

## **ExCo 14 – Ottawa, Canada Report from the Alliance of the CGIAR Centres**

**Alliance members have continued to engage very actively in the Change Management Process and the Independent Review of the CGIAR System. The Alliance is striving to contribute an Alliance position on key issues in the Change Management Process, over and beyond individual centres' contributions. In addition to these contributions, the Alliance produced a number of outputs.**

### **Development Challenges**

The Alliance commissioned an analytical paper on the development -and associated research-challenges that face international agricultural research and discussed it during its last meeting. A second Alliance position paper resulted (the first being 'The Way Forward') on the key development challenges for international agricultural research over the coming decade. The Alliance considers that the CGIAR must address three inter-linked Development Challenges:

- (i) Pro-poor growth to improve the productivity and the sustainability of developing country agriculture and food systems;
- (ii) Sustainability, climate and energy to improve the management of natural resources and environmental services to strengthen livelihoods and to respond and adapt to climate change and energy scarcity;
- (iii) Agriculture to improve nutrition and health and reduce the spread of infectious and chronic diseases.

This new position paper was provided as a further Alliance input into the on-going Change Management Process.

### **Development of Framework Plans for the twenty System Priorities**

Scientists from the Centres worked together to prepare, under the guidance of the Centres Deputy Directors for Science, twelve framework plans for twelve of the twenty Systems priorities. These plans result from a consultative process including main CGIAR actors, and sometimes partners and global experts in the field. The plans describe the CGIAR's research role in the context of global initiatives and cutting edge research being carried out elsewhere, by agencies, industry, advanced research institutes and national agricultural research systems. The Alliance is currently engaged in a dialogue with the Science Council on the best way to move forward with the remaining eight framework plans in the context of the development challenges that are emerging from the Change Management Process.

## **Climate change**

In preparation for the Climate Change Initiative which Kathy Sierra launched in Bali, the Alliance prepared an inventory and an analysis of the on-going work of Centres on climate change and agriculture. The current research agenda of the CGIAR on climate change and agriculture represents a significant research effort on key issues in current international discussions and negotiations. The work has five main *foci*. The first focal area concerns new research methods, including innovative models, scenario analyses and early warning tools for small-scale agriculture. The second area deals with assessing the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations, ecosystems and germplasm particularly at risk. Third, options for adapting essential germplasm, small-scale agricultural systems and small-scale practices to climate change and increasing climate variability are being developed. A fourth focus concerns mitigation options, including practices for reducing emissions from agriculture and deforestation and increasing carbon sequestration. Finally, policy options that support small-scale farmers in developing countries in their adaptation and mitigation of climate change are the fifth focal area.

The Alliance is now engaged in developing a plan of action for ensuring sustainable funding of this on-going climate change work. The new climate change challenge programme has been designed to complement (not to replace) this on-going agenda and is therefore a part of this much larger Strategic Initiative on Climate Change.

## **Challenge Programmes**

The Alliance continued to coordinate the preparation of the three proposals for new challenge programmes. Internal processes were put in place to ensure that new innovative science -and associated partnerships- that add value to the on-going CGIAR agenda would drive the preparation of the proposals.

In preparation for the submission of full proposals, the Alliance undertook a survey of lessons learned from the existing Challenge Programs. These lessons, drawn from the perspective of the Centres (e.g. value addition to on-going research programmes), complemented the lessons drawn by the Science Council and by the Secretariat. The lessons were essential for designing new Challenge Programmes in a more effective manner.

## **Regional Plans for collective actions in sub-Saharan Africa**

The Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) regional plan for collective action consists of four flagship projects. The first flagship on integrated natural resources management, seeks to better link long term research sites into a single knowledge, research and monitoring platform. The second flagship on markets, institutions, policies held a panel discussion on market development at an international conference and is discussing with stakeholders a major conference on agricultural market development and pro-poor growth. Flagship 3, on genetics is also organising a workshop and review of “Knowledge, methods and approaches to accelerate the contribution of bio-technology to African agriculture”. The fourth flagship, on recovery after crises/conflict, is particularly active in South Sudan.

The Western and Central Africa (WCA) regional plan for collective action is organised into five programs. These are: (i) Harmonizing sustainable use of genetic resources; (ii) Using genetics and technology for food security; (iii) Reducing rural poverty through diversification; (iv) Sustainable resource management for improved productivity and (v) Harnessing the power of the marketplace to help WCA farmers.

