

13th ICARDA-CAC Regional Program Planning Meeting

The 13th Regional Planning Meeting (RPM) of the ICARDA Program for Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) was organized in the Hotel Ak Altyn in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on June 16, 2010, which was attended by around 30 participants. The participants comprised the heads of the National Agricultural Research Systems of Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the DDG of Research and representatives of the CGIAR and the other International Centers, and representatives of donor agencies. Also, many scientists from several research institutions working in the region participated. In particular, there was an active participation of a number of scientists from Turkmenistan.

The purpose of the 13th RPM was to summarize the ICARDA-CAC activities and results in the CAC countries and discuss the research directions for the years 2011 and 2012 in collaboration with the NARS partners. The agenda of the 13th RPM provided for presentations and discussions of the agricultural research activities by the respective ICARDA departments, results and conclusions of recent projects and activities in the CAC countries, and discussion of the future ICARDA activities and research needs in the CAC region.

During the meeting, several vital issues related to agricultural research and food security existing in CAC were raised and discussed. Discussion groups along the research questions of crop improvement/genetic resources/IPM, natural resource management/system diversification/livestock and rangeland, and socio-economic and policy research were formed to discuss plans of current projects for the next years, identify capacity development needs, research priorities and possible financing and resource mobilization plans. It was agreed that the focal points of the working group should contact the relevant scientists at ICARDA HQ and circulate the results of the discussion groups to get more information, also in order to avoid duplication with other ongoing projects.

13th CGIAR-CAC Steering Committee Meeting

The 13th Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) of the CGIAR Program for Sustainable Agricultural Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) was organized in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on June 13-15, 2010. The meeting was attended by about 150 participants, comprising of the Focal Points of the National Agricultural Research Systems of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the representatives of the CGIAR and the other International Centers, as well as a large number of scientists and policymakers from Turkmenistan.

The purpose of the 13th SCM was to summarize the CGIAR activities and results in the CAC countries in 2009-2010, and discuss the research directions for the next year and future collaboration within the CAC program.

The Meeting was opened by Deputy Prime Minister of Turkmenistan. He has read out the Solemn Address of H.E. the President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Gurbanguly Berdymuhammedov, to the participants of the SCM. H.E. the President of Turkmenistan welcomed the participants of the meeting in Turkmenistan and wished a success to the meeting. Following this, Mahmoud Solh, Director General, ICARDA, expressed his thanks to H.E. the President of Turkmenistan and the Government of Turkmenistan for hosting the 13th SCM of the CGIAR-CAC Program and highlighted the great progress being made in Turkmenistan in terms of agricultural research development. On behalf of CIMMYT, Dr. Hans Braun gave the opening speech and pointed out the increasing importance of mobilizing efforts to fight the diseases in cereal production, particularly rusts in the region. Dr. Mahmoud Solh in his presentation talked about the ongoing process and goals of transforming the CGIAR and the implications of the CGIAR reform for the CAC region. He informed that the Integrated Reform Proposal includes new legally-structured

Consortium of CGIAR centers, a Common Fund managed by donors and partners, and an Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC). The CG-Centers will create a Consortium as a legal entity with a Consortium Board and an Executive Director (CEO). The Strategy will be implemented through a portfolio of Mega-Programs which are currently developed by the centers. Donors are encouraged to channel their funding through the newly created Common Fund; some donors may continue bilateral funding. He stressed the fact that CGIAR is a strategic partnership always acting at the forefront of agricultural research and this reform will give the CGIAR more focus with clearer vision and strategic directions. The reform has implications for the CAC region as to that the funding for CGIAR System-wide Programs will be discontinued, but the new structure of the mega programs may focus on regional dimensions. The importance of the agro-ecological approach in MPs is emphasized. Therefore, stronger partnerships with national programs will be critical and co-financing and full cost recovery must be considered. Membership may have to be considered to cover the cost of PFU.

Dr. Zakir Khalikulov, Acting Head, PFU, CGIAR-CAC presented the Annual Report of the PFU to the SCM. In his presentation Dr. Zakir Khalikulov briefly summarized the activities of the Program during 2009-2010.

During the meeting there were NARS presentations and discussion about country status reports on research in collaboration with the CG centers in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Prof. Asad Musaev, Director General, Agrarian Scientific Center, Azerbaijan, made a presentation on the collaborative activities of the CGIAR CAC program in Azerbaijan. He mentioned that during the last years, the cooperation between such centers as CIMMYT and ICARDA was enhanced. As a result of cooperation with CAC Program, the national genebank of Azerbaijan has been made functional. Presently, more than 5,500 samples of cereal and legume crops are stored there. The national network on PGR by now consists of 14 national research institutes. Germplasm enhancement remains a key area of cooperation with ICARDA.

Dr. Levon Minasyan, Head, Department of Science, education and extension, Armenia, made a presentation on the collaborative activities of the CGIAR CAC program in Armenia.

