



Adopted on 31 October 2009

Bangkok Declaration
on
Reorienting Agricultural Research for Development in Asia-Pacific Region

PREAMBLE :

Agriculture remains important for economic growth, livelihood and sustenance for majority of the people in the Asia-Pacific region forming about 57% and 73% of the world's total and agricultural population, respectively. The land availability per person is only about one fifth of that in the rest of the world. Research in the agricultural sector led to remarkable achievements in the past to attain food security and reduction in poverty. Agricultural population is dominated by small farm holders, pastoralists, tribals, fishermen and agricultural labourers. However, about 63% (640 million) of the world's hungry and malnourished, 50% (over 660 million) of the world's extreme poor (living on less than US\$ 1/day), and 70% of the world's undernourished children and women live in the Asia-Pacific region. Over the last two years, the number of hungry in the region has increased by about 11%. The Millennium Development Goals, especially to reduce hunger and poverty to half by 2015, are no longer closer to be achieved despite all commitments and on-going efforts.

The region is facing stagnation or slow down of productivity growth rates, soaring food prices, increasing energy costs, diversion of area for biofuel production, consequences of the climate change and economic shocks. The problems of the numerous and geographically dispersed small farm holders and other resource poor communities, who form the bulk of agricultural population, persist: low yields, low returns from farming, and inadequate access to resources and markets. Natural resources, particularly land and water, are becoming scarcer and degraded. Addressing these complex challenges, with opportunities to harness many innovations, now require out of box solutions (technology, institutions, policies, and higher investment). Previous analyses have unequivocally shown that investments in agricultural research had high rates of return both in terms of growth and poverty reduction in the region.

A regional consultation process, jointly initiated by the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) and Asian Development Bank (ADB), in collaboration with the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), to identify priority directions for research in agriculture and natural resource for development in Asia-Pacific has just been completed. The bottom up process involved e-consultations, studies of priority research needs in South Asia, Southeast Asia, China and the Pacific countries, and finally a Face to Face meeting of various stakeholders. The Consultation on Agricultural Research for Development (AR4D) in Asia-Pacific was held in Bangkok from October 30 to 31, 2009. The outcome of this consultation would provide an input to the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD) to be held in March, 2010 in Montpellier, France. It will also contribute to the change management initiative of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). The process as a whole will provide a clear focus on the development objectives that will contribute to the reform and renewal of agricultural research as well as innovation systems in the region.

The discussions held in the Bangkok meeting involved 75 stakeholders from 17 countries representing APAARI member National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), CGIAR, GFAR, Advanced Research Institutions (ARIs), Universities, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), farmers' organizations, the private sector and the donor organizations. They deliberated on refocusing agricultural research for a development agenda for Asia and the Pacific. The outcome of deliberations led to the adoption of

“Bangkok Declaration”, which recognizes the urgent need for increasing investments in research, innovative thinking and action for reorientation of our research agenda for achieving sustainable agriculture in the region.

DECLARATION :

1. We, the stakeholders of agricultural research for development (AR4D), recognize that the Asia-Pacific region is home to almost half of the global population and has high rates of population growth, poverty, hunger and malnutrition. We also believe that agriculture will continue to play a critical role in terms of employment and livelihood security of small farm holders, pastoralists, tribals, fishermen, landless labourers and all those involved in agricultural value chain. The region is not only rich in diverse natural and genetic resources but also important in being a major supplier of food and agriculture commodities. A profitable, dynamic, sustainable science based agriculture in the region can, therefore, alleviate hunger and poverty and contribute significantly to food and nutrition security.
2. While we are determined to free the region from the twin scourges of hunger and poverty, we do realize that along with application of science in agriculture, enabling policies and increased investments in infrastructure will foster new partnerships through innovative institutional arrangements leading to large scale impacts.
3. It is evident that invariably governance systems are weak, political commitment is inadequate and a coordinated approach to development addressing the needs of the poor and vulnerable is lacking. In this regard, NARS will need to effectively establish dialogues as well as linkages, and work closely with all other development partners and policy makers to ensure synergy and the desired impact. NARS would, therefore, benefit much from the improved research planning and management, while ensuring the much needed partnership with the small farm holders, private sector and the related civil society organizations (CSOs). In this context, the governments must embrace AR4D as an integral component of national agricultural policy.
4. In this Expert Consultation, priority AR4D needs have been identified which require increased resources urgently. New investments are essential for integrated natural resource management with focus on land and water issues; socio-economic and policy research to empower small farm holders to concentrate on productivity enhancement of major food crops as well as lesser-known crops of high economic potential; post-harvest management and value addition; energy security (without compromise on food security); and capacity building, especially skills development including that for research planning, prioritization, impact assessment and poverty mapping. Addressing these needs will ensure resilience to cope with economic shocks and natural disasters, including climate change. The needs and prospects for Atoll Islands in the Pacific are unique and hence be addressed accordingly.
5. We also recognize that new approaches are necessary to achieve impact in the priority research areas. These approaches will effectively address the needs of small farm holders, pastoralists, tribals, fishermen and agricultural labourers, and particularly benefit the more vulnerable groups. The new approaches include: farming systems research in the ecosystem framework through need based diversification (livestock, horticulture, fisheries, post-harvest processing and value addition); increased participation involving farmers, NGOs, women and youth; value chain; blending traditional knowledge with modern technologies; community based resource management; extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the establishment of rural knowledge and communication centres for generation, assessment and transfer of new technologies/innovations. Strong public-private-civil society partnerships for providing and delivering Transfer of Technology

(ToT) services and for linking farmers/farmer groups to markets are needed much in the present context.

6. Promotion, organization, and strengthening of local, national and regional networks ensuring south-south collaboration is essential to make efficient and effective use of individual country strengths, human capacity, donor support and other available resources.
7. We strongly recommend that in order to meet the challenge of hunger and poverty in the region, the current investments in agricultural research in the Asia and Pacific region need to be at least **doubled** from its current level of about US\$ 10 billion. To attract the required funding from international development community/organizations and the private sector, a firm commitment from every government is needed to raise the level of agricultural GDP from around 0.3% to at least 1%. There is an urgency to ensure both long-term (core) funding for continuity, and short-term quick funding by the donor community to meet the new challenges. Business as usual with the current level of investments without clear expected benefits for the resource poor should no longer be acceptable.
8. For an effective and efficient use of research funds, there is a clear need for reorientation of agricultural research for a development agenda by the NARS that is demand driven, enhances food and nutrition security, improves livelihoods and takes into account the expected direct benefits to the small farm holders and the poor consumers, and that addresses the key emerging challenges. In order to ensure this, active participation and involvement of resource poor farmers, NGOs and the private sector is called for.
9. It is our expectation that the renewed priorities for agricultural research with focus on small farm holders, the poor producers and consumers, with new mechanisms and partnerships elaborated in this declaration, will not only ensure inclusive development at the national and regional level for continuous supply of food and other agricultural commodities, but will also hasten the pace towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific region.
10. We are confident that Asia-Pacific agriculture will liberate the region from hunger, malnutrition and poverty and bridge the widening income divide between farmers and non-farmers. It must continue to supply its region and the world with food and agricultural commodities. Given the declining land, water and agro-biodiversity resources and the intensifying environmental footprint of agriculture, the task is difficult, but certainly not insurmountable.
