

**GFAR**

GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Newsletter

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**Editorial**

It is my pleasure, as the new Executive Secretary of The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), to send you this newsletter outlining our recent activities. GFAR is a unique and vital institution and one that I am proud to serve. By bringing together the voices and perspectives of science with those of wider society, GFAR plays a crucial role as the platform that enables all those concerned with agricultural research to shape the future of agriculture and meet the major challenges that lie ahead.

Agriculture has come right back onto the global agenda over the last year. Spiralling food prices have resulted in millions of people being pushed back into poverty and caused riots in over 30 cities. The FAO High level meeting has shown the depth of concern among governments and emphasized that the solutions required go beyond short-term measures. Recent international reports: the World Development Report and the International Assessment of the Role of Agricultural Science, Knowledge and Technology in Development have established that not only does agriculture have to provide the means by which the poor can escape poverty and productivity have to increase dramatically to feed anticipated population growth, but we must also ensure the future environmental sustainability of agricultural practices.

More than ever, these complex issues require the generation, access and use of knowledge to develop solutions that are relevant and accessible to the poor. GFAR provides the space and opportunity for us all to help to shape tomorrow's agriculture today. However, we should not underestimate the challenges we face. We need to feed a growing population in a world of diminishing resources and changing climates. We need to develop ways and institutions to do so that put the needs of the poor at the centre of research, recognizing the value of agriculture in maintaining rural societies and enabling the poor to escape poverty and live with dignity. Fostering these changes is the role of GFAR; future generations absolutely depend on our success in doing so together.

GFAR has gone through a period of extensive reflection over the last year that has renewed its purpose and focus. We need to get back to basic principles of this Global Forum as a movement for change, a platform involving everyone who cares about the future of agriculture, whether working via global action or through our constituent regional fora and stakeholder bodies.

Since my appointment, I have been working with colleagues from all the constituent communities in agricultural research for development to bring more vigour to the Global Forum, so that GFAR fulfils the essential roles for which it was created. This has included extensive discussion with the CGIAR to build the linkage between processes of regional demand and the shaping of international research, support to the establishment of an NGO platform to work with APAARI in addressing the agricultural research needs of the Asia-Pacific region and participation in the World Farmers Congress of IFAP and the final



plenary of the International Assessment on the role of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development. I have also met with representatives from many research-for-development funding bodies, to build their engagement with the Forum, in which they are as much a partner as a contributor.

To make a difference, the effort and the commitment needs to come from us all. We in the GFAR Secretariat pledge our total commitment to supporting you to make change happen. We now look to you all for your commitment to these processes. We are all partners in ensuring the agriculture of tomorrow meets the needs of humanity and the environments in which we live; let us now work together to deliver this. If I may take the liberty of quoting Mahatma Gandhi, we all need to "be the change you wish to see in the world".

*Mark Holderness*

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## **News from the Secretariat**

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### **Dr. Mark Holderness takes office as Executive Secretary**



Dr. Mark Holderness, appointed as new Executive Secretary of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research in late 2007, took office in January 2008.

Dr. Holderness began his working career in Papua New Guinea and has worked in science related to international agricultural development for over 20 years. A Council Member of several scientific societies, he is now also a Board Member of the World Vegetable Centre. Originally a plant pathologist, his interests cover a wide range of scientific areas and international development contexts and are particularly concerned with knowledge and innovation flows between science and society and their implications for institutional structures and rural development. He played a leading role in the International Assessment of the Role of Agricultural Knowledge Science and Technology in Development. He recently served as Director of Agriculture and Director of Membership and Partnerships for CAB International.

GPPs

### **Recent developments of the Linking Farmers to Markets (LFM) partnership programme**

Within the activities for the development of the LFM programme recently 4 regional case studies have been completed by AARINENA, APAARI, FARA and FORAGRO.

These case studies are documenting successful experiences in linking small holder farmers to markets at a regional level; they will be instrumental in the development of the Project Proposal that the Interim Steering Committee (ISC) for the programme will be presenting at the next GFAR Steering Committee meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay. This will be a full project proposal outlining in detail all the operational issues for a successful implementation of the LFM. The programme will have two main dimensions: a first one dealing with strictly regional issues and experiences in linking smallholder farmers to markets; a second one more focused on the inter-regional exchange of information. All the GFAR stakeholders will have an active role in the initiative and will also be represented at all levels in the governing bodies of the programme.

*Antonio Schiavone*



DURAS Project

**Learning from experience in building and implementing innovative partnerships in Agricultural Research for Development (ARD): DURAS Documentation Workshop**



The implementation of the DURAS Competitive Grants Scheme (CGS)<sup>1</sup> is a very insightful experience. It has afforded both the Project Office and the various stakeholders involved in the 12 projects a rich experience and handful of lessons learnt along the way.

However, some more effort needs to be done in order to increase the opportunities for learning from these experiences, as well as sharing the learning and building a wider body of knowledge on and further understanding and appreciation of the need to involve various actors in the agricultural research and innovation process.

As such, two **DURAS Documentation Workshops**, one for English-speaking and one for French-speaking projects, are being organized by the DURAS Project Office in collaboration with the Centre for Information on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture (ILEIA Group)<sup>2</sup>. The English-language workshop will be held on **16-19 January 2008 in Hanoi** (Vietnam) while the French-language workshop scheduled for **11-15 February 2008 in Cotonou** (Benin). DURAS-supported projects in these countries are co-organizing the event.

The workshops aims to analyze project experience jointly undertaken by both project staff and participants. This process is expected to generate lessons which are to be fed back to improve the project, to strengthen the learning and organizational capacities of the organizations involved as well as to help project participants in designing possible follow-up activities. The project experiences will be documented, presented in the format chosen by the participants and made accessible to a larger public, as well as shared with other groups.

At the end of the workshop, it is expected that all relevant information related to the project are organized and analyzed, and ready to be written up. Participants would then write it up in their own time, with editorial support through email, so that the cases are ready to be presented at

<sup>1</sup> [www.duras-project.net](http://www.duras-project.net)

<sup>2</sup> [www.ileia.info](http://www.ileia.info)

the DURAS Project Closing Workshop in the second quarter of 2008. A special publication will also be prepared and disseminated. It will contain the articles about the lessons learned on each of the projects as well as their research findings.

*Oliver Oliveros*

**DURAS Project Final Seminar**

After almost four years, the DURAS Project was officially concluded through a seminar organized under the auspices of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) last 11-13 June 2008 in Rome.

The three-day event was attended by about participants including representatives from the 12 DURAS-funded projects, French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, and several other organizations. During this seminar, project participants presented their research results and shared their experience in project implementation as well as in partnership-building.

Despite the small size of the projects and their limited duration, some positive outcomes were achieved in several areas. These include, among others, contributions to new scientific knowledge (e.g., identification of a new biological control agent for nematodes); development and testing of methodological approaches for engaging civil society groups in collaborative research; facilitating changes in policy processes (e.g., in South Africa where enabling legislation was introduced to establish a new framework governing Geographical Indications); and leveraging additional funding to expand on project activities or develop them in new directions (e.g., accelerating local innovation in natural resources management through the use of Innovation Support Funds).

