



New project to boost knowledge-sharing on sustainable land management in Central Asia

Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 10 June 2013: A new initiative to streamline use and creation of knowledge on sustainable land management (SLM) in Central Asia in the face of climate change launches today.

It aims to improve knowledge on SLM practices in the region, and tailor this knowledge to the needs of local populations for practical use and of authorities for shaping better informed policies.

Officials, researchers, practitioners and policymakers will meet to officially kick-start the project and review its objectives and planned outcomes, and design a project work plan. The event is co-organized by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ) in Bishkek.

This initiative lays the groundwork for the second phase of a larger multi-donor investment program called the Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM), which was created to respond to risks posed by growing land degradation and climate variability to local communities, who are highly dependent on land resources for their livelihoods. More specifically, CACILM was established to support Central Asian countries in implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. In the inception phase from 2006 to 2009, it delivered a set of regional and national land management projects totaling US\$155 million.

During this initiative, which is supported by a three-year grant from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and is coordinated by ICARDA, a knowledge platform will be built to consolidate knowledge generated during the Inception Phase. "Learning something new in one country can help to raise the level of knowledge in other countries," says Alona Reichmuth, Advisor with GIZ's Regional Program for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, who led a team that analyzed, evaluated and documented over 20 best practices arising from the Inception Phase.

The new initiative and the Bishkek workshop are designed to give a renewed impetus to the process of sharing useful approaches and best practices in SLM across the region.

Dr Jozef Turok, ICARDA Regional Coordinator for Central Asia and the Caucasus, comments: "Our main objectives are to enhance CACILM knowledge management for facilitating widespread dissemination of sustainable land management (SLM) practices, to make agricultural systems more productive and sustainable, and to promote climate change adaptation."

The initiative seeks to produce recommendations on how SLM interventions can best be scaled-up. Researchers will work with target groups, which include policymaking units responsible for

SLM in each country; non-governmental organizations and rural development agencies working in each country and at regional level; extension agencies, farmers and farmers' organizations; and the international donor community active in Central Asia.

Dr Theib Oweis, Director of ICARDA's Water and Land Management Program that spearheads the effort, explains: "Knowledge management is essential to understanding and disseminating innovative SLM approaches and technologies that have high potential for implementation in the different agro-ecosystems of Central Asia. The evaluation how these technologies perform in farmers' fields is needed to tailor interventions to specific needs. And the choice of interventions needs to be accompanied by enabling policies and institutional arrangements for each agro-ecosystem."

The project targets four main agro-ecosystems: rainfed cropland; irrigated agriculture; mountain ecosystems; and rangelands.

It is expected that through this project, knowledge on how to better adapt to climate change in agriculture and rural development will increase. A knowledge platform will be created that displays up-to-date information on SLM, monitors and assesses the rate of SLM adoption in the region, and provides support for evidence-based policy formulation.

ICARDA will work closely with the CACILM Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), a multi-donor partnership, which includes IFAD, GIZ, ICARDA and other organizations. This project will surely contribute to making vulnerable populations in Central Asia ready for and better adapted to climate change by harnessing best practices in SLM.

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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).