

Crop sector background document: Summary report of the ABDC-10 parallel session¹

There were 100+ participants. The following key issues for developing countries emerged from the background document as discussed by Andrea Sonnino:

OPTIONS

- Policy development
- Build up indigenous research programmes
- Development of regulation frameworks
- Linkages to strategies for dissemination
- Shared access to technologies
- Document development, adoption and impact

ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- Assist in capacity development
- Offer assistance to public sector R&D in biotech
- Offer a meeting place for countries
- Facilitation of access to technologies

These points were further discussed first by the panel (Eija Pehu, Agriculture and Rural Development Department, World Bank; Pat Mooney, Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group); and Dominic Glover, Technology and Agrarian Development Group, Wageningen University) and then in a general audience session, during which additional topics emerged as follows:

1. Roles of governments

- Address declining R&D investments in public sectors
- Form and/or support regional groupings, especially of smaller countries to achieve critical mass
- Target investments to small farmers
- Capacity building is still required
- Incentivise researchers to focus on smallholder problems rather than just academic outputs

2. Roles of international organisations

- Undertake basic R&D on behalf of developing countries
- Be more responsive to needs of small farmers and focus less on technology-driven programmes
- Address problem of seed laws favouring maximum yield rather than consistent yield under diverse stresses
- Addressing intellectual property right (IPR) challenges where appropriate
- Ensure linkages are made with farmers before sponsoring expensive R&D
- Establish and/or support broad regional/global priorities that may be beyond individual national capacities

Participants were then invited to prioritise the above options for developing countries in an informal poll. The highest scores were for the following options in order of priority:

1. Build up indigenous research programmes
2. Shared access to technologies
3. Policy development
4. Development of regulation frameworks

¹ This is the summary report of the parallel session organized by FAO on the crop sector background document (ABDC-10/3,1, synthesized in ABDC-10/3.2) held on the first day of the FAO international technical conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries (ABDC-10) that took place in Guadalajara, Mexico on 1-4 March 2010 (<http://www.fao.org/biotech/abdc/parallel/en/>). Denis Murphy was the Rapporteur.