Discussion on lessons learnt were about project experiences in the challenges of combining local and scientific knowledge, in strengthening the involvement of civil society organization (CSOs) in agricultural research for development (ARD), in promoting public-private and market linkages and in facilitating knowledge exchange through networks and platforms. Participants then deepened their reflection and discussion in parallel working group sessions on these topics as well as on additional issues ranging from innovation systems, promoting, monitoring and evaluating partnerships, information and communication as well as how to ensure project sustainability.



With the discussions on the previous days serving as a background, Roundtable Discussions on "Personal and Institutional Change" as well as on "Prioritizing and Financing ARD" were also organized. In the first Roundtable session, Dr. Philippe de Leener (Université Catholique de Louvain) provided an introductory presentation on the topic. This was followed by reactions from a panel of consisting of a researcher from Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRS), a Ugandan NGO (Environment alert) and a professional involved on institutional learning and change (ILAC Initiative).



Participants in the DURAS Closing Seminar hosted by GFAR in Rome at FAO headquarters

In the second Roundtable discussion, experiences in research priority setting at the country and regional levels were shared by Drs. Aboubakar Njoya (IRAD-Cameroon) and Ibrahim Hamdan (AARINENA), respectively. This was followed by an intervention on Spain's take on financing ARD by Dr. Ana-Regina Segura (INIA). A panel consisting of representatives from the donor community (France, IFAD), farmer groups (ASPRODEP-Senegal), group of northern NARS (ECART-EEIG) and international organizations (FAO, CGIAR). The event was capped by insights from persons external to DURAS as well as members of the DURAS Steering Committee and the project's Scientific Partnership Committee.

Participants expressed over-all satisfaction of the DURAS project highlighting that their experience led them to better understand the importance of inclusive partnership in ARD. Their experience inspired them to either continue with their respective projects and/or develop successor initiative that is very much aligned with the DURAS "spirit."

Workshop presentations and summary of discussions will be made available soon on-line. A special publication that will feature lessons learned on each of the 12 projects as well as their research findings will be prepared and disseminated by the end of 2008.

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## News from the Global Forum

### GFAR Statutory Meetings, Beijing, China, 28/11 – 1/12 2008

#### 3rd GFAR Program Committee Meeting

The 3rd GFAR Program Committee (hereafter, PC) met on 28-29 November 2007 in Beijing, China. Dr. Adel El-Beltagy, Chairman, GFAR in his welcome address to the members of the Committee traced how the GFAR retreat at Alexandria, Egypt had resulted in the GFAR Business Plan for 2007-2009. He emphasized that the World Development Report 2008 and the FAO Independent External Evaluation clearly offer unique opportunities for enhancing GFAR's role in ARD. He called for all GFAR members to jointly pursue a more proactive stance in resource mobilization for ARD and GFAR. He also stressed the importance of the PC in strengthening inter-regional collaboration. Dr El-Beltagy ended his remarks highlighting the importance of Biofuels, Climate Change and other challenges. He wished the PC would lay greater emphasis on Program, whereas budget could be discussed by the Steering Committee to ensure effective implementation of the technical Program during 2008.

The meeting was chaired by Dr. Raj Paroda. In his opening remarks he welcomed all members and drew attention on the finalization of the new Terms of Reference of the PC. He emphasized the broadening of the composition of the PC, having representation of the youth, through the YPARD platform, as well as other stakeholders: the private sector, farmers and the civil society organizations.

During the meeting reports from the GFAR Secretariat, the Regional Forums, the Stakeholder Groups and activities of GFAR such as the Global Partnership Projects (GPPs), DURAS and the various networks were presented and reviewed.

GFAR's role to promote and facilitate inter-regional collaboration, based on

recommendations of the Regional Forums Executive Officers Meeting was discussed in detail. The PC recommended that the following should be identified as priority items for GFAR to act upon: ICM, ICT and Knowledge Management, Linking Farmers to Markets, strengthening engagement of the Civil Society in ARD, impact evaluation of ARD, linkages between research and extension and agricultural innovation, Biofuels and climate change, inter-regional networks on cotton, biotechnology and biosafety and support for inter-regional linkages and exchanges.

The PC also recommended that all GPPs should be working in an outcome-oriented mode (rather than activity-based) and with 3 year budget planning phase. It was also emphasized that all GPPs should be working in active partnership with at least two Regional Forums. A proposed initiative led by FAO on Plant Breeding Capacity



Members of the GFAR Programme Committee in Beijing

Building was also discussed and it was recommended that GFAR be used as a platform to promote this important initiative as well as to provide linkages with the stakeholders via website & regional networks. The PC also recommended partnership of GFAR in new Challenge Programs such as on Climate Change, High Value Crops and Desertification.

The PC recommended a GFAR Plan of Work for 2008. This plan of work included a list of prioritized activities stressing inter-regional collaboration.

Dr. Paroda at the conclusion of the meeting thanked all the PC members for their commitment and active participation. He



expressed the need to elect a PC Vice-Chair and to make its membership fully comprehensive through representation of all different stakeholder groups.

The draft minutes of the 3rd Program Committee of GFAR are available [here](#)<sup>3</sup>.

*Ajit Maru*

## 20th GFAR Steering Committee Meeting

Following the 3rd GFAR Program Committee Meeting, the GFAR Steering Committee met for its 20th Meeting on 30th November and 1st December, 2007 in Beijing, China.

The Chairman of the GFAR Steering Committee (hereafter, SC), Dr. Adel El-Beltagy, welcomed the participants to the meeting. He congratulated Dr. Isabel Alvarez, representing FAO on the GFAR SC, for her new appointment



Members of the GFAR Steering Committee at work in Beijing

as Director of the Natural Resources Research and Extension Division of FAO. He also welcomed Dr. Mark Holderness as the incoming GFAR Executive Secretary. In his opening remarks he mentioned the progress made by GFAR in 2007 especially in getting its External Review, developing its Business plan for 2007 – 2009 and appointing a new Executive Secretary. He also reiterated, as he had in welcoming participants at the 3rd GFAR Program Committee Meeting, the challenges that Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) and GFAR faced.

A report of GFAR Secretariat's activities in 2007 was presented by Dr. Ajit Maru during the meeting. Dr. Adel El Beltagy reported on the activities he had taken up on behalf of GFAR. In his report he emphasized that GFAR's role is not to manage projects but to be a key player in influencing the wider agenda of agricultural research for development, across all partners.

