

Strengthening Relations between France and the CGIAR

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries hosted the Eleventh Meeting of the Executive Council of the CGIAR (ExCO 11) October 17-18, 2006 at its building located at 78 rue de Varenne, Paris.

On that occasion, relations between France and the CGIAR were strengthened and renewed.

This was demonstrated by the events organized during the afternoon of October 17, when a gathering was held in parallel with ExCO 11, at the invitation of the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Dominique Bussereau, and Katherine Sierra, CGIAR Chair and World Bank Vice President. The three events described below are noteworthy.

The Round Table “Facing the Changes in Global Agriculture: The Response to International Agricultural Research”

The Round Table, opened by Denis Despréaux of the Ministry responsible for research, Executive Secretary of the International Agricultural Research Commission (CRAI) and representative for France on the CGIAR, served as a forum for bringing together four speakers who were introduced by the two Round Table moderators, Michel Petit, a Professor at the Montpellier Mediterranean Agricultural Institute [*Institut agronomique méditerranéen de Montpellier*] and Francisco Reifschneider, Director of the CGIAR. Michel Petit introduced Christian de Boissieu, Professor of Economics at the *Université de Panthéon Sorbonne* and Chairman of the European and International Council on Prospective Studies related to Food and Agriculture of the Ministry of Agriculture [*Conseil de prospective européenne et internationale pour l'agriculture et l'alimentation du ministère de l'Agriculture*], followed by Bernard Bachelier, Director of the Foundation for Agriculture and Global Rural Development [*Fondation pour l'agriculture et la ruralité dans le monde FARM*]. Christian de Boissieu demonstrated how the current discussions between economists fell into the dual categories of the relevance of models and consideration of the process of innovation and technological change. Referring in particular to the 2020 forecast of the IFPRI, the INRA models, and the work of Michel Griffon, Christian de Boissieu also underscored the extent to which agricultural and rural economists were pioneers in the area of prospective studies. Bernard Bachelier shed light on the great importance of strengthening public-private partnerships in addressing global food and ecological challenges. He also underscored FARM's commitment to giving consideration to these challenges facing both the North and South in conduct of its work.

In introducing the next two speakers, namely, Henri Carsalade, former Assistant Director of the FAO and Chairman of the Board of ICRISAT, as well as Joachim Voss, Chair of CGIAR's alliance of international agricultural research centers [Alliance Executive], Francisco Reifschneider thanked the French authorities and representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture for facilitating the various ExCO 11-related events and expressed his satisfaction over the launching that day of the publication “France and the CGIAR: Achieving Results in International Agricultural Research” [*La France et le CGIAR: des résultats pour la recherche agricole internationale*] which, in his view, marked a seminal moment in the history of relations between the two research systems. Henri Carsalade

pointed out the uniqueness of France in that it has both national and international research systems, with the National Agricultural Research Institute [*Institut national de la recherche agronomique* INRA], the International Center for Agricultural Research and Development [*Centre international de recherche agronomique pour le développement* CIRAD], the National Center for Agricultural Machinery and Engineering, Water Resources and Forests [*Centre national du machinisme agricole, du génie rural, des eaux et des forêts* CEMAGREF], and the Research Institute for Development [*Institut de recherche pour le développement* IRD]. Henri Carsalade expressed his pleasure over the collaboration taking place internally and in the international sphere, with the signing of the Letter of Agreement between French research entities and the CGIAR. He stated that he was committed to the process, in his capacity as President of Agropolis Montpellier and the new CRAI organization. Joachim Voss noted the coordination effort undertaken by the 15 international agricultural research centers within Alliance Executive and expressed interest in planning joint research with institutes for advanced research, particularly in France, in order to better respond to the CGIAR's mission, namely to improve food security, reduce poverty, and protect the environment in developing countries through scientific research and related activities in the areas of agriculture, livestock production, silviculture, fisheries, and natural resource policies and management.

In response to a question on the role of the media in an event focusing on scientific issues for future agricultural research, and which in some countries would attract a great deal of media interest (press and television), the speakers noted that the unfortunate fact was that scientific discussions caught the interest of the high-reach media only in instances of major crises.

Official Speeches and Launching of the Publication: France and the CGIAR: Achieving Results in International Agricultural Research

Philippe Etienne, the Director General for International Cooperation and Development of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed his satisfaction over the strengthening of relations between France and the CGIAR, to be formalized through the signing of an agreement that day pledging to focus on such major global issues as the doubling of food demand by 2050 or even management of the planet's renewable resources in an economically and socially sustainable manner. Pointing to the ongoing support provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the CGIAR since its founding in 1971 and to his support for new programs such as the global food and water program, Philippe Etienne announced that the CGIAR will benefit from financial measures be implemented in 2007.

Katherine Sierra, CGIAR President and Vice President of the World Bank, noted the fruitful and long-standing partnership between France and the CGIAR, not only from a financial standpoint, but also from a scientific, technical and orientation standpoint. Underscoring that agriculture is a key sector in most developing countries, Katherine Sierra took due note of the fact that the portion of development assistance earmarked for agriculture by the European Union had increased and stood at 3.3 percent of all assistance in 2004. With regard to the CGIAR, Katherine Sierra noted that the projected 2006 budget, which is trending upward, stood at US\$489 million and that the reform program undertaken was geared toward greater efficiency and responsibility by allowing for the streamlining of procedures, strengthening work in the area of science to serve development needs, and the establishment of new partnerships. Referring to her wish to strengthen agricultural research to serve development needs, she stressed that the book

“France and the CGIAR: Achieving Results in International Agricultural Research,” which was circulated at that event, was a testament to the importance of scientific partnerships between France and the CGIAR. The book is a compendium of over 40 articles written by more than 130 authors and co-authors and addresses such important areas as the long-term management of genetic resources.

Michel Fuzeau, Director of the Office of the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries headed by Dominique Bussereau, underscored the importance of challenges faced in the area of international agricultural research and the renewed commitment of France in this regard, as evidenced by the achievements of the scientific partnership described in the France-CGIAR book which was launched and circulated among the participants of the meeting that day, and in the future, through the signing of a Letter of Agreement between French research entities and the CGIAR. Michel Fuzeau indicated that from the standpoint of French research entities, the signing of the Letter of Agreement was coming at the right time. French agricultural research entities are in fact being consolidated with a view to greater clarity and effectiveness, particularly in the international sphere. With this in mind, INRA and CIRAD have started to work collaboratively, in conjunction with CEMAGREF and in keeping with the establishment of a resource agency within IRD. In his closing remarks, Michel Fuzeau underscored how all the elements, taken together, have shaped a renewed framework conducive to strengthening partnerships with the CGIAR.

Signing of the Letter of Agreement between French Research Agencies and the CGIAR

The representatives of the French agencies and the CGIAR, namely Patrick Lavarde, Director of CEMAGREF, Patrice Debré, President of CIRAD, Marion Guillou, President of INRA, and Jean François Girard, President of IRD as well as Francisco Reifschneider, Director of the CGIAR, and Joachim Voss, Director of Alliance Executive, then proceeded to initial the agreement concluded.

The Letter of Agreement provides for the implementation of joint programs in the area of research, training, and prospective studies. A committee responsible for follow up work related to the agreement, formed with equal French and CGIAR representation, is charged with drafting proposals for the meeting, already slated to take place in February 2007.