

2nd draft

Proceedings of the 4th Inter-Regional Consultation for the ICM4ARD GPP held at FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy in the afternoon of 26th September 2007.

1. The list of participants is attached as Annexure 1
2. The agenda for the Consultation is attached as Annexure 2.
3. Upon request by participants, Jean-Francois Giovannetti chaired the Consultation.
4. Jean Francois Giovannetti initiated the consultation by welcoming all participants. In his opening remarks, he recalled how the GPP had developed since 2002. Ajit Maru as facilitator at the GFAR Secretariat of the ICM4ARD GPP was then invited to make his opening remarks. He also traced the development of the GPP and indicated how it is influencing the global agenda for interventions in improving ICM for ARD. Stephen Rudgard in his opening remarks highlighted how the close collaboration of all major ARD stakeholders and the regional forums, and through them, the NAIS were pushing the envelope of rapidly improving ICM in ARD globally. He also drew attention to the valuable contribution of the ICM4ARD GPP to the IISAST initiative (International Information Systems in Agricultural Science and Technology), which had held its 2nd Expert Consultation on 23/24 September. Nihad Maliha in his remarks also assured close collaboration of the CGIAR in activities related to improving ICM for ARD.
5. Jean Francois Giovannetti then called upon Ajit Maru to make presentation of the review of the ICM4ARD GPP since its inception. The review (Annexure 3) and the presentation (Annexure 4) made by Ajit Maru are attached. In his presentation, Ajit Maru referred to the achievements of the ICM4ARD GPP and areas where progress was slow. He identified key issues he wanted to be discussed during the consultation. These were:
 1. What can be done under the ICM4ARD GPP to improve awareness building, sensitization and advocacy of senior NARS leaders and policy makers to improve and increase investment in ICM and ICT enabled ARD information systems?
 2. What has to be done to improve donor investment in the ICM4ARD GPP so that the various targets especially in capacity development are achieved?
 3. What has to be done to improve content generation and its management, including integration and coherence, in the NAIS and RAIS level so that it contributes to ARD?
 4. How can monitoring and evaluation of the ICM4ARD GPP be improved especially as regards outcomes and impact?
 5. What are the new challenges for ICM for ARD in the next 3-5 years that we should tackle through this GPP?
6. Following Ajit Maru's presentation, Viviana Palmieri was invited to present the report for FORAGRO's activities for ICM. FORAGRO has been facilitating the flow of Agricultural Science and Technology information in LAC countries. It is now collating and enabling sharing of information on Institutional innovation. FORAGRO has also initiated activities of ICM for innovation in agriculture. For capacity

development, FORAGRO and FAO in collaboration have been conducting training using IMARK modules. 53 participants from 13 countries have gone through this training. As regards Advocacy FORAGRO is working with GFAR and has a book on 6 success stories in ICT for innovation. FORAGRO is also designing a strategy to sensitize decision makers in the next 3 years. This strategy will be finalized by the end of the year and shared with all ICM4ARD partners. FORAGRO is also working with the CGIAR-Agricultural Science and Technology Indicator group to update the LAC data. The FORAGRO presentation is available as Annexure 5.

7. Myra Wopereis-Pura presented the ICM activities for FARA. She indicated the changes brought about in FARA's activities and how the FARA.RAILS ICM strategy is being adapted to this change in FARA's activities. She also indicated the various activities that were conducted in improving ICM for ARD by FARA and the four sub-regional forums. Myra Wopereis-Pura also indicated the support the African Development Bank had provided to ICM in the region and to FARA.RAILS. The FARA presentation is available as Annexure 6.
8. Sahdev Singh presented the activities in ICM4ARD by APAARI. He indicated that APAARI through its advocacy efforts is trying to harmonize the region's ICM for ARD activities. The region has high heterogeneity in the status of using ICT enabled information systems in ARD. APAARI has tried to address the needs of some countries that are weak in ICM4ARD activities through advocacy and capacity development. There has been some success. APAARI has also published success stories in the use of ICM for agricultural development. Sahdev Singh also highlighted the challenges of integration: the commitment of member NARS, the involvement of NINPs and the issues of capacity and funding. The APAARI presentation is available as Annexure 7.
9. Mohammed Sallam presented the AARINENA.RAIS ICM activities and its 3-year working plan. He also indicated how AARINENA has developed, in close collaboration with the Egyptian Central Laboratory for Agricultural Expert systems (CLAES), the NARIMS Toolbox, which can be used at the NARS level for managing ARD project information, as well as NERAKIN, in collaboration with FAO, to manage information at the regional level. Mohammed Salaam pointed out the heterogeneity between activities by the various regional forums and the disparity of ability to attract funding for ICM for ARD activities in different regions. This, he stated, contributed to growing divide in access to ARD information. The AARINENA presentation is available as Annexure 8.
10. Ajit Maru summarised the ICM activities carried out in the CAC region, among which: the establishment of a CAC RAIS Steering Committee, a regional meeting with senior NARS leaders and the release of a NARS Institutions database.