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload//242432/GFAR\\_PCM\\_3rd\\_Minutes\\_Dec2007.pdf](http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload//242432/GFAR_PCM_3rd_Minutes_Dec2007.pdf)

Dr. Raj Paroda presented a report on the proceedings of the 3rd Program Committee. In his report he included recommendations on priority programme areas for GFAR in 2008. GFAR's activities in Climate Change were also discussed, including consensus building, collaboration with the CGIAR System at a global level and with the Science Council and links with FAO. A joint event on Climate Change with the CGIAR was proposed by FAO. GFAR endorsed the Biofuel initiative of APAARI. The main role for GFAR was to influence policy in this area. A new Global Challenge Program on High Value Crops was discussed. This includes a number of international centres and the Global Facilitation Unit on Under Utilized Species is a partner. It was felt that GFAR stakeholders needed to find constructive linkages with this and the other Global Challenge Programs under preparation.

Dr. Monty Jones emphasized the role of the Regional Fora in providing support to the global agenda and helping to draft relevant papers, recognizing that the Forum is for everybody and requires everyone to play a role. Dr. Enrique Alarcon suggested that there should be an opportunity for the Regional Fora and other stakeholders to present to the SC. The presentations in the Program Committee should be related to program activities but presentations in the SC should be at a more strategic level. He also asked the Forum to consider policy issues

including socio-economic dimensions of research.

There was a discussion on agricultural science and technology indicators and it was suggested that GFAR should not look only at indicators of investment in agriculture science but also at returns on investment.

Dr. Holderness introduced the programme of work planned for 2008. Foremost in this plan will be GFAR's role as a mechanism for global advocacy on behalf of agricultural research and development for the poor. Inter-regional learning was considered a crucial role for the Global Forum. The value of GFAR in strengthening North-South and South-South learning was strongly endorsed. Each region felt they had much to benefit from the sharing of experiences, which could greatly reduce the transaction cost of developing new approaches. Technical support to existing global partnership programmes was endorsed. However, the Committee now seeks specific learning from these experiences and expects the concerned



partners to both take forward the programmes into implementation and report back to the Global Forum on their subsequent successes and failures. GFAR's unique role in helping to create appropriate institutions for the future was clearly recognized. GFAR has a critical role in ensuring that multi-partner programmes are linked effectively to both the intended users of their scientific outputs and their intended beneficiaries in rural communities. In 2008 this will begin with a revival of stakeholder representation in the Generation Challenge Programme and linkage with new Challenge programmes currently being fostered by the CGIAR. Global Partnership programmes will continue to be fostered among diverse institutions with common concerns, each addressing themes of agreed importance and linked to at least 2 Regional Fora. A stakeholder proposal to revitalize conservation agriculture partnerships was a first priority, together with other nascent programmes previously endorsed. GFAR will seek improved ways of transforming knowledge from one form to another, to overcome the communication and trust barriers between science and society. In 2008 the ICM4ARD programme will focus first on the harmonization and cross-searchability of information databases on agricultural science (FAO, CABI, CGIAR etc). All of these activities are considered of great importance by GFAR's constituents at regional and national levels as they seek to increase the relevance and value of agricultural research to meet real development needs.

Dr. Ren Wang, Director, CGIAR also met the GFAR SC members. He indicated the importance of GFAR for the CGIAR and requested that the Global Forum support the CGIAR in building close partnership with all ARD stakeholders, especially Civil Society, via GFAR participation in the CGIAR Change Management process (particularly in soliciting input from the South and from CSOs). He emphasized that the CGIAR sought to serve the needs of the smallholder farmers and he asked for GFAR's assistance in enabling the CGIAR to link effectively with the Regional and Sub-Regional Fora.

The GFAR Chair in his remarks to Dr. Ren Wang's address, stated that the International Agricultural Research Centres are an important constituent of the Global Forum and the Forum wishes to see strong international research efforts, targeted at areas where there is a clear value addition to the work of national systems and addressing areas explicitly demanded and prioritized by stakeholders in the regions concerned. In concluding the meeting, he thanked all those present for a rich and healthy discussion. He commended the Secretariat for their work under very difficult circumstances and again called for all stakeholders in GFAR to play

an active and constructive role in ensuring the future success of this vital mechanism, that brought together all of agricultural research for development, so that it could meet the challenges facing the world into the future.

*Ajit Maru*

### Visits of the GFAR Chair

Dr. Adel El-Beltagy, the Chair of GFAR, has represented the Global Forum at several international meetings over the last six months.

From 3 to 7 December 2007 Dr. El-Beltagy was at the CGIAR Annual General Meeting (AGM07) in Beijing, China; from 26 to 28 February 2008 he participated in the CG Change Management Retreat and in the CIAT Meetings in Washington DC, US; from 1 to 5 March he took part in the FAO 29th Regional Meeting in Cairo, Egypt.

In April and May 2008 Dr. El-Beltagy participated in several international meetings: the 3<sup>rd</sup> board meeting of the Global Crop Diversity Trust in Rome, Italy; the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the meeting of the European Action on Global Life Sciences (EAGLES) and the BioVision Conference in Alexandria, Egypt; the CG Change Management Meeting in Ottawa, Canada; and lastly, on 13 to 14 May, the 14<sup>th</sup> CGIAR Executive Council in Ottawa, Canada.

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Recently, on 3 June 2008, Dr. El-Beltagy attended the Open Science Network Meeting on Partnerships, Innovation and Agriculture jointly organized by INRA and CIRAD in Paris, France.

The Network Meeting discussed a wide range of demands and challenges faced in agriculture. This included ensuring food security, safety, better nutrition, guaranteeing environmental sustainability, combating climate change and dwindling natural resources, while also factoring in ethical and social considerations etc. The meeting had more than 350 participants. The details of the Open Science Network Meeting are available at [www.gip-ifra.fr](http://www.gip-ifra.fr).

At this meeting, Dr. El-Beltagy presented that the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) is a unique platform for world wide collaborative action for agricultural research and innovation. He highlighted the structure of GFAR, which is based on the subsidiarity principle of the National Agricultural Research



Systems and their Regional Forums, and includes other stakeholders to agricultural research for development such as the International Agricultural Research Centers, NGOs, Farmer Organizations, the Private Sector and the Donor community. He also described how GFAR innovatively builds partnerships and contributes to agricultural research and innovation through its Global Partnership Programs, regional and inter-regional networks, advocacy and capacity-building activities through regional forums and facilitates information and knowledge sharing such as through its electronic platform, EGFAR. Dr. El-Beltagy's presentation at this meeting is available [on line](#) on EGFAR.

Dr. Mario Allegri, Chair, FORAGRO also participated in the meeting.

After considering recent reports such as the World Development Report 2008 and the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development which highlight the indisputable and pivotal role of agricultural research and its limitations in increasing food security and

facilitating economic growth and a wide variety of presentations, the meeting concluded that a new agenda for agricultural research calls for both fresh and renewed partnerships on an international scale. The challenges before agricultural research have consequences for societies and economies at local, regional and global levels. It is through these international partnerships that research can assume its responsibility in the face of new challenges related to food and agriculture at the World level.

