

Executive Summary of the Regional Review for West Africa and Near East

Regional Review towards the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development

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Background

In the last two decades the world has witnessed significant developments and rapid changes at the national level. New technologies and new crops have been integrated, common goals of agriculture including food security, resource conservation, environmental impact, economic stability and improving living standard have become the central priorities. One of the most important changes has been the rapid development in the technology of communications and thus has began the globalization of trade. Another important change at the global level is the climate change which affects directly the use and availability of resources mainly water. As a result new global development challenges have appeared. These include the elimination of extreme hunger and poverty, sustainable use of natural resources, reducing emission of green house gases, adaptation to and mitigation of effects of climate change, increasing the use of renewable sources of energy and combating the spread of epidemic diseases and pests affecting humans, animals and plants. The solutions to many of these challenges lie with agriculture and its development.

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) is organizing a series of GCARDs, working through its constituent agencies and networks, which include CGIAR, FAO and IFAD, International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), Regional Research Fora (FARA, EFARD, AARINENA, APAARI, CACAARI and FORAGRO) and representatives from civil society, private sector and donor agencies. The processes of consultation leading to each GCARD Conference will bring together diverse partners to develop agendas, capabilities and ways of working in agricultural research for development, that address the challenges of the future, are centered on the needs of the poor, in particular for poor farmers and agricultural producers, and demonstrate a robust and investable international partnerships able to deliver development impact.

The process of consultation towards March 2010 Conference began with a synthesis of existing documents, including development reports, regional research priorities,

national and regional agricultural frameworks, etc. with the purpose of: 1) Producing a high-level regional development targets and refreshed, high-level set of regional agricultural research priorities 2) Evaluation of current frameworks and modalities for implementing regional priorities 3) Identification of areas of specific need in agricultural research for the poorest in AARINENA region 4) Producing a set of key issues requiring wide public consultation to improve the value of agricultural research in achieving Millennium Development Goals. This will be followed up by developing an action plan for implementing the identified regional priorities that would improve agricultural research and innovation in region so as to enhance its food security and support efforts to improve living standards in many countries.

West Asia and North Africa WANA included five sub regions: Arabian Peninsula (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE), Maghreb (Algeria, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia), Mashreq (Cyprus, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian Authority, Syria), Nile Valley & Red Sea (Djibouti, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen) and Western Asia (Iran, Pakistan, Turkey). The main development goal of all the governments in the WANA region in the last two decades is to improve the living standard of the people. To achieve this, the countries needed to provide fast and effective economic growth and implement social reforms and programs. This Regional Review covered WANA region except Maghrib Sub-Region aimed mainly at Identifying areas of specific need in agricultural research for the poorest in AARINENA region, Producing a set of key issues requiring wide public consultation to improve the value of agricultural research in achieving Millennium Development Goals and developing an action plan for implementing the identified regional priorities that would enhance regional integration and food security.

Researchable issues of 2002

Previous research has identified some the key researchable issues in the region in 2002. It identified five researchable issues. The first one is Germplasm Management in which different issues could be discussed like Germplasm improvement & biotechnology, genetic resources conservation, integrated Pest Management and Seed Production. The second group is the production and productivity of crops (Wheat & Barley, Forages, Vegetables, Industrial crops, Legumes, Fruit trees, Maize, Potato, and Forest). The third key issue was related to livestock and animal production which could be small ruminants, Cattle, Camel and Bees. The other important key issue is related to the human behavior that is Socioeconomic & Policy; many issues could be discussed under this category like marketing, the quality and adding value of the products, policies, technology dissemination and post harvesting. The last one is the Natural Resource management which could be one of the most important of the researchable issues mainly water management, soil conservation and degradation, land use and range land management..

Current Situation of AR4D:

The collected templates from the responding countries/institutions were analyzed. The total research titles were 1411. The research topics were collected from the three sub-regions, Arabian Peninsula, Mashreq, and River Nile & Red Sea. The research topics

ranking revealed that livestock, with its all components except fisheries was the highest, then comes food technology and nutrition then Germplasm Improvement & Biotechnology, then plant nutrition.

The majority of the responses put their research priority and the level of cooperation as medium and moderate respectively.

