



Scientists and policy makers discuss agricultural research results and priorities for Central Asia, Caucasus

Fergana, Uzbekistan, 27 August 2014. More than 50 scientists and policy makers from 15 countries meet in Fergana on 27-29 August 2014 to discuss ongoing research projects and future plans to increase food production and boost agricultural development in Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC).

Fergana will host the 16th meeting of the Steering Committee of the CGIAR Regional Program for Sustainable Agricultural Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus - a review of the achievements of the current science program and a consultation on future targets and priorities. Attending the consultation will be senior policy officers from Ministries of Agriculture, directors of agricultural research from national institutions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and directors general and senior scientists of international agricultural research centers. Representatives from several international development and donor organizations will also join.

The CAC region is faced with a plethora of challenges stemming from climate change, land degradation and growing concern over the availability and quality of water resources. All this calls for new integrated approaches to ensuring sustainable agricultural production and food security, and improving livelihoods of rural populations, says Dr Jozef Turok, Head of the Program Facilitation Unit and ICARDA Regional Coordinator for Central Asia and the Caucasus. "The CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Systems, launched in 2013, was created to tackle these problems. Research is now in progress in three trans-boundary Action Sites, in the Aral Sea region, the Rasht Valley and the Fergana Valley - spanning from Osh and Jalalabad provinces in Kyrgyzstan through Andijan and Fergana provinces in Uzbekistan to Sughd in Tajikistan," he also says.

The meeting will assess progress made to date in the Dryland Systems and other CGIAR Research Programs that are in progress in the region, including 'Wheat', 'Dryland Cereals', 'Roots, Tubers and Bananas', 'Water, Land and Ecosystems', 'Forests, Trees and Agroforestry'; 'Policies, Institutions and Markets'; and 'Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security'. Participants will also exchange knowledge on how agricultural innovations are improving climate change adaptation and water management in the CAC region, and in ongoing research projects enhancing the productivity and sustainability of agricultural production. The main focus will be on the implications of these research outcomes for policy-making in the CAC countries.

The meeting includes a visit to research and demonstration sites in Fergana province, where participants will interact with farmers and local authorities. Uzbekistan has defined a priority to increase the production of quality fruits, vegetables and grapes, supporting its agricultural policy defined since independence in 1991.

Uzbekistan President, Islam Karimov, recently commented that Uzbekistan exports food, particularly fruit and vegetable, products worth some USD5 billion, and that agricultural exports have more than tripled in the past three years.

As delegations from eight Central Asia and Caucasus country will be present, the meeting will also help to identify country priorities, needs and capacities in agricultural research for development. More importantly, however, this meeting will also set the scene for a ministerial meeting on food security and environmental sustainability in the CAC region, planned to be held in Turkmenistan in December 2014.

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About ICARDA and CGIAR Regional Program for Central Asia and the Caucasus

The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) strives to promote agricultural development in the dry areas of developing countries. ICARDA is one of the 15 research centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food secure future. Since 1998, ICARDA has hosted the CGIAR Program for Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) in Uzbekistan. The CGIAR Regional Program is a consortium of eight National Agricultural Research Systems, eight CGIAR Centers and three additional advanced research institutions. The Program is operated under a legal agreement between the Government of Uzbekistan and ICARDA on behalf of the Consortium.

The CGIAR Regional Program promotes sustainable agricultural development in Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC). It also supports the CAC Region in achieving the strategic goals of increased productivity, food and nutritional security through developing and transferring modern agricultural production technologies, while ensuring protection and sustainable use of natural resources. The Program aims at reducing poverty and hunger, improving human health and nutrition, and enhancing ecosystem resilience through high-quality international research, partnership and leadership in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia).