In Dr. El-Beltagy's opinion, there is an increasing global recognition for building partnerships for agricultural innovation at national, regional and global levels. This is an even more compelling reason for GFAR to play a prominent role in agricultural research and innovation. This issue was discussed with the heads of CIRAD and INRA. The Chair of CIRAD recognizes the important role of GFAR and he stressed his interest in posting an expert within the GFAR Secretariat, in addition to a close coordination and cooperation with GFAR in the future.

## News from the Regional Fora

AARINENA

### Expert Consultation Meeting for the Establishment of the Agricultural Biotechnology Network, Cairo, 15-16 December 2007



Under the patronage of H.E Mr. Amin Abaza, Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation of Egypt, the Expert Consultation Meeting for

the Establishment of Agricultural Biotechnology Network was held in Cairo, Egypt, during the period 15-16 December 2007. The meeting was hosted by Egypt Agricultural Research Center (ARC), and sponsored by the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and AARINENA.

The Agricultural Biotechnology Network was established upon the recommendations of AARINENA Executive Committee, and emerged from the need for a coordinating body and a technical cooperation Network on agricultural biotechnology for the promotion of cooperation

among the region states for the optimal utilization of limited resources available for the development of agricultural biotechnology.

The objective of the Consultation Meeting was to discuss the establishment of Regional Network for Agricultural Biotechnology in the Near East and North Africa. APCoAB was invited to share its experiences in the Asia-Pacific region and explore the areas of interregional collaboration with the new network.

Eighteen agricultural biotechnology experts from 14 countries of the region (Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen) besides representatives from AARINENA, FAO, GFAR, ICARDA and APCoAB, participated in the consultation meeting.

Participants unanimously adopted the proposal by Dr. I. Hamdan, Executive Secretary, AARINENA, for the establishment of Regional Network for Agricultural Biotechnology in the Near East and North Africa.

AARINENA



### **AARINENA Executive Committee Meeting, Oman, 7 January 2008**

AARINENA Executive Committee and Cosponsors Representatives (BI, FAO, GFAR and ICARDA) met on the 7th January 2008 in Muscat-Oman. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Ahmed Al Bakri, President of AARINENA.

Highlights of the meeting:

- It was recommended that one of AARINENA task force members participate in the ICARDA/ IFAD expert consultation meeting on small ruminant and report the outcome to AARINENA 11th General Conference.
- It was recommended that Constitutional amendments recommended at the last Executive committee meeting be submitted to all full members 60 days before AARINENA 11th General Conference for adoption.
- It was recommended that a brief summary be circulated of the Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) Network proposal to all member countries requesting their interest for hosting the PGR Network Secretariat.
- The Committee reviewed the proposed North Africa Sub-Region Organization (NASRO) Constitution that was based on the Entebbe Declaration, and recommended a memorandum of understanding between AARINENA and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in respect to its contents to be presented for adoption at the 11th General Conference of AARINENA.
- The committee agreed to informally launch Near East Regional Agricultural Knowledge and Information Network (NERAKIN) system at the national information focal units meeting in January 2008 before formal launching in the 11th General Conference of AARINENA in Damascus.
- Regarding revisiting of priority setting exercise the committee recommended to hold an expert consultation meeting on the thematic priorities before the 11th General Conference of AARINENA.
- Regarding the representation of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and NGOs at AARINENA Executive Committee, the committee recommended to contact CGIAR Alliance to recommend ICARDA as CGIAR representative member at Committee and recommended that the elected NGO representative in the WANA region serves as a member for three years followed by farmers' organization representative.
- The Committee approved the membership of Arab Society for Plant Protection (ASPP) on a reciprocal no fee payment basis following the

same arrangement between AARINENA and APAARI.

- The Committee recommended that The 11th AARINENA General Conference be held during the period 20-22 October 2008 in Damascus.
- The Executive Secretary briefed the meeting about the financial status up to 31 December 2007. The report showed an increase in the activity expenditures in 2007, and an increase in the country membership status, which resulted in an increase in the balance of the fund as compared to the balance in 2006.

*AARINENA*

### **ICT Nodal Units Workshop, Muscat, Oman, 8-10 January 2008**

AARINENA with support from FAO and GFAR organized the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Nodal Units Workshop, which was held during the period 8-10 January 2008 in Muscat, Oman, and hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. A total of 22 participants coming from 11 countries (Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen), along with AARINENA President and Executive Secretary and FAO, GFAR, and ICARDA representatives participated in the workshop.

A deep discussion among the participants identified the following areas for intervention:

- Policy and Strategy development
- Institutional aspects in developing and strengthening Information Systems
- Identify stakeholders and beneficiaries of information systems, and their needs for information
- Managing content especially content generation, its sharing and effective use
- Changing the attitude and skills of people involved in information systems especially information systems managers. Meanwhile, building capacities and retaining staff trained in managing ICT would enable information systems
- Managing ICT infrastructure effectively especially bandwidth
- Attract greater investment in ICT would enable information systems in terms of both finance and human capacities.

*AARINENA*



APAARI

**APARIS Technical Workshop on Development and De-centralized Management of ARD Information Resources and APARIS Steering Committee Meeting, 19-20 April 2008, Bangkok, Thailand**



The Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS), in collaboration with GFAR and ACIAR, organized a two-day technical workshop on Development and De-Centralized Management of ARD Information Resources. Among the 20 participants of the workshop, 10 were National Information Nodal Points (NINPs) from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, and Thailand who participated in the workshop to strengthen APARIS and its linkages with the National Agricultural Information Systems (NAIS) of the Asia-Pacific using the de-centralization approach of the Global ARD Web Ring. The workshop was facilitated by resource persons from GFAR, FAO and AIT, and APARIS Coordinator.

GFAR and FAO emphasized the critical role of NAIS in this Web Ring as most of the agricultural knowledge is created at a research institute level. ACIAR advocated that greater adoption of agricultural R&D by farmers is possible if improved communication at various levels leads to cooperation among the development stakeholders. GFAR observed that there is growing evidence that information science is influencing farmers more than the agricultural science in some cases.

After country briefs by NINPs, the workshop deliberated on various priority issues at NAIS level, including Standardization, Coordination and Sustainability. Through a group exercise, the participants came up with several recommendations for further development of the Global ARD Web Ring in which APARIS and its NAIS can participate using newly available tools / applications / frameworks such as RSS feeds, AgriFeeds, and CIARD. APARIS, through its own applications, demonstrated how these can be incorporated and implemented in NAIS.

The workshop was followed by the meeting of the **APARIS Steering Committee**, composed of three NARS leaders (one each from Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific) and representatives from ACIAR (the current chair), GFAR (Ajit Maru, co-chair of the APARIS SC), FAO, and AIT. The Steering Committee commended the progress made so far by APARIS, finalized the work plan for 2008, and suggested future strategies to further improve the impact of APARIS at NARS/NAIS level. The advocacy and capacity building roles of APARIS were identified as critical.

The proceedings of both activities will soon become available at [www.apaari.org](http://www.apaari.org).