Although the region in general suffers from water shortages, little research was conducted on water even that many countries in the region suffer from water scarcity. Moreover, only few researches were devoted to environmental aspects and fisheries. However, the current contributions of agriculture assume special significance for ensuring food security, poverty reduction, and protecting the environment through sustainable use of natural resources.

Key Researchable Issues

Based on the review of different reports and data collection from the internet Seven major challenges for AR4D have been identified for the WANA region. The following reflect the key researchable issues for the region for meeting these challenges. They are:

1- Issues related to Food Security: The Urgent Need of the Region

- Key Issue 1: Enhance the sustainable productivity of agriculture in the irrigated and rainfed/less-favored or “lagging” areas while protecting the natural resource-base In the region
- Key Issue 2: Provide effective financing of agriculture and farms to support newly-emerged small-scale farmers and rural household farming/kitchen farming/mini-farming in the region
- Key Issue 3: Need to explore the full potential of livestock sector in the region
- Key Issue 4: Need to emphasize on research on comparative and competitive advantage in fisheries and aquatic production systems
- Key Issue 5: Need to pay attention to trans-boundary animal and plant diseases and pests

2- Issue Relating to Improvement of the Declining Living Standards and Livelihoods of Farmers: Better life for all

- Key Issue 1: Study and analyze the declining living standards and livelihoods in rural areas and develop opportunities for household income generation
- Key Issue 2: Organize and promoting the role of rural women in agriculture, and agricultural research and development

3- Issues Relating to Protection of the Environment: Essential for the region

- Key Issue 1: Enhancing efforts on protecting the precious land and water resources and range land from degradation
- Key Issue 2: Enhance efforts on protecting precious vast natural biodiversity present in the region

4- Meeting the special challenges (existing and future)

- Key Issue 1: Aligning agriculture research and development to meet the challenges of global warming, i.e. adaptation to and mitigation of climate change
- Key Issue 2: Need to address the issue of desertification.

5- Technology, information, knowledge and innovations

- Key Issue 1: Need for greater investments in agricultural research and restructuring of the research system to coordinate the national agricultural research system and to meet the national agricultural development goals.
- Key Issue 2: Creating an effective extension system for the country to create linkages with farmers, researchers and civil society organizations, and to facilitate technology transfer.
- Key issue 3: To improve quality of agricultural education and employability of agricultural graduates and to increase availability of appropriately trained human resources at different levels

6- Market and marketing

- Key issue 1: To effectively link small and marginal farmers with markets, including with the fast emerging large (multi-national) retailers and super markets
- Key issue 2 :To benefit small farmers and to protect consumer from food price rise and fluctuation

7- Energy

- Key issue 1: To develop bioenergy as a complement to and not at the cost of food security;
- Key issue 2: To enhance energy security compatible with economics and ecology.

Conclusions

Main conclusions are summarized in the following:

- It is noticed that most of the countries and institutions in the region had set agricultural research strategies in a broad sense. Most of these strategies were directed towards agricultural development in the first place; none of them look at the Millennium Development Goals as the base for research.

- The results of the analysis showed that the implementation of agricultural research did not follow these strategies totally. The research was directed only to the desire of the researchers to work on tangible research which gives short run results, so they did not invest in poverty alleviation, food security, capacity building and other socio-economic research where their results appear on the long run.
- Public agricultural research, both national and international, like much of development strategy, has bypassed the needs of small and marginal farmers and concentrated primarily on better endowed regions, commodity-intensive production systems, and commercial crops. Small producers, particularly those operating in resource-poor areas, have benefited much less from the recent technological breakthroughs in agriculture.
- To achieve these capabilities, small farmers must have access to sustainable technology in agronomy, livestock, forestry, and fisheries. These techniques should also be diversified, adapted (or adaptable) to the specific characteristics and constraints of farming households, as well as appropriate to their different socio-economic and agro-ecological environments. They must also protect the environment, and provide for renewal of natural resources.
- Success in implementing the appropriate research would require increased public and private investment (agriculture or industry) in the agricultural research, the development of supporting policies and institutions, revalorization of traditional and local knowledge, and an interdisciplinary, holistic and systems based approach to knowledge production and sharing.