The opening access to research data for agricultural development

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Abstract

The opening of access to structured, organized research data can open a vast potential of applications for agricultural and farm development across the world as also new avenues for research. This data can be used to improve production and farming systems, productivity and value addition chains of agricultural commodities especially those for food. In research, this data can contribute significantly to solving issues emerging from climate change enabling both adaptation to it and its mitigation. It can contribute to conserving, effectively using and recovering natural resources including degraded soils and water, managing the spread of diseases and pests and loss of biodiversity, especially that related to agriculture and improve agricultural market chains at global, regional and national levels.

This paper reviews and reports upon the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR; http://www.egfar.org) and its partners, including those engaged in the Coherence in Information for Agricultural Research for Development (CIARD; http://www.ciard.net) actions in opening agricultural research data, information and knowledge globally.

Introduction

The opening of access to structured,organized research data can open a vast potential of applications for agricultural and farm development across the world as also new avenues for research. This data can be used to improve production and farming systems, productivity and value addition chains of agricultural commodities especially those for food. In research, this data can contribute significantly to solving issues emerging from climate change enabling both adaptation to it and its mitigation. It can contribute to conserving, effectively using and recovering natural resources including degraded soils and water, managing the spread of diseases and pests and loss of biodiversity, especially that related to agriculture and improve agricultural market chains at global, regional and national levels.

Objectives

GFAR is a multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue on critical issues related to agricultural research for development, advocating and facilitating actions on these critical issues through collaboration and partnerships and assessing the impact of these actions. GFAR has been engaged since 1999 in improving access to research information for agricultural development. It has contributed significantly to improving information and communications
management for agricultural research for development by supporting regional and national agricultural information systems across the world. By contributing to CIARD, it has developed a framework for opening access to research information for agricultural development. It leads the development and management of the CIARD.RING, a route map to information nodes and gateways related to agricultural development across the world.

**Methodology**

GFAR’s approach to opening access to research data for agricultural development will be in consonance to global opinions and approaches in opening access to data with specificity to data generated by research systems and organizations. It will largely be based on advocacy for opening access, building appropriate capacities especially in making policies and strategies, developing and using standards and in technical issues related opening access to research data. GFAR is approaching the various stakeholders and actors in agricultural research from public, private and civil society/community sectors, national research systems through regional organizations, advanced research institutes in developed and rapidly developing countries, international agricultural research systems, professional societies related to agricultural sciences, governments etc. promoting their support and participating in opening access to agricultural data, supporting the development of appropriate global, regional and national frameworks, policies and strategies to implement more open access to organized structured research data related to agriculture, especially from research, facilitating and supporting the development of standards, negotiating improved data and information flows and contributing to developing appropriate capacities through collaboration and partnerships at global, regional and national levels.

**Results**

GFAR and its CIARD partners have achieved considerable success in mobilizing more than 180 research organizations, and 300 information systems to provide information through the CIARD.RING to openly access their research information systems. Today more than 6 million bibliographic records and 1 million full text documents can be accessed through CIARD.RING. CIARD has developed a Framework for Opening Access to Data and Information for Agricultural Research for Development, Advocacy Toolkit, guidelines, pathways and mechanisms for supporting improved information management such as the CIARD Fair which contribute to opening access to agricultural research data and information globally.