APAARI



APARIS Technical Workshop and Steering Committee meeting, Bangkok, Thailand

**Formation of the NGO Association for Agriculture Research in Asia-Pacific (NAARAP)**

The NGO Association for Agricultural Research in the Asia-Pacific (NAARAP) has been formed after discussions at "Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on Agricultural Research for Development" organized jointly by APAARI-ANGOC-GFAR on 16-18 April 2008 in Bangkok, Thailand.

A discussion among NGOs in the Asia-Pacific region for a body that represents NGO interests in agricultural research for development in APAARI and in the Asia-Pacific region has been in progress since 2006. This is a part of an initiative by the Global Forum on Agricultural Research and all Regional Forums to enable the civil society, NGOs and Farmer organizations participate in dialogues and action related to agricultural research for development and make the Global and Regional Forums more inclusive of ARD stakeholders.

More than 17 representatives from NGO organizations from various sub-regions in the



Asia-Pacific participated at the Bangkok Regional Workshop. There were wide ranging discussions on the mode and direction of the NGO participation in ARD in APAARI and at the regional and national level by the NGOs. A final proceeding of this Workshop and the NGO statement on participating in APAARI activities and at regional and national level is awaited.

*Ajit Maru*

EFARD

### European-African workshop on agricultural research organised by EFARD & FARA



The Joint Africa-EU Strategy<sup>4</sup> provides a long-term vision for a strategic partnership between Africa and the European Union. Many countries in Africa are confronting particular challenges in meeting the targets of the Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, and will require a broad range of strengthened efforts to meet those targets. Such efforts must include effective action to tackle the shortfalls in policy, predictable financing, and data collection and implementation capacities. Children, gender, HIV/AIDS and the environment will be addressed as cross-cutting priorities.

To implement the commitments made in the Joint Strategy, the EU and Africa will address and advance all identified objectives on all the strategic priorities, with a wider view of supporting African countries in their efforts to attain all Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015. The African and European Leaders agreed in Lisbon to implement these selected priority actions in the context of specific "Africa-EU Partnerships" and "Priority Actions" on subjects of common interest, articulated in an Action Plan. The Plan includes a Priority Action on "Accelerate the achievement of the Food Security Targets of the MDGs". The objective is to make substantial progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Objective of halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and malnutrition by the year 2015 in all African countries. Expected outcomes include issues such as better access to food, increased agricultural growth rates, improved agricultural productivity and reduced rural poverty,

<sup>4</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/development/services/events/eu-africa-summit-2007/index\\_en.cfm?CFID=110566&CFTOKEN=69371775](http://ec.europa.eu/development/services/events/eu-africa-summit-2007/index_en.cfm?CFID=110566&CFTOKEN=69371775)

improved governance in the agricultural sectors, enhanced intra-Africa trade in agriculture, reduced malnutrition, reduced maternal and child mortality, improved food-security early warning systems, wider application of safety-net / social transfer systems, reduced vulnerability in food-insecure communities.

Agricultural research is targeted as a key area for collaboration, to strengthen institutional cooperation and coordination between national agricultural research systems (NARS) and regional and international research programmes, notably with EU research institutes, in the framework of the new partnership on agriculture between the EU and Africa.

In this context the European Commission organised a workshop in collaboration with the European and the African Fora (EFARD & FARA), through the Platform for the African European Partnership on Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD), with the collaboration of CTA. The workshop was held in Brussels in April 2008, was attended by experts from the two continents, and helped in identifying priorities for the programming of the European Commission instruments targeting agricultural research for development: the Framework Programme on Research and Technology (FP7), and Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP).

*EFARD*

FARA

### Updates on the Regional Agricultural Information and Learning Systems (RAILS)



Three consultations meetings took place at the Secretariat Offices in Accra, Ghana on 18-25 February 2008.

The **RAILS technical group consultation** (18-19 Feb) was held for two days in order to elaborate a work program on how the information systems will be developed following the framework of RAILS.

The **RAILS taskforce annual meeting** (20-21 Feb) discussed the RAILS work program for 2008.

The FARA communication strategy (22,23,25 Feb) reflected on the previous two consultations, as well as different needs of each of the networking support functions within the FARA Strategic plan.



The consultations involved the SROs information and communication experts who are the members of the RAILS taskforce, who in turn selected among its RAILS national learning team members. International service providers who submitted their bids to develop the information system also participated (i.e. CABI and Wageningen International) and other international service providers who are currently working with RAILS i.e. FAO, GFAR, CTA. The FARA communication strategy consultation involves the FARA NSF representatives, RAILS taskforce and learning teams and other interested partners.

*[from the [FARA Secretariat blog](#)<sup>5</sup>]*

### News from the FARA Bulletin

30 March 2008: the FARA Chairman signed on behalf of FARA, a memorandum of agreement with development partners who are committed in supporting the core activities of the FARA Secretariat starting in 2008. The first group of development partners who signed in the MOU are: AfDB, Canadian CIDA, DFID, European Commission, the Netherlands, USAID and WB.

26-30 March 2008: seven days were allocated by the FARA Executive Board, its technical advisory group, FARA development partners and the Secretariat to reflect on 2007 operation and lessons learnt to guide the planning of activities for 2008. The programmatic approach of FARA activities will be fully implemented in 2008. The week was divided into several sessions i.e. FARA subcommittee meetings, SRO-FARA retreat and the Executive Board meeting.

*[from the FARA Bulletin]*

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FORAGRO

### Success stories in the use of ICTs for agricultural research and innovation in Latin America and the Caribbean



The documentation of successful experiences is a basic element for capacity building and for sensitization of decision makers on the importance of information and communication management. For capacity building, because of the possibility of sharing experiences on the way in which information and communication technologies were managed in cases in which they contributed to the success of a research or

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<sup>5</sup> <http://farastaff.blogspot.com/2008/02/regional-agricultural-information-and.html>

innovation process. And for advocacy, because specific cases of how a positive impact through these technologies was achieved, can help decision makers become aware of their potential.

With this in mind, IICA, FORAGRO and GFAR launched an invitation to collect success stories in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) within agricultural research and technological innovation projects or programs. The invitation was for anyone with inside information of such a case and wanted to share it. The selected cases were included in a publication, in which the respective proponents were the authors of their chapter.

Steps in this process:

- 1) Proposal of success stories. The cases were submitted through an online form. The form was designed to collect contact data of the person who proposes the case, basic information on the project or program in which ICT were used successfully, and the description of ICT use.
- 2) Selection of cases. An international panel selected the stories to be published.
- 3) Preparation of final documents, for selected cases.
- 4) Preparation of the final documents was responsibility of each author (the proponents of the selected success stories).
- 5) Publication

Translation and publishing was recently concluded. See the English version of the document [here](#)<sup>6</sup>.

