

CGIAR Annual General Meeting 2001
Stakeholder Meeting, Wednesday 31 October
Parallel Session II
Chair – Joseph Mukiibi (Uganda)
Sec – Tim Kelley

During this session, brief presentations were made on four themes:

- Animal Diseases, Food Safety, Trade and Poverty
- Agriculture and Combating Desertification
- Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM); and,
- Web-based Information System on Agriculture Research and Development (WISARD)

Short discussions amongst the group followed each of the presentations.

The first presentation addressed a topic that was previously submitted as a potential theme for a CGIAR Challenge Programme (CP). This theme, which was presented by Chris Delgado (IFPRI) and David Taylor (ILRI), focuses on the need for targeted multi-disciplinary research to address the new challenges of ensuring food safety and controlling animal diseases in the context of poverty alleviation and the increasing importance of trade. Key issues, expected outputs and impacts and a list of existing and potential partners and sources of new financing were identified. The ultimate objective of this initiative is to help small-scale operators meet global quality, food safety and timeliness standards through institutional and policy development. The discussion following the presentation raised several issues related to the scope of the work (food contamination through transport, importance of developing country markets) and different dimensions of the adverse impact of disease outbreaks on the livelihoods of farm families in both developing and developed countries.

The second topic presented by Barry Shapiro (ICRISAT) and Willy Erksine (ICARDA)—agriculture and combating desertification—is another proposed theme for a CGIAR CP. The proposed programme aims to conduct focused research on the links between agriculture, land degradation in dry areas, and drought, and to undertake dialogue activities with a wide range of desertification stakeholders. The initiative builds on related on-going CGIAR centre activity, the Desert Margin Initiative among others, but proposes a new three-prong approach consisting of stakeholder dialogue, research programmes and resource mobilisation. A range of potential dialogue partners has been identified. In the discussion which followed, a key issue that emerged was the need for greater clarity and focus, and the need to identify specific key working hypotheses, particularly in the light of considerable experience gained thus far and large research investments that have already been made in this area. More specific goals and expected impacts need to be articulated. Nevertheless, the need for a programme such as this was expressed by several stakeholders in the group.

A brief report was presented by Jacqueline Ashby (CIAT) covering the recent INRM 2001 meeting at CIAT. The report also addressed recent developments in INRM thinking at the System level. To-date, the INRM task force activities have been self-financed. INRM is an approach that integrates research on different types of natural resources through a stakeholder driven processes of adaptive management and innovation. The effort focuses on improved livelihoods, agro-ecosystem resilience, and agricultural productivity and environmental services at various community and spatial scales.

A tour of the web-based information system for agricultural and natural resource management (WISARD) was given by Frans Neuman (IAC, Wageningen). WISARD is a powerful tool for accessing specific types of information on a range of topics and identifiers related to agricultural research and development.

Several times in the discussion concern was expressed about the process by which proposals for CPs would be advanced to the next stage, the timing and extent to which other interested potential partners would be brought into the process, and questions about operationalizing the preliminary “endorsements” of individual CP concept notes. In response to this concern, the Chair pointed out that the primary purpose of this session was to provide a forum for informing stakeholders on the current developments with respect to the proposed CPs and to give an opportunity to interested stakeholders to discuss and seek clarification about the objectives, specific expected outputs and impacts from the proposed CPs, and the potential partners, and prospects for new sources of funding.