

Administrative Report from CACAARI: Activities on GCARD CAC Regional Consultations and Founding of Farmers' and Non-Governmental Organizations Consortia

(As per the Letter of Agreement between CACAARI and GFAR Secretariat, P.R. 42155)

Tasks as per the Letter of Agreement (LA)

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on behalf of the GFAR Secretariat of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research made available to the Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutes (CACAARI), a financial contribution in the amount of USD150,036 in support for CACAARI to conduct regional consultations in the Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) Region for the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD). This includes organizing the CAC Region Farmers Organizations Consortium (CFO-CAC) and the CAC Region NGO Consortium (CNGO-CAC), in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The activities for which the funds provided by GFAR-Secretariat, under the Agreement were:

- Regional consultations for GCARD;
- Formation of CAC Region Farmers Organizations and NGO consortia;

The activities to be performed by CACAARI were the following:

- to conduct the regional review;
- to organize and conduct the e-consultations within the Central Asia and Caucasus region and also provide comments on the outcomes of the e-consultations in the CAC region;
- to organize and conduct the face to face consultation and produce its proceedings as per guidelines provided by GFAR;
- to organize and support the CAC Region Farmers Organizations Consortium in Tashkent, Uzbekistan;
- to organize and support the CAC Region NGO Consortium in Tashkent, Uzbekistan;

Outputs expected were:

- regional review of AR4D needs and priorities;
- report on the electronic consultations for GCARD;
- proceedings of the face to face consultations for GCARD;
- report on the formation of and proceedings of the first meeting of CAC Region Farmers Organization Consortium;
- report on the formation of and proceedings of the first meeting of CAC Region NGO Consortium.

Activities Conducted by CACAARI as per the Letter of Agreement

Appointment of CACAARI/GCARD Lead Consultant

The CACAARI Secretariat issued a call for GCARD CAC Regional Consultancy on July 15 in Central Asia Harvard List, ATSAF list-serve, ICARDA website and YPARD website.

Of the five applications were received, Dr. Surendra Beniwal, Ph. D, Hon. Prof., was chosen for the position because of his deep knowledge of the whole CAC region and the contacts he has well maintained with local NARS leaders since 1995. A contract for Dr. Beniwal was agreed upon and signed on September 9, 2009.

Preparations for GCARD CAC Activities

Dr. Ajit Maru (GFAR), Dr. Christopher Martius (Head, PFU-CGIAR), Dr. Zakir Khalikulov (Deputy Head, PFU-CGIAR) and Mr. Anvar Rahmetov (CACAARI Assistant Executive Secretary) have met also on August 9, 2010 to discuss the outline for regional review and specific issues with CAC ARD. On Monday, August 10 a small brainstorming session was organized among various CGIAR experts present the CGIAR-PFU Office. Meeting participants suggested a number of ARD issues in the CAC region for consideration by Dr. Beniwal.

Mr. Anvar Rahmetov (Assistant Executive Secretary) and Mr. Sherzod Qosimov (CACAARI ICM Manager) also met with Dr. Ajit Maru, who was at CACAARI/ICARDA from August 7 to August 10, 2010, and discussed plans for the overall preparation for the CAC regional activities for GCARD.

By the end of August 2009, a website was modified to include more information on GCARD process including a prominent link to GCARD with information on the process and publicity material in Russian and English.

Drafting of the GCARD CAC Regional Review

CACAARI Lead Consultant Dr. Beniwal actively interviewed stakeholders in Tashkent throughout August. He visited Research Institute for Market Reforms in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and met with representatives of the Ministry of Economy of Uzbekistan. Several face-to-face interviews were conducted with heads of prominent agricultural organizations, retired former managers of ARD in Uzbekistan and some farmers (including household plot farmers – Dehkons). Consultations were also done through dozens of telephone calls and email exchanges with the leaders of the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) in the seven other countries of the CAC Region.

On August 12, emails were sent to all eight NARS in CAC with a request to comment on specific issues of ARD in their countries. All of them responded with comprehensive reports that have been incorporated by Dr. Beniwal into the Draft Report. By 26 Aug, Dr. Beniwal had produced the final draft of the Regional Report titled “Key Issues for Agricultural Research for Development in CAC Region”. The document was translated at the CACAARI Secretariat and distributed among the NARS’ leaders/leading scientists through emails and also to e-consultation participants, NARS members and wider stakeholders at various meetings and seminars (including the CACAARI Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) in Tbilisi, Georgia on September 15). A number of hard copies of the report (in Russian) were also provided to those who had no access to emails.