*[from the [INFOTEC website](#)<sup>7</sup>]*

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<sup>6</sup> <http://infoagro.net/shared/docs/a2/Successstories.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [http://infoagro.net/infotec/exitosos/index\\_ing.cfm](http://infoagro.net/infotec/exitosos/index_ing.cfm)



## News from the other Stakeholders

### Update on the CGIAR Change management process

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) is a key constituent organization of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research and of course was one of the bodies instrumental in its foundation as a platform bringing together those concerned about agricultural research for development.

However, in recent years, there has been growing concern that the CGIAR system has lost clarity of purpose and has not adapted to take account of the new research for development landscape in which many other partners, including the national systems of emerging economies, are now involved. The CGIAR Change Management Process, established among the CGIAR and its stakeholders, thus sets out to achieve reform of the international agricultural research system to create a system that all can support as playing a valuable role.

This is being tackled through a series of working groups, addressing the vision, partnerships, governance and finance of the CGIAR and coordinated through a Central Steering Team. Prof Dr Adel El-Beltagy, GFAR Chair, sits on the Central Steering Team (and represents GFAR on the Executive Council of the CGIAR) and GFAR Executive Secretary Dr Mark Holderness co-chairs the Partnerships Working Group. The Working Groups are drafting papers and seeking to articulate coherent proposals for change that provide clear, constructive ways forward, are aligned with each other and acceptable to all.

The way in which the CGIAR operates depends very much on its purpose and thus the 'Vision' working group has been the first to report. Their report is now available on line<sup>8</sup> on the CGIAR website (this site also describes the change management process in more detail). World Bank Vice- President & CGIAR Chair Kathy Sierra has now written to stakeholders to encourage participation in an e-discussion ('Virtual Forum'). We would encourage you all, as the stakeholders in agricultural research for

development, to input your thoughts and opinions directly via this mechanism (see Ms. Sierra's message in the box).

Once the other working groups have reported, these will also be put to wider discussion through an electronic consultation, managed by the CGIAR Secretariat and through face-to-face discussions around the world. GFAR and FORAGRO have arranged for the first of these to take place during the FORAGRO conference and GFAR Steering Committee meeting, in Montevideo at the end of July. The FORAGRO event will include a position paper from the CG Centres in Latin America and responses from the region. Senior figures from the CGIAR and the Change Management Central Steering Team will be present to discuss the process and its implications. During the GFAR Steering Committee meeting, the wider implications of the CGIAR change process will be discussed with GFAR's stakeholder representatives. GFAR's different constituencies can each play a key role in facilitating and organizing subsequent discussion of the proposed changes and their implications in other regions of the world.

Dear all,  
I would like to invite you to join a series of virtual discussions on the CGIAR Change Management Initiative (<http://www.cgiar.org/changemanagement/index.html>).

Our first engagement is through a blog, where I present some of my initial thoughts, and ideas on the Change Initiative, describe some of the current debates, and invite your comments. Please join the conversation at <http://changemanagement.cgiar.org>.

The blog is part of a series of e-conversations that will be held over the next six months in order to gather ideas and reactions as our thinking develops.

A series of e-discussions on the papers produced by the Change Management working groups will also be launched. "Visioning the Future of the CGIAR", a paper produced by the Visioning working group is already available in the Virtual Forums (<http://www.cgiar.org/cgdisc>) for your consideration and discussion. Working groups on Partnerships, Governance and Funding will each present their papers to the broader CGIAR community later in the northern summer and seek your comment.

I look forward to a productive exchange of information, viewpoints and vision.

Katherine Sierra  
Chair

The CGIAR forms a key constituency of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research and

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.cgiar.org/changemanagement/index.html>



constructive partnership between the CGIAR and our other constituencies is crucial for ensuring that agricultural research is driven by the needs of the poor and delivers against the global challenges now facing us all.

We would urge and encourage you all to take an active part in these processes as they develop, so that we create an international agricultural research system that adds value in the best possible ways to national and regional processes, to help meet the future needs of this world.

*Mark Holderness*

### **IFAP Congress Warsaw, 4-6 June 2008**

Dr. Holderness was invited to attend the IFAP World Farmers Congress in Warsaw, June 4-6. He presented a paper to the Opening Plenary Session, entitled 'The Global Forum: Shaping Tomorrow's Agriculture Today'. This paper, available on line<sup>9</sup> on EGFAR, outlined GFAR's agenda for connecting agricultural science and society, creating farmer-centred systems of agricultural research for development that are driven by the needs of poor communities and with a particular focus on ensuring sustainable increases in productivity. The paper was very well received by a large audience, representing farmers' organizations from 70 countries. Further practical linkage is now being developed with the IFAP Secretariat, Development and Research Committees, to translate this enthusiasm into practical actions and close partnership with other constituencies of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research.

The World Farmers' Congress was extremely well organized and covered a range of relevant global themes, including building commodity supply chains, approval of IFAP policies on food safety and quality and on animal welfare and managing risks created by market volatility and global warming. There was extensive discussion on climate change and bioenergy, including arguments from the perspectives of farmers in large biofuel producing countries. Economic themes of investing in agriculture for reducing rural poverty, including a paper by Juergen Voegelé, Director of the World Bank's Agriculture and Rural Development Department and on rewarding eco-system services were also very relevant for other constituencies within the Global Forum. Agricultural trade impacts

<sup>9</sup><http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload//245863/GFAR%20IFAP%20Summary.pdf>

globally and Crawford Falconer, Chair of the Agricultural Negotiations of WTO, joined the Congress via a videolink. A very interesting and relevant meeting, it was only unfortunate that a clash of dates with the FAO High Level Conference overshadowed the attention it should have otherwise drawn. Further information on the World Farmers' Congress is available at [www.ifap.org](http://www.ifap.org).

We congratulate Ajay Vashee from Zambia, farmer leader, President of SACAU, a regional farmers' organization for Southern Africa and former President of the Zambian National Farmers' Union, on his election as the new IFAP President.

### **FAO High Level Conference on World Food Security, Rome, 3-5 June 2008**

The High-Level Conference<sup>10</sup> on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy opened at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy on 3 June 2008. Throughout the three days of events, forty-two Heads of State and Government, one hundred high-level Ministers and sixty non-governmental and civil society organizations from one hundred eighty-one member countries discussed the challenges that climate change, bioenergy and soaring food prices posed to world food security.

The main output of the Conference was the declaration on World Food Security, which is available on line<sup>11</sup> on the FAO website.

*A Statement to the FAO High-Level Conference from the Global Forum on Agricultural Research, on behalf of all those concerned with agricultural research for development*

### **Linking Science and Society**

Current global challenges of poverty and hunger require not just increases in production, but that these are made sustainable in economic, environmental and social terms. Agricultural research provides society with the knowledge required for sustainable agriculture. However, much past research has failed to benefit or meet the needs of the poor. To address this need, The **Global Forum on Agricultural Research**

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.fao.org/foodclimate/hlc-home/en/>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/foodclimate/HLCdocs/declaration-E.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/foodclimate/HLCdocs/declaration-E.pdf)



(GFAR) was established among all stakeholders in agricultural research for development in the 1990s. GFAR provides a key linkage between agricultural science and the societies it serves, bringing together the knowledge and innovation of local communities with that of science. GFAR creates new partnerships, pathways and ways of working that help ensure that agricultural innovation puts the needs of poor communities at its centre and delivers the development outcomes we all seek.

