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Toward Global Partnership in Agricultural Research

**The Needs and Opportunities for Agricultural Research From
the Perspective of West Asia and North Africa**

The attached paper is circulated as an input into the discussions leading to the *Declaration and Action Plan for Global Partnerships in Agricultural Research*.

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**Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
in the Near East and North Africa**

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**"Needs and opportunities for agricultural research
in the WANA region"**

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AARINENA, President**

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Introduction

Allow me ladies and gentlemen at the beginning of my statement to express my deep appreciation and recognition to the Consultative Group for the kind invitation addressed to the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA) for attending both, Jakarta meeting and the Center's week.

This occasion is rather unique for both of us, since the CGIAR called for a new vision where NARS and NGOs of developing world would play a significant role in setting up the CG agenda; likewise, NARS in the WANA region, called for a leading role of AARINENA as strong spokes person for the region and took major decisions for an outreach development of our association both at national and regional levels.

Opportunities and challenges of the WANA region

Allow me Ladies and Gentlemen to recall to your attention some salient characteristics of the WANA region in terms of opportunities and challenges; this will help us understand some major conclusions we draw upon in this presentation.

As you know, the region of our member countries extend from Morocco in the west to Pakistan in the East and from Turkey in the North to Yemen in the South.

The population of the WANA region is characterised by a wide variation in size among individual countries and a rapid growth rates of 2.7 %.

This region is also characterised by a fragile natural resource base since, approximately 8 % of the region's 1.7 billion hectares is arable land and another 22 % is steppe, leaving the bulk of the remaining 70 % desert or semi desert* . As consequence 40 % of the countries rely or have potential for irrigation, yet in 60 % remaining countries, irrigated land don't exceed 15 % of total cultivated areas.

* Source : ISNAR and ICARDA figures

These contrasting figures raise then, the first challenging question that is how much resources should be allocated to rainfed agriculture relative to irrigated lands ?

The WANA region is the largest food importing region in the developing world, mainly due to a rapidly growing population, increasing urbanisation and low rate of growth in the production of major food commodities. Also, it is expected, that in the future, most of the achievable increase in food production would come mainly from increasing productivity.

The second most important challenge then, is how to achieve this goal without further depletion of natural resources within a world trade economy characterised by severe competition and reduced direct support to farmers ?

There are however major opportunities for the WANA region:

- ① WANA region is well known for its *world wide genetic resources diversity* of most important cultivated species such as wheat, barley, oats, several tree species, animals etc.
- ② Farmers and stockbreeders of the region do have *millenary experience in field of irrigation, pasture management and general farming*.
- ③ *Potential research capacities and greater opportunities for potential relations between NARS* do exist in most countries. As shown by ISNAR and ICARDA reports, apart from some Gulf States, most countries share communalities in terms of agro-ecological zoning and production systems; This has contributed to a major development of various networks in the region.
- ④ There are great opportunities for interactions with developing ^{ed} countries such as *Europe through the Mediterranean region and with developing countries in Africa and Asia, which make the WANA region in rather unique geo-political position*.
- ⑤ International centres such as ICARDA and ISNAR are valuable sources of new technologies for the WANA agriculture and have been playing a key role in *genetic resources conservation, training, upgrading management capabilities and fostering network linkages in the region*.

- ⑥ AARINENA which is the only organisation with the objective of fulfilling a suitable dialogue between the NARS in the WANA region would play a significant role in fostering such partnership. Our association which was created since 1983, includes 16 member countries from the WANA region and is co-sponsored by FAO, ISNAR and ICARDA. The overall objectives of our association are to :
- foster the development of agricultural research in the region;
 - promote the exchange of agricultural, scientific and technical experiences and informations;
 - strengthen cross-linkages between national, regional and international research centres and organisations.

Ladies and gentleman, I would like now to share with you our views on key issues raised in the Global Plan of Action (GPA) developed in Rome meeting in August 1996, this plan and the Detailed Action Plan (DAP) of previous IFAD/CCCIAR consultations, set forth an overall program for NARS and IARCs ; The process also helped set forward the major key issues that need considerations for developing partnership with CG-systems and other partners as well.

Capacity building :

Regarding capacities building, It was recognised that implementation of the GPA will require strong NARS, and a general opinion emerged from the previous consultation with ICARDA/ WANA/NARS meeting that *capacity building in terms of human resources development and upgrading information systems are of high priority to NARS.*

With regard to the first issue training should consider both research and management; It was indicated that *training should address regional needs and put more emphasis on post-graduate degrees of NARS scientists and technicians. This aspect could be a real link point of an overall partnership's program which would engage NARIs, Universities, NGOs and CG-centres.*

Regarding information system, as you know recent decades have seen enormous advances in information technology, such advances present tremendous *opportunities for scientists in developing countries to bridge the information gap with their counterparts in developing and developed world*; on other hand as research becomes decentralised, there is an increasing *demand for management of information flow networks both at local, national and regional levels*. Therefore, the ability to manage the flow of information can be a crucial factor in determining whether NARS can effectively meet the challenges of increased and more varied demands for agricultural research results in a rapidly changing environment.