The presentation of the NARS partners from Georgia highlighted **the** main activities of the Program in Georgia such as germplasm enhancement, PGR conservation and use, potato research, and capacity building. From Tajikistan Acad. Hukmatullo Ahmadov, President, Tajik Academy of Agricultural Sciences made a presentation on the collaborative activities of the CGIAR CAC program in his country and presented detailed information on CGIAR Centers research activities in Tajikistan in such fields as PGR conservation, germplasm enhancement, introduction of bio-saline agricultural practices in the country, activities on IMP and work with CIP on potato in the Rasht valley. Also, he highlighted the activities on developing water and soil management technologies have been successfully conducted together with ICARDA under the CACILM framework.

From Kazakhstan, Dr. Serik Kenenbaev, President, KazAgroInnovations presented the report on active collaboration with CG centers on germplasm enhancement, crop production, PGR and irrigated agriculture. Also, he mentioned about the research on raised bed planting which had led to the creation of a prototype of a raised bed planter adapted to the conditions and informed about the on-going reforms in the agricultural sector in Kazakhstan.

Acad. Djamin Akimaliev, General Director, Kyrgyz Research Institute of Agriculture made a presentation on the collaborative activities of the CGIAR CAC program in Kyrgyzstan which is focused on germplasm enhancement of wheat, barley and legume crops and vegetables as well as PGR. Acad. Djamin Akimaliev mentioned that as the result of collaboration with Bioversity International, the national PGR strategy was updated and several related publications were produced. The activities on livestock management together with ICARDA are contributing to the improvement of the livelihoods of rural livestock producers, especially in the remote areas. The

activities under the SLMR project have led to the introduction of several promising land management technologies, such as laser land leveling.

Dr. Bahtiyor Kamilov from Uzbek Scientific production Center of Africulture, Uzbekistan in his presentation mentioned about the importance of fighting against rusts in Uzbekistan. He highlighted the research activities conducted by IWMI in Uzbekistan, notably on IWRM and especially mentioned about the successful activities of AVRDC in Uzbekistan, which has led to the release of 6 new varieties of mungbean, sweet and hot pepper. Dr. Kamilov also expressed the satisfaction with the collaborative activities together with Bioversity International, CIP and ICBA.

From Turkmenistan, Dr. Geldy Goshayev, Director, Institute of Crop Husbandry, made a presentation on the collaborative activities of the CGIAR CAC program in Turkmenistan where he had mentioned the current status of agricultural development in Turkmenistan and its priority areas, informed about activity of CG Centers. He expressed his conviction that these successful collaborative activities would be further continued.

After the NARS partners' presentations there were the overall discussion where the several issues were raised, such as vital difference between nutritional and food security, capacity building of young scientists, omission in agrarian policy and other vital problems existing in the region.

Also, Heads of CGIAR Centers made presentations and discussed agricultural research in collaboration with the NARS partners in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Dr. Ram Sharma presented ICARDA activities in the CAC region with focus on the three ongoing projects. Dr. Hans Braun and Dr. Murat Karabayev presented CIMMYT activities. Dr. Mohan Junna presented IWMI activities. He pointed out the critical issue that if water management practices don't change, water needs for agriculture will double. Bioversity International activities was presented by Dr. Jozef Turok. Dr. Carlo Carli presented CIP activities on Potato virus and viroids distribution in different agro-ecological conditions of Uzbekistan. Dr. Ravza Mavlyanova presented AVRDC activities and the main priority vegetable crops in Central Asia. Dr. Kristina Toderich presented ICBA activities and good performance and accumulation of green biomass under highly saline environments.

During the **overall discussion of all presentations**, questions were raised related to the status of the uptake and adoption of the research outputs that are produced in the CAC region as it is still not clear how much was it taken up. There is the need to conduct a formal impact assessment study. Also, it needs to be looked at how strong the interactions among collaborators is, and what are the opportunities for us working together. In this respect, particularly the issue was discussed of whether increasing the uptake via NGOs is a valid way, and it was pointed out that if there are no governmental extension services CGIAR research will not achieve its goals. The Ferghana Valley project of IWMI has done some assessment of the project impact, and part of the documentation is available. Nevertheless, the lack of extension services in each of the countries is a real constraint for the distribution of knowledge, so NGOs are the means of distribution/dissemination. Also, it was noted that adoption strategies and impact are different for different technologies, e.g. what is applicable for water or land management is different from where improved seeds are used. There is still the need to change not only the extension system only but also the varietal testing, seed multiplication and release system.. In some countries, there is a financial bottleneck for adopting the new varieties. During the meeting, Mahmoud Solh, ICARDA DG, met the Turkmen Minister of Agriculture and other high officials and they all showed commitment on strengthening collaboration. The issue is how the CG centers can quantify the impact of the work as the external review recommended to measure the impact of the research from various projects.