The need for the generation and use of new knowledge to specifically benefit the poor has previously been recognised in the **FAO World Food Summit** and the follow-up meeting, "**The World Food Summit: Five Years Later.**" More recently, the **World Development Report 2007** and the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology in Development, 2008 have together provided further support for the direction, objectives and goals of GFAR. The Global Forum on Agricultural Research mobilizes all stakeholders in agricultural research, including FAO and the CGIAR at the international scale, farmers organizations, civil society and national agricultural research systems at regional and national levels. GFAR is taking forward key messages from these international processes **into action among all those involved in agricultural research for development.**

#### **Agriculture matters**

Agriculture is fundamental to our existence and our futures. Recent food price rises have shown how fragile is the balance between supply and demand of food, even in a world of global trade. The World Development Report has highlighted the need to increase food production to meet increasing global demands and for investment in appropriate research to enable this to happen. The International Assessment has clearly shown that this global challenge is not just a case of producing more food, but that agriculture is also key to enabling the poor to escape from poverty and creates the social fabric sustaining rural communities.

These reports are highly complementary and together form a **global wake-up call** that agriculture matters and that new agricultural approaches are required that will simultaneously increase production from existing areas, maintain or increase biodiversity and ecosystem function, while providing access to food for all and opportunity for the world's poor. These are major challenges in a world where as a result of mankind's actions, production climates are themselves changing and natural resources being rapidly consumed.

#### **Innovative approaches are required**

Both reports recognize that both **modern science and technologies and local innovation each have much to contribute** that is essential to the future of our planet, but also emphasize that technologies and inputs need to be considered in a bigger context than increased production alone. It is now clear that **there is no single universal model for success.** Needs and realities vary around the world, but knowledge and the power this brings people to change their own systems and lifestyles are key determinants of our agricultural futures. GFAR is helping to better connect modern science with local knowledge by strengthening the innovation pathways. Specific solutions will depend on local circumstances and the part that each of us can play, as producers and consumers, in creating a sustainable future.

**Creating a sustainable future for generations to come requires the development and use of agricultural knowledge and technologies that recognize the economic, social and environmental implications of their use.** It requires those involved in agricultural production and markets to recognize the many functions of agriculture into both policies and practical decisions. To do so also requires appropriate education and research institutions that put societal needs, not just technologies, at the centre of change and that better link science with the societies it serves. This will require commitment from all the parties concerned: national governments, public and private research and extension organizations, civil society organizations and farmers and consumers themselves.

**The Global Forum on Agricultural Research** is taking forward these processes into action. We provide the international platform for all those involved in agricultural research for development. We identify key global agendas, drawing from national and regional needs, we establish innovative partnerships and new ways of working that bring together diverse partners to address these global challenges. We link their knowledge, their actions and their interactions to advance the generation, access and use of agricultural knowledge and rapidly share new learning to meet the world's food and rural income needs. In a world of rising food prices we all need to act now and to **shape tomorrow's agriculture today.**

The **FAO High Level Conference: World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy**, clearly shows the significance of these activities. We are already faced with the double challenge of production affected by a rapidly-changing climate and competing



demands for food and fuel. Agriculture counts and agricultural research has a crucial role to play in meeting development goals.

### GFAR: A Call to Action

On behalf of the global community for research for development, we call **on all people of the world** to take stock of the central importance of agriculture to their lives in the way they use and consume natural resources and to redouble efforts **to generate and make available**

**technologies** that meet the food needs of humanity, while minimizing damage to the environment and which will enable the rural poor and disadvantaged to escape from poverty and live with dignity, both now and into the future.

*The GFAR Statement to the FAO High Level Conference is available on line at: [http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/243656/GFAR\\_statement\\_FAO\\_HLC.pdf](http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/243656/GFAR_statement_FAO_HLC.pdf).*

## ICM Corner

### The ARD Web Ring

In the original project documents by GFAR and FAO the so-called EGFAR Webring was defined as "a gateway function to access the GFAR stakeholders' information resources that are presently available" and "as a formal link between websites of the key stakeholders". This function has been a major component of GFAR's activities in information and knowledge sharing. Until recently, the Web Ring was seen as a service to be implemented on the EGFAR website. Both the ICM4ARD Inter-regional Consultation and the EGFAR Task Force (established in 2007 and composed by representatives of the Regional Fora, other stakeholder groups and GFAR partners) in their meetings in 2007 recommended that the Web Ring concept needed to further evolve considering:

- a more participatory approach, based on voluntary participation, where the RAIS and other partner organizations managing information on Agricultural Research (and innovation) for Development (ARD) play a more active role;
- the changes brought about by new technologies and new paradigms such as Web 2.0 in information access, sharing and exchange;
- the active participation of GFAR in the Coherence Initiative in Agricultural Research for Development (CIARD; earlier International Information Systems for Agricultural Science and Technology, IISAST);

and concluded that the next challenge was to redefine and further develop the ARD Web Ring, which was to be termed the Global ARD Web Ring rather than the EGFAR Web Ring, its role in the CIARD initiative and the role of EGFAR within the ARD Web Ring.

The Global ARD Web Ring is now defined as a "voluntary coalition of web spaces that share information related to agricultural research and innovation for development."

These web spaces make ARD related information sources more accessible through each other.

The rationale behind the ARD Web Ring lies in the fact that the complexity of agricultural research is increasing and information needed by agricultural communities, not only farmers but all members of agricultural commodity market chains including consumers and the agricultural innovation system, now include a wider range of topics and go beyond that available from their local communities. Globally, all stakeholders to agricultural research and development are now also demanding cohesive efforts to enable greater equity in access to agricultural and related information.

The Global ARD Web Ring is one of the steps to enable more equitable access to information globally needed for agricultural development. The goal the Web Ring expects to reach is a network of high quality, integrated information services that meet the needs of the agricultural research and development community and which enables this community to share information, knowledge, skills and technology for agricultural development. The information services will be free and publicly available, thus constituting Global Public Goods that can be leveraged by any organization, person or information service.

### The architecture

Considering how complex and diverse the present state of the RAIS and of all ARD information systems is, the most suitable description is that of an informal network with no hierarchy and no internal coordination, where information sharing can be best facilitated through light mechanisms like aggregating, mapping etc., mechanisms that do not impose



changes in the management of already existing contents.

Thus, the ARD Web Ring is now best described as a network of ARD related "webspaces" which may be "gateways" (websites or systems that enable value added access to networks or "nodes" of ARD related digital/electronic information through such facilities as search engines, indexes, catalogues, classifications, aggregators, digests etc.) or nodes (websites or systems that may either store and maintain ARD related information or just consume information from other systems).