Discussions

11. There were very active discussions after each presentation. The main issues identified were similar to those that had emerged during the 2nd IISAST Expert Consultation:

- a. The heterogeneity in ICM for ARD development within regions and countries within region which indicates a major divide in access to ARD information in future
- b. The lack of impact of advocacy efforts for improved and increased investment among NARS leaders and policy makers in several regions. This issue was further discussed and it was felt that there may also have been weaknesses in the strategy for advocating increased and improved investment in ARD at the NARS level. This strategy needs to be examined carefully by the IIAST Advocacy Task Force and the ICM4ARD project.
- c. Donor support to ICM especially to address the heterogeneity between regions and within regions among countries. Participants wanted GFAR to address this issue urgently and wanted it to provide information on donor support to ICM for ARD.
- d. The weak capacities of many NARS and ARD systems and institutions to institute improved ICM especially in generating indigenous digital content and managing this content to meet global standards and norms and integrate with regional and global systems.
- e. Members also pointed out that most ARD institutions had non-existent or weak policy environments for ICM for ARD. There were very few approaches known to NARS leaders and ICM managers in developing ICM policies at the Institute and NARS levels. There is a need for advocating with Institutes for sharing contents that are locked at the institutional level.
- f. Inadequate interest of regional forums, especially the governance bodies and executive secretaries, in supporting ICM activities in their region. Participants pointed out that while topics such as Biotechnology, Biofuels, Climate Change were discussed at great length at the regional forums meetings, issues related to improving ICM for ARD at the regional and global level was largely ignored or given very little time to be discussed or acted upon by the Regional forums.
- g. The issue of assessing the impact of ICM activities at various levels was raised. This included user communities, Institutions, Networks and National Systems level. To improve ICM for ARD more rapidly it is necessary to evaluate and assess the impact of ICM as precisely as possible.
- h. Agricultural research is rapidly changing its approach to becoming more innovations based. With this shift, ICM for ARD is also undergoing a significant change. How ICM should support agricultural innovation needs to be examined. Members felt that GFAR initiate a dialogue and suggest action along with other major ARD stakeholders in how ICM can meet the needs for agricultural innovation.
- i. It was observed that ICM4ARD is much more than just a GPP funded through GFAR, a lot of ICM activities have been conducted with support from other

donors and international agencies as well as self-funding by RFs and NARS, as evidenced by all the partners in the IISAST Consultation.

- j. The ICM4ARD GPP major success has been in influencing the global agenda for interventions in improving ICM4ARD, including through the IISAST initiative. Members recognise the true spirit of the GPP as executed for ICM4ARD.

Based on the discussions the following interventions were recommended for the ICM4ARD GPP.

- (1) The need to lobby for this GPP in order to secure funding enabling the various RFs to strengthen their RAIS and the EGFAR platform to ply its role of ARD Web ring.
- (2) With regard to Advocacy for ICM4ARD, it was recognized that in addition to ICM policy development at global, regional and national levels as was also being promoted through the IISAST initiative, individual institutions need a clear policy framework on how the outcomes of research and development activities are communicated to stakeholders and beneficiaries. GFAR should work with FAO and CGIAR in the context of the IISAST Task Forces in developing this framework as a tool for further advocacy and support to NARS.
- (3) Monitoring and evaluation of ICM4ARD activities needs urgent attention, as had been identified in the 2nd IISAST Consultation. Several alternatives were discussed, including impact assessment through outcome mapping. This methodology traces the impact at various levels, starting from ICM4ARD GPP to regional fora to NARS and finally in the form of livelihood improvement at grassroots level. It was also suggested that better documentation of work plans of RAIS, EGFAR and other ICM4ARD activities could assist in monitoring and evaluation process. To further strengthen the monitoring and evaluation process for ICM, an external evaluation of ICM4ARD GPP was recommended along similar lines as was done for overall GFAR activities.
- (4) There is a need for developing ICM policies at the Institute and ARD Systems level. It was recommended that policy frameworks and guidelines that enable development and implementation of ICM policies be developed in collaboration with the IISAST Advocacy Task Force and advocated under the ICM4ARD GPP. These policies should look at issues in generating, processing and using more effectively information through ICT enabled systems for ARD at the Institute and ARD Systems level.
- (5) ICM4ARD needed a shift in its focus from ARD to a larger agricultural innovation framework. A concept note on this should be developed after reviewing similar efforts made by DFID (Research Into Use project), CTA and FORAGRO.