The Alliance has furthered linkages between these two regional plans and Conference of Leaders of Agricultural Research in West and Central Africa (CORAF) and Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA). Both plans were presented at the annual general meeting of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and have been endorsed by FARA as contributing to the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) and the Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP).

As far as research on rice is concerned, CIAT, IRRI and WARDA have identified areas of common intervention in the rice sector in Africa through a collaborative program. A MoU was signed by the three Directors General to provide a framework of common understanding for the work of the CGIAR on rice in Africa.

A coordination and management plan has also been conceived under a Sub Saharan Africa Rice Research Consortium (SARC) which will liaise with already existing networks in ESA (Eastern and Central Africa Rice Research Network -ECARRN) and WCA (West and Central Africa Rice Research Network - ROCARIZ) to provide a sustainable access to the National Research Programs already in place in Africa.

### **Collaboration with FAO**

Progress regarding a priority for FAO-Alliance collaboration -climate change- was made as FAO is one of the partners in the new Challenge Programme on climate change. The Alliance has also been invited to contribute to the preparation and organisation of the FAO High-Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy in June 2008.

### **System-wide Online Tool for Medium Term Plan (MTP) reporting**

The Alliance, in collaboration with the Science Council, the Information and Communications Technology and Knowledge Management Unit (ICT-KM), and the CGIAR Secretariat, developed an online tool to help compile MTP information. This on-line tool will allow, by the end of 2008, the consultation of MTPs on line, and to conduct searches across Centres, for instance to identify all activities undertaken by the Centres in any one region or country, or on any specific topic across regions and Centres. This will provide the first on-line system level view of Centres activities. The users of 'EASY-MTP' are expected to be research managers, Centre's staff, development investors, CGIAR members, national partners, and the Science Council.

### **System Wide and Ecoregional Programmes (SWEPS)**

Following the release of the Science Council's analysis of System Wide and Ecoregional Programmes (SWEPS), the Alliance discussed the role which SWEPS play in the System. The position of the Alliance regarding this role is stated in a separate paper.

### **Alliance Bioenergy Platform (ABP)**

Recognizing the global urgency of biofuel issues, their high relevance to the CGIAR mission and the need to complement and synergize expertise and gain critical mass and visibility, nine Alliance Centres decided to create a joint platform on bioenergy. This creation followed consultation meetings with stakeholders, and an Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutes (APAARI) Expert Consultation on this issue.

The purpose of the ABP is to build synergy and coherence between Centres on bioenergy research related to agricultural development, such as the potential of new crops and cropping systems, economic and social risks and opportunities, impacts on climate change, land degradation / rehabilitation, and water use. ABP will provide analysis, research and advice on the crucial issues of the magnitude of bioenergy impact and of technical tools needed to avoid negative consequences on food security.

ABP's current major activity is expanding its partnerships by organizing a high-profile Symposium in October 2008 at the American Society of Agronomy meeting that will build relationships with leading global players on these priority issues.

### **Agriculture and Health Research Platform (AHRP)**

The AHRP is an initiative of eleven Alliance Centres in partnership with health research and development organizations, notably the World Health Organization. The goal of the AHRP is to promote and coordinate research on the two-way linkages between agriculture and health, to alleviate food insecurity through enhanced policy and program effectiveness.

The AHRP has prioritized the following areas during a multi-stakeholder workshop co-hosted by the World Health Organisation: HIV/AIDS and agriculture; avian influenza, household livelihoods and food security; agriculture, nutrition, diet and health; food safety and growing food supply chains; water-borne diseases and water management; occupational health (including pesticides) and child labour in agriculture; and the links between animal and human health. Environmental change, with its linkages to climate change, will provide the dynamic backdrop to much of this work. Gender will be a key crosscutting issue that permeates all Platform activities, with research capturing gender differentials in linkages and in programmatic responses, and in effectively addressing barriers to women's access to, and control over resources for productive agriculture and a healthy life.

A health advisory group of global public health experts advises the Platform, along with a core research group comprising representatives of the Centres, WHO, FAO and several NGOs and academic institutions.

The AHRP has been asked to submit a paper on agriculture and health research and facilitate a session on "Collaborations" at a preparatory meeting for the Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health which will be held in November 2008. This conference, held every 4 years, charts the way ahead for international research on health-related issues.