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## ***Perspective on Efforts to Share Data and Information in the Central Asia and Caucasus Region***

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Five countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) and Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) occupy the geographic area exceeding 4 million sq. km (about 3 % of the Earth's dry land), which is characterized by a great variety of agricultural directions, plant and animal species, etc. They have a total population of more than 75 million, a large number of which (up to 40%) live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. The GDP per capita is highest in Kazakhstan (USD 8,500, 2010), and lowest in Tajikistan (USD 800, 2010).

Developments in the CAC region's diversified agriculture, with up to 100 agricultural research institutions and universities take place in the very unusual context of the Research and Development Sector in the post-soviet era in these countries, as well as overall declining of agriculture production.

Improving agricultural information services can enable improve agricultural research and innovation in the CAC region, helping to restore agriculture production and contributing significantly to poverty reduction in rural areas where 70% of poor reside.

Since 2000, FAO and later (since 2004) GFAR and CACAARI (Central Asia and Caucasus Association of Agriculture Research Institutions) have had contributed essentially into development of the Regional Agricultural Information System of CAC region. From the very beginning efforts were focused on the creation of conditions for efficient agriculture information exchange regionally and internationally, as well as locally for the benefit of agricultural and rural producers. The task was complicated by changing organizational environment. For example, in a number of countries the National Centers for Scientific and Technical Information, – the most experienced bodies in agricultural information in CAC region, - supposed to take part in the RAIS were close done. The corresponding agriculture information resources were lost.

CACAARI, perhaps in difference from other regional associations, had to solve several problems in parallel: finding new partners for RAIS, create local and regional (joint) information resources and establish information exchange among them. A very positive role in solving the problem had played the assessment survey of RAIS initiated by GFAR in 2007.

Currently the new National Nodal Information Points are identified and their local and regional tasks are determined. Existing national data bases are identified as well. National Nodal Information Points are organizations which will constitute the initial

core of RAIS. These are State Agricultural University libraries, remained National STI centers (in Kazakhstan and Georgia) and some other organizations. Their tasks are:

- To develop National agro information resources
- Insuring their accessibility and interoperability regionally and internationally
- To develop jointly regional data bases on institutions, experts, projects and project outputs, as well as Farmers Organization, NGOs, universities, extension, private sector agricultural research organizations, etc.
- To improve information services for local agriculture related organizations using local, regional and international information resources
- To involve more local agricultural and related organizations into local, regional and international information exchange (in the framework of CIARD initiative and through other available mechanisms)
- Strengthening CACAARI.RAIS Website and Electronic infrastructure so that GCARD related activities such as e-discussions, document repository, etc. can be undertaken appropriately.

Some of NNIPs already have entered the CIARD.Ring.

There a number of National bibliographic data bases available on-line in the region, for the most part multidisciplinary, embracing agriculture as well. These are databases on books, papers published in local journals, doctoral thesis, R&D reports, as well as on articles from newspapers and magazines, papers by local researchers published in international journals, national patents, etc. The databases are in national languages, English and Russian. A number of systems of classification are used for indexing: UDC, Russian State STI classification, IPC, Thomson ISI classification, etc. The MICROSOFT SQL SERVER software is in use predominantly for data bases' management.

A number of measures to improving ICM for ARD in the region are envisaged in 2011 and the following period. The ICM Status Report for ARD in the CAC Region will be prepared.

This will provide evidence and direction for investment, capacity building and activities to be initiated at National and Regional levels. A CIARD and CIARD-related advocacy and support workshop is planned in Tbilisi, Georgia as the NNIPs' capacity building measure.

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