

CGIAR Annual General Meeting 2001
Stakeholder Meeting
October 31, 2001
Report from Parallel Session I
Chair: Leen Boer
Sec.: Manuel Lantin

Three program initiatives (climate change, water and agriculture, and biofortification) were considered in Parallel Session I. The first two were previously submitted as potential themes for CGIAR challenge program. The Session Chair clarified the main purpose of the session, i.e. to provide a forum for informing stakeholders about the proposed themes and provide them an opportunity to comment and give inputs for their further development. The session was attended by over 140 participants, indicating high interest in the topics.

The following is a summary of the comments/issues raised:

1. Climate Change – presented by Dennis Garrity (ICRAF and Inter-Center Working Group on Climate Change (ICWGG-CC))
 - Proposed coverage is very broad. There is a need to prioritize and focus on components which are feasible and deliverable in a time-bound program.
 - Need to define appropriate governance mechanism for the program
 - Linkages between climate change and other themes (e.g. water, as well as other areas of CGIAR work) need to be defined.
 - More broad consultation with stakeholders need to be undertaken.

The presenter acknowledged the comments and suggestions, and indicated that they were indeed areas that the ICWG-CC will consider in the course of the proposal's development.

2. Water and Agriculture – presented by Frank Rijsberman (IWMI)
 - Need to clarify the objectives and thrust of the proposed program, vis-a-vis the current research agenda of IWMI
 - As in the case of climate change, appropriate governance mechanism should be defined.
 - Problem identification needs involvement of community-based groups.

On the first point, the presenter responded that the proposed program covers components that are beyond IWMI's current research agenda and would need involvement of a wide array of partners. He acknowledged the other points raised and would consider them in the development of the proposal.

3. Biofortification – presented by Per Pinstrup-Andersen (IFPRI) and Joachim Voss (CIAT)
 - A concern was expressed on the strategy of biofortification. It was argued that it would reduce “diversity” (i.e. deriving nutrient supply from different food sources) in people's diet.

- The use of genetic engineering techniques to increase micronutrient content of staple crops was also raised .

In response, the presentors agreed that diversity in people's diet is indeed desirable and should be promoted. They, however, pointed out that biofortification should be considered as one of several approaches to solving malnutrition among the poor, particularly women and children. Biofortification offers great opportunity to improve the nutritional value of current staple crops which are the principal components of poor people's diet.

Improving micronutrient content of food crops is accomplished through conventional plant breeding and use of molecular tools. Genetic modification with the safe use of genetic engineering tools open up opportunities for more rapid and efficient development of improved food crop varieties.