export markets for herbs and essential oils, threats to medicinal plants, quality requirements, role of national research centers in protecting and surveying MAPs, genetically engineered products, collection and conservation of medicinal plants. The participants discussed and recommended:

- To organize a semi-annual workshop by ESMAP and focusing on different topics related to medicinal and aromatic plants
- Organize workshop biotechnology and medicinal plants
- The 13th International ESMAP conference will be held in October 2009.

5.5. Regional Water Use Efficiency Network:

CWANA region suffers from water scarcity, quality decline, and inefficient use. This situation is worsened by frequent drought events.

While the Near East covers 14% of the total area of the world and home to 10% of its population, its water resources represent only 2% of the total renewable water resources of the world.

AARINENA Executive Committee recommended to establish a Water Use Efficiency Network to contribute to water saving, improvement and sustained productivity and quality through mobilization of existing knowledge and production of adapted technology packages.

Network Activities:

5.5.1. AARINENA Expert Consultation for Establishment of Water Use Efficiency (WUE) Network, Aleppo-Syria, 26-27 November 2006

AARINENA in collaboration with ICARDA and GFAR held an expert consultation meeting at ICARDA, Aleppo-Syria during 26-27 November, 2006. Water use efficiency experts participated in the meeting from Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen, ICARDA and FAO. The participants presented their country profiles and reviewed the proposal for establishing a WUE Network in the WANA region. The participants adopted the Proposal for the establishment of the network with the following composition:

* The venue and the secretariat of the Network will be at INRA -Morocco.
* Elected Dr. Ayman Abu-Hadid from Egypt as the chairman of the board of the network.
* Identified the following countries to host the technical working groups:
  1. Management and conservation of rainwater in rain fed agriculture (Yemen).
  2. Sustainable management of water in irrigated agriculture (Iran).
  3. Decision making and water management tools(modeling and GIS)(Egypt).
4. Institutional, policy and socio-economy analysis and evaluation of water in irrigated agriculture (Syria).

The participants recommended as a priority activity for the network to be implemented in 2007/2008 the formulation of an ATLAS that will serve to compile data on water use efficiency in the region.

5.6. Regional Agricultural Biotechnology Network:

- Letter of Agreement (LOA) with GFAR was initiated to hold an Expert Consultation meeting for the establishment of Agricultural biotechnology Network at AGERI-ARC Egypt 15-16th of December 2007 in collaboration with ICARDA.

- Preparing for holding the meeting is in progress

5.7. Regional Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) Network

The first step in this activity is to develop a succinct concept paper articulating the purpose, mission and modus operandi of the proposed network, as well as a detailed plan of action for the implementation of the steps leading to the foundation of the network and program of work and budget for the first two years thereafter. This will be followed by an intergovernmental consultation of authorized representative of countries of the region that have indicated interest in the network to discuss the development of the network and agree on their respective responsibilities, division of labor among them and follow up steps.

The new network should be country driven to further strengthen national and regional genetic resources programs with the following objectives:

- Foster the conservation and sustainable use of PGR in the region
- Promote the exchange of PGR scientific and technical experience and information
- Strengthen national PGR research capacities for providing timely and necessary data and information to policy makers
- Encourage the establishment of cooperative PGR research and training programs in accordance with identified regional, bilateral or national needs and priorities
- Strengthen cross-linkages between national, regional and international research centers and other organizations, including universities, through involvement in jointly planned PGR research and training programs, and
- Assist in the mobilization of financial and other forms of support to strengthen PGR conservation and sustainable use for development in the region.
- To avoid shortcomings in past PGR collaboration in the Region, the establishment and launching of the proposed network should be orderly and professionally executed. It is suggested that an Executing Agency/Organization be appointed by ARRINENA/GFAR to undertake operational and legal steps leading to the establishment of the network.

6.0. Inter-regional collaboration

6.1. Workshop on “Global Partnership Program on Linking Smallholder Farmers to Growth Market”

A workshop on the global partnership program on linking smallholder farmers to growth markets was held in Cairo during the period of 11-15 September 2006. The workshop was sponsored by the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR). The meeting was
attended by representatives of the Regional ARD Forums of AARINENA, Asia-Pacific (APAARI), sub-Saharan Africa (FARA) and Latin America and the Caribbean (FORAGRO) who have been engaged in a process for the preparation of concrete regional proposals on which the Global Partnership Program (GPP) will be based. In each region a multi-stakeholder ad hoc working group has been established to discuss and identify the respective contributions to and demands on an inter-regional partnership programme on the theme of Linking Farmers to Markets. The workshop outputs were:

a) A draft of a Concept Note for the establishment of a Global Partnership Program on the theme of Linking Smallholder Farmers to Growth Markets that establishes the rationale, vision, mission, proposed outcomes and outputs of the program, and identifies the principal participants with their respective roles and responsibilities

b) A short-term plan of action for the start-up phase of the program that will establish an interim governance structure and the activities required to build the program into a full fledged global program.

c) AARINENA nominated a farmer representative to serve in the interim secretariat for the GPP on linking small producers to market. The first meeting of the secretariat was held at FAO HQ in June 2007

d) Regional Success stories on linking small producers to market was initiated according to specific terms of reference set by the interim committee

6.2. Collaboration with FARA

Establishment of North African Sub regional Organization (NASRO) with FARA

AARINENA participated in the fourth Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly, which took place in Sandton, South Africa from 10 – 16 June 2007. One of the resolutions adopted by FARA General Assembly was to endorse the representatives of AARINENA North Africa sub-region, Mr. Adnan Gibriel from Libya and Dr. Amor Shermiti from Tunisia to serve at FARA Executive Committee for the next three years to be inline with FARA Entebbe Declaration.