In this context, the Web Ring has to be a flexible framework, capable of giving access to the various resources at the best level possible, from simple hyperlinks to harvesting to advanced unified searches depending on the extent to which partner websites agree on and comply to protocols, standards and mapping of taxonomies.

- Making their information searchable through common search engines;
- Providing RSS feeds and, more in general, XML or RDF exports of information based on agreed metadata sets.
- Providing advanced web services to dynamically generate RSS feeds and, more in general, XML or RDF exports of information.
- Sharing their documents participating in the new AGRIS or in the Open Archive Initiative labelling their repositories or records as ARD related and possibly using common vocabularies.
- Building advanced services exploiting the ARD Web Ring framework such as providing wikis, white papers and reviews, indexes, catalogues, bookmarking services, object repositories, alerts etc.

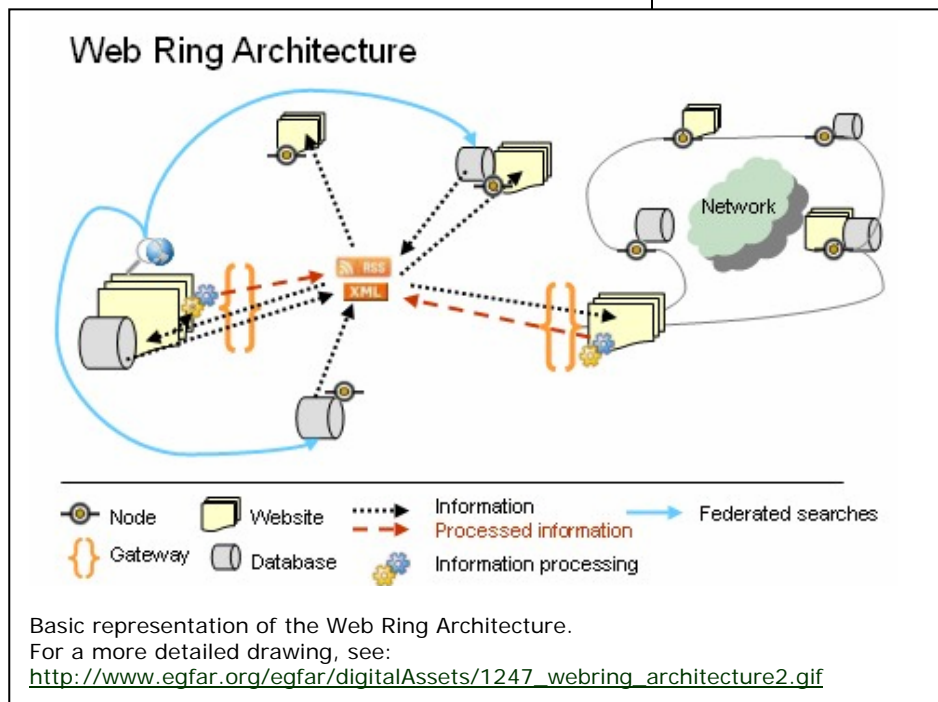
Services built on the Global ARD Web Ring framework can be provided by any of the partners, and all partners can be providers of information and value-added services and consumers, or all of these. There will be no hierarchy in the network.

The Global ARD Web Ring is one of GFAR's activities that cuts across both the ICM4ARD GPP and EGFAR. It also fits snugly under the umbrella of the Coherence Initiative in Agricultural Research for Development (CIARD) in which GFAR is a leading actor. In the context of CIARD, the specificity of the Web Ring is the focus on agricultural research and innovation for development, thus

involving not only all lead partners working in ARD but also organizations in agricultural-related sectors that can contribute information on ARD.

The proposal that is being circulated for the ARD Web Ring project is available [here](#)<sup>12</sup>.

*Ajit Maru, Valeria Pesce*



### Participation

There can be several forms of participation in the Web Ring, all voluntary and independent of formal agreements. Examples of ways in which partners participate in the ARD Web Ring are:

- Being included in the common Directories (organizations, projects etc.) now under development in the context of the Content Management Taskforce (CMTF) of CIARD: these directories, though more generic in scope than the ARD Web Ring, provide information that is core to agricultural research management.

<sup>12</sup>[http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload//242450/The%20ARD%20Web%20Ring\\_draft\\_final.pdf](http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload//242450/The%20ARD%20Web%20Ring_draft_final.pdf)



### Agri-Directories: close collaboration between GFAR and FAO in implementing global directories based on a distributed architecture

The GFAR Newsletter already featured an article on "Managing information on organizations, experts, projects and project outputs" (issue 4/2007<sup>13</sup>), where distributed management and a coherent use of standards (metadata and protocols) were identified as the best approach in view of building comprehensive, reliable and integrated information services.

Over the last year, under the umbrella of the Coherence Initiative in Agricultural Research for Development (CIARD, earlier International Information Systems for Agricultural Science and Technology or IISAST), collaboration between the Global Forum and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in this area has become stronger. The adoption of a distributed approach based on metadata exchange is being advocated by both organizations. Common projects have been identified in the implementation of different types of global Directories, or Registries, giving access to distributed sources describing organizations, projects, projects outputs (documents) and experts, as well as news and events (and the same approach can be extended to other information items like job opportunities, grants etc.) in an agreed format.

Some of the metadata standards adopted are already widely used, others are under development: whenever possible, existing standards are re-used, otherwise new metadata sets are developed as Application Profiles (more information on the [Agricultural Information Management Standards Website](#)<sup>14</sup>).

Some pilot projects have already been started, others are still at the planning stage.

- FAO is adopting this approach in the new [AGRIS](#)<sup>15</sup> architecture which will leverage the Open Archive design, which is in itself a distributed architecture based on metadata exchange.
- FAO, together with GFAR and other CIARD partners, has implemented [AgriFeeds](#)<sup>16</sup>, "the agricultural news and events aggregator", harvesting news and events feeds and exposing aggregated and customized feeds for further re-use; an extension of this service to

information like job opportunities and grants is being considered.

- GFAR, FAO and Wageningen International are working on:
  - [AgriOrg](#)<sup>17</sup>, a Registry of distributed descriptions of organizations;
  - [AgriProjects](#), a Registry of projects.
- An [AgriExperts](#) directory is also planned.

These Directories will be free and publicly available, thus constituting Global Public Goods that can be leveraged by any information service.

Valeria Pesce (GFAR)  
Gauri Slokhe (FAO)

#### People at the GFAR Secretariat

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M. H. > Mark Holderness  
A. M. > Ajit Maru  
V. P. > Valeria Pesce  
A. S. > Antonio Schiamone  
S. T. > Sylvaine Thomas

<sup>13</sup><http://www.egfar.org/egfar/website/new/newsletters/newsletterarticle?contentId=1612&newsletterId=1522>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.fao.org/aims>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.fao.org/agris/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.agrifedds.org/>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.egfar.org/egfar/website/webring/org\\_me/tabase](http://www.egfar.org/egfar/website/webring/org_me/tabase)