CG-system would therefore play a key role for helping NARS in establishing information management strategies, for a better identification of demand and sources of information, mechanisms for dissemination and coordination of management flow, as well as upgrading NARS capacities.

Gentlemen, within this context of capacity building, I would like to draw your attention to two other major points which would constitute major challenges as well for the future of NARS; *Biotechnology and management of Natural resources has become increasingly important issues for most developing NARS* The need here, is to *help NARS establish integrated research/development and management's strategies in both areas within the actual context of ongoing research, and help set specific training programs for upgrading capacities of NARS.*

Priority setting

Priority setting was the second most important issue raised during our process of consultation with the CG-centres. The meeting, co-sponsored by FAO, IFAD, ISNAR and ICARDA in December 1995, was a historical event which launched a long term process in this regard.

AARINENA has discussed intensively this issue during its 5th General Conference held in Rabat-Morocco in April 1996 and requested member countries to *prepare documents on status of priority setting at the national level*; these documents were forwarded to ISNAR to assist in preparing a synthesis paper and terms of reference for sub-regional groupings based on outcome of the WANA/NARS/CGIAR meeting held at ICARDA; And we were happy to see that the actual ISNAR strategy pay a special attention to this aspect.

Regarding the content of this priority exercise, AARINENA member countries have actively participated to ICARDA and ISNAR's consultations which led to the finest elements of strategies and medium term planning. In this regard AARINENA will discuss this aspect during its executive committee meeting in November, 96 in Cairo, I would like however to raise some specific concerns that we would like CGIAR consider at this occasion.

① *From agrosystem stand point, development of rained agriculture of arid and semi arid and high elevation systems should remain the key trust of CG mandate in the WANA region since most poorest farms live in such areas and because of more challenging problems for developing sustainable production systems. And I would like at this occasion express our deep recognition to ICARDA, CIMMYT and ICRISAT for their contribution to the development of these regions.*

② *The increasing concerns for irrigation would require a selective effort of involvement of GC centre such as IMMI in the region on priority issues such as water management and water use efficiency; likewise the increasing concern of sustainable development and land degradation control specially in watersheds, would need development of more comprehensive research in areas of agroforestry with further involvement in the region of CG centres such as ICRAF.*

③ *With the growing concerns of the world trade liberalization, there is a need for diversification of cropping system in order to secure farm incomes; such requirement will need however more indepth studies of potential market demand; yet we believe that the actual commodity goods of CG mandate within our region should remain the highest priority for the WANA region; these could be reviewed however in light of new concerns such as quality improvement, IPM etc.*

④ *The ICARDA/NARS/WANA meeting raised a new dimension of crops such as olives, date palms, citrus and nut trees, species which do not fall in CG mandate. Regional centres such ACSAD and IOC (International Oil council) have considerable input in such areas; Yet, NARS in the region would need support for coordination and sustaining existing network in order to mobilize the tremendous efforts and genetic ressources available in the region.*

Partnership with CG and non CG systemes

As stated in the GPA paper, our goal here is to seek collaboration through sharing responsibilities networking and collaborative research programs.

In order to put forward the process, AARINENA took major decisions during its last General Conference and decided :

❶ *To broaden the scope of membership from NARIs to NARS to include all components of agricultural research such as universities, NGOs and private sector.*

❷ *To develop five sub-regional representations of AARINENA as follows : North Africa, Nile Valley and Red sea, Fertile Crescent, Arabian Peninsula and Western Asia.*

These decisions will certainly provide a new vision for the interaction with our different partners. However, we feel that it would be important to bring to your attention the followings :

❶ *CGIAR initiative for a global regional consultations with NARS and Lucerne declaration, constitute two major events towards a major change for a more constructive way of interactions of research systems world wide; However, we feel the neccessity of developing a more systematic and institutionalized mechanisms for participation of NARS in the CG agenda, that is to allow regional fora to have a voice in decision-making in the system and more systematic intercation with TAC;*

❷ *Selective efforts should be made to support strong NARS which have comparative advantages in taking the lead, in this context we may need to consider if even possible an affiliation of NARS programs of excellence to CG system. Ways and regulations of such affiliation may be taught of in the future;*

❸ *It is understood that the CG system shares only 5 % of the overall research world wide with NARS. Yet, this relatively small portion has a major impact on agriculture production for most commodity goods in developing countries. Then appropriate mechanisms for intercation with other ARIs are required to increase the efficiency of the research system; CG-centers such as ISNAR may help set specific coordination mechanisms with non-CG Centres.*

④ Finally, *implementation of the Global Plan of Action would imperatively need adequate financial resources; we therefore, call for a global consultation on this critical issue, which determine to a large extent the sustainability of our mutual commitment. In this regard, we need to define what will be the contribution of CGIAR and NARS in the priority setting exercises at national and regional levels ? We need also to know what are the mechanisms to put in place and what are the resources available for upgrading NARS capacities ? And what are the research aspects or programs to be devoluted to NARS ? How will they be funded ? and what are the mechanisms to put in place for sharing responsibilities ?*

Ladies and gentlemen, these were specific key issues that we wanted to share with you in the current meeting.

Whish you best success.