The draft constitution for NASRO was prepared to be adopted by the next AARINENA executive committee and general conference.

6.3. Collaboration with APAARI and CACARI

- AARINENA participated in APAARI general assembly and expert consultation "on agricultural innovations" held in New Delhi-India, November 2006
- Cosponsored with APAARI and CACCARI the INCANA general assembly meeting in Damascus, June 2007.
- AARINENA participated in CACARI Expert Consultation on Regional Research Need Assessment meeting held in Tashkent, March 2007.

6.4. Collaboration with ERA-ARD

AARINENA participated in the ERA-ARD conference on ‘Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) in Europe: Towards a Shared Vision’ as a member of the newly formed Southern Advisory Group (SAG). The conference was held in Brussels, Belgium, during the period 28-29 June 2007, and was the first occasion when members of the SAG could meet.
Until recently, southern involvement with ERA-ARD had been on an *ad hoc* basis. To provide a strategic entry point to foster greater involvement of southern ARD partners, the SAG was created with the following objectives:

- Provide information and advice to the ERA-ARD program about southern regional, sub-regional and national ARD policies, strategies, capacity etc.
- Offer feedback on draft reports and proposals prepared by ERA-ARD
- Challenge established Northern ERA-ARD thinking
- Validate demand for the ERA-ARD joint and trans-national programs
- Provide the basis for a longer-term collaboration between southern ARD programs and ERA-ARD
- Choose specialists from the South for participation in ERA-ARD as required by work package Leaders

AARINENA Executive Secretary participated in the second the Southern Advisory Group meeting that was held in October 2007 in Slovenia in which the terms of reference for the group was finalized followed by participation of the group in the ERA-ARD steering committee meeting.

### 7.0. Publications

#### 7.1. Newsletter:

- AARINENA biannual Newsletter 2006/2007 (Vol.14-1, Vol. 14.2 and Vol. 15.1) were published and distributed to all members, research institutions, and faculties of agriculture at universities in the region. The newsletter is available on AARINENA website.

#### 7.2. Success Stories:

Three success stories have been published:

1- Success story from Oman on “Can we produce seed of indigenous pasture species in hot humid gulf climate to re-vegetate degraded lands” was published: AARINENA publication 2005/1.
2- Success story from Saudi Arabia on “Micro propagation and DNA fingerprinting of date palm trees in Saudi Arabia”. AARINENA publication 2006/1.
3- Success story from Yemen on “Revitalizing Community-Based Traditional Seed Systems in Yemen: Experience of an Outreach Seed Program”. AARINENA publication 2007/1.

#### 7.3. Proceedings of Meetings:

- Proceedings of AARINENA General Conferences, Executive Committee meetings, workshops and training courses were distributed and posted on AARINENA Home page.
- Setting Agricultural Research Priorities for CWANA Region
- AARINENA General Rules of procedure were amended for adoption.
- Directories of agricultural Research Institutions in the WANA Region
- Proceedings of the activities for AARINENA (ICM4ARD) May 2007
- Proceedings of Water Use Efficiency country profiles
8.0. Workshops, Training Courses & Expert Consultations Meetings (2006/2007)

2. The Third International Conference on Date-Palm , Abu-Dhabi-UAE, 19-21 February 2006
3. GPhI and Network Coordinators follow up meeting to finalize the 3 project ideas, Abu-Dhabi, UAE 22 February 2006
4. ICT-RAIS General Assembly Meeting Amman-Jordan April 2006
5. 10th AARINENA General Conference, Sana’a–Yemen, 25-27 June 2006
6. Advocacy workshop for AARINENA NARS leaders, Sana'a-Yemen 26 June 2006
7. Cotton IPM traveling Workshop, Syria, 16-21 August 2006
8. Workshop on GPP: Linking farmers to market, Egypt Sept. 2006
10. The 12th International Conference on Recent Trends in Medicinal & Aromatic Plants Egypt, November 2006
11. Regional Workshop on agricultural Information Systems for agricultural Research & Development Cairo-Egypt May 2007
12. Third INCANA Steering Committee Meeting Damascus-Syria 2007

9.0. Future Activities

- Expert Consultation for the Establishment of Agricultural Biotechnology Network 15-16 December 2007, Cairo- Egypt
- AARINENA Executive Committee Meeting, Muscat-Oman 7th January 2008
- ICT focal units training workshop, Muscat –Oman 8-10 January 2008
- Expert Consultation for establishing Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) Network, Damascus September 2008
- AARINENA 11th General Conference and Expert consultation on " Revisiting priority setting for WANA" 2008
- Enhancement of New version of AARINENA Web site (English and Arabic versions) using a Content Management System (CMS).
- Supporting and strengthening Regional Networks
- Strengthening inter-regional collaboration

10.0. Conclusions

- AARINENA has supported National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) in the region in capacity building through training programs, technical and scientific workshops and conferences, and establishing regional information and communication system (RAIS) through active support and active participation of GFAR, ICARDA and FAO. In this regard, a web site (www.aarinena.org) to disseminate information to member countries was enhanced in both Arabic and English.

AARINENA has also contributed establishing five Regional and Inter-regional networks for essential crops in the region; date palm, cotton, olive, medicinal &
herbal plants and water use efficiency and in the process of establishing two networks on Agricultural biotechnology and Plant Genetic Resources (PGR). AARINENA played the major role in the implementation of the “Strategic Framework for Global Partnership Program on Linking Smallholder Farmers to Growth Market” and strengthened inter-regional cooperation with other regional Fora.

- AARINENA acted as a facilitator in bringing the views, aspirations and research priorities of the WANA region to the attention of relevant international organizations with the aim of promoting a sustainable agricultural development through attraction of global agricultural and developmental communities, as well as donors to support the regional and sub-regional research projects and related activities.

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