
IFAP¹ and GFAR collaboration during 2006 and 2007

“For years, IFAP has been insisting that agriculture research has to be farmer-focused. It must solve the problems farmers face both in production and in marketing. It has been the case in many developed countries for years that agricultural research is focused on farmers needs, because farmers have been contributing to agricultural research through check-offs (commodity levies) and so have influence in directing it. In some Latin American countries, farmers’ organisations have representatives on the governing bodies of their national research institutes, and because government resources and producer check-offs flow through farmers’ organizations, they have created research institutes admired the world over. This is not the case everywhere, and particularly for small-scale producers who do not yet have strong farm organisations representing them – not yet”

IFAP President, Mr. Jack Wilkinson

Research is a key issue for farmers and since this priority was established, IFAP created a Committee on Agricultural Research to address this issue. In addition to this, since 2003 IFAP has been participating and collaborating within GFAR structures.

Agricultural research should seek to improve the livelihoods and incomes of farmers, helping them in having a sustainable rural life. Agricultural research has to be **farmer-centred** and it must solve the problems farmers faced, not only in production but in marketing as well. It has to shift from supply based approach to needs based approach. It should help to achieve the goals of food security, poverty elimination and the sustainable use of natural resources. Knowledge sharing and innovation is a pillar for sustaining farmer’s livelihoods. In order to ensure a demand-driven agenda for agricultural research, it is important that farmers are involved in setting research priorities. IFAP is therefore pressing for farmers to be represented in the governing structures of agricultural research forums, networks and platforms at all levels.

The International Community should keep in mind that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will never be reached without improving the involvement of farmers’ organizations in agricultural research programmes and networks.

GFAR efforts to increase farmers’ participation in its structures, programmes and activities, coincided with IFAP farmers demand for a better involvement in agricultural research processes from planning and decision making to implementation.

1- Increasing farmer’s participation and dialogue with researchers

A delegation of eight farmer’s representatives of IFAP participated in the **GFAR Triennial Conference in India** (9-11 November 2006). IFAP leaders point out that the Conference was a

¹ **IFAP** is the world farmers’ organization representing over 600 million farm families grouped in 115 national organizations in 85 countries. It is a global network in which farmers from industrialized and developing countries exchange concerns and set common priorities.

good opportunity to exchange directly with the researchers community, nevertheless its still needed to make farmers voice to appear more often into this kind of conferences and also to tight the outputs in terms of the reorientation of agricultural research “farmers centred” and in order to meet the MDGs. The farmers’ organizations presence and participation still need to be emphasized. Farmers’ Organizations as a form of Civil Society Organizations have the potential to play an important role: in developing a strong social capital in the rural areas that is regarded a pre-requisite for food security and sustainable development; in the production of agricultural production, food security and sustainable utilization of the natural resources. Farmers’ Organizations are a relatively untapped resource in the global agricultural research. In this sense, IFAP considers that through their involvement in GFAR they will have new opportunities to help tailor agricultural research in ways that would better fit farmers need. Farmers should take their rightful place in decision making bodies that set agricultural research for development (ARD) agenda at national, regional and global levels. The conference has addressed various aspect of the required orientation of the agricultural research so that the agricultural sector can effectively contribute to meeting MDGs in a sustainable manner. It will consider the changes needed in agricultural research and development systems to satisfy societal needs expressed in the part in the MDGs, and for the correct and wise use of the new technologies. Farmer organizations reiterated their commitment in achieving MDGs and finding solutions to challenges of poverty, food insecurity and degradation of natural resources and for re-orienting the agriculture research priorities for meeting these challenges.

The Delhi Declaration was adopted mentioning important issues for farmers such as: the significantly contribution of agriculture with the MDGs and the affirmation of the commitment to reorienting agricultural research for development (ARD) in order to contribute more effectively to meet the targets. It was highlighted to pay special attention to small farmers and recognize the important role of women and youth. As they contribute in the achievement of the MDGs and in the continuum of ARD activities, enhance their future involvement might be a goal to achieve too.

As outcomes, IFAP issued two documents to inform farmers worldwide: “Towards a breakthrough for farmer-centred agricultural research” and “Brief summary on the Farmer Organisation Consultations”.

Later in the year, an IFAP delegation of five farmers participated at the **Civil Society Forum, Program and Steering Committee of GFAR, CGIAR Business meeting and the CGIAR General Assembly held in Washington DC** (30th November to 7th December 2006). IFAP evaluates that the forum was an opportunity for interaction, exchange of information, diversity and networking. A number of suggestions were made especially related to lessons learned and creating avenues for working together.

2- Creating regional linkages between farmers and researchers

During 2006 for strengthening farmers’ participation in GFAR regional research forums, IFAP nominated **farmers’ representatives in each region**. They are: Mr. Fernando Lopez for Latin America and the Caribbean (FORAGRO); Zviad Bobokashvili for Central Asia and Caucasus (CACAARI); Raul Montemayor for Asia Pacific (APAARI); Gülcan Eraktan for Near East and North Africa (AARINENA) and Nduati Kariuki for East and Central Africa (FARA). The role of these farmers’ representatives –also members of the IFAP Committee on Agricultural Research- is to implement the agreed “IFAP Research Committee Action Plan” within the regions and to interact with the concerned research forum. At the end of 2006 and beginning of 2007, IFAP focal points address meetings with all of the regional forums to present farmer’s regional view about collaboration with research. Those addressed meetings, allow IFAP to be updated on the regional research forum situation and perspectives in each region.

3- Updating tools for farmers

IFAP, with GFAR financial support, updated the **booklet “Negotiating Linkages: Farmer organizations, Agricultural Research and Extension”**. This publication is an advocacy tool for farmers’ organizations to better communicate the importance of the farmer’s centred approach for agricultural research, also bring these insights to the forefront of the development arena. The publication was the result of a series of informative workshops, seminars and consultations undertaken at the national, regional and international level by developing country farmer organizations themselves.

Finally, IFAP prioritizes the collaboration with GFAR in agricultural research issues as a very important issue being highlighted permanently by its member organizations. ...

References:

- “Towards a breakthrough for farmer-centred agricultural research”. Report by IFAP President, Paris, France, 2006.
- “Brief summary on the Farmer Organisation Consultations”. Report by IFAP President, Paris, France, 2006.
- “Negotiation Linkages: Farmer organizations, Agricultural Research and Extension”, updated on 2006 from the original on 1995. Paris, France, 2006.