The Draft Report was discussed at the SCM of CACAARI As per the decision taken at Steering Committee meeting of CACAARI in Tbilisi, The GCARD Task Force of CACAARI, comprising of NARS leaders of the eight countries of CAC region reviewed and approved the Final Draft Report.

Publicity of GCARD and CAC-Platform for e-consultations

Starting August 12, GCARD electronic consultations were actively publicized through emails, faxes and follow up phone calls, as well as through the CACAARI website. Russian translations of GCARD materials were prepared and sent out on August 12. Starting the next Monday, August 18 they also featured on the CACAARI website.

The issue of the platform for e-consultations was decided on August 13. It is egfar.org with a mirror on cacaari.org. The publicity e-list serve included about 400 people. Some 30 of them responded with “out of office replies” and some 25 emails are invalid. Many emails were received with a promise to actively contribute to discussions.

Dr. Beniwal and Mr. Rahmetov were appointed to moderate the electronic discussions which were assisted by Ms. Shahnoza Djabbarova, who was temporarily recruited to assist in English/Russian/English translations and provided an the desirable overall assistance to the CACAARI secretariat throughout the GCARD process.

E-Consultations

The Electronic GCARD CAC Consultations were organized from September 3 to September 23, 2009 at egfar.org website. The consultations were moderated by Dr. Beniwal and Mr. Rahmetov. Ms. Djabbarova provided parallel translations to overcome the language gap for English and Russian-speaking participants of the e-consultations. Although a difficult task but was managed well.

First, the overall structure of the consultations was outlined by the moderators, followed by introducing several key issues every day. In this, the assistance of Ms. Simone Staiger, Consultant with GFAR, provided the useful guidelines. About 120 participants representing all eight countries, CGIAR Centers working in CAC and some outside the region representing a wide variety of ARD stakeholders in CAC participated and contributed some 200 messages on various issues of agricultural research and development in the region. The exercise was found extremely useful and served the purpose. Dr. Beniwal, who had summarized the results of e-consultations in a separate document, submitted a brief report on e-consultations to GFAR and presented the results at several regional and international meetings.

GCARD CAC Face to Face Consultation

The F2F consultations were held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on October 16-17, 2009 at the Business Center “Poytakht”. More than 90 people participated in the consultation including 75 stakeholders representing scientists of NARS (including the Agric. Universities), farmers, NGOs, private sector from all the eight countries of the region, representatives of CGIAR-CAC PFU, and the donor community.

The consultation lasted for two days. On day 1, presentations were made by Acad. Hukmatullo Ahmadov, CACAARI Chairman, Dr. Zakir Khalikulov, Acting Head, PFU, Dr. Mohammed Roozitalab, Director, ICARDA-Iran Program (on behalf of CGIAR), Dr. Ajit Maru, Senior Agricultural Officer, GFAR, and Dr. Surendra Beniwal, Lead Consultant, CACAARI. The second half of the day 1 was devoted to group discussions facilitated by pre-appointed facilitators.

On day 2, results of the Group Session 1 were presented by facilitators and discussed at plenary meeting and Group Session 2 was held. In the second half of the day 2, results of Group Session 2 were presented and discussed, and Plenary Meeting was held with voting on identified issues (earlier identified by the participants). Voting results were summarized by CACAARI Secretariat and written and presented by Dr. Beniwal in the Summary report submitted to GFAR and also included in Final GCARD Report that he prepared.

Farmers and NGO Consortia Meetings

Two separate one-day Meetings of the Farmers Consortium (CFO-CAC) and NGO Consortium (CNGO-CAC) were organized by CACAARI in the Business Center Poytakht, Tashkent, Uzbekistan on October 14 and 15, respectively, by followed more or less a similar program for the two meetings. The CACAARI Chairperson Ahmadov gave introductory presentations on CACAARI to participants. Following the Chairperson's presentation, Dr. Zakir Khalikulov, Acting Head of Program Facilitation Unit of the CGIAR Program for Sustainable Agriculture in CAC (CGIAR-CAC) and Acting Regional Coordinator of ICARDA-CAC made a presentation on the CGIAR-CAC Program.

Dr. Ajit Maru, Senior Officer from GFAR also presented GFAR's position and priorities for GCARD. The presentation on the GCARD Process in CAC was made by Dr. Surendra Beniwal, Lead Consultant for CACAARI. Dr. Beniwal's report included the highlights of both the Regional Review of Key Agricultural Issues in CAC and the e-consultations for CAC. Mr. Anvar Rahmetov, Assistant Executive Secretary of CACAARI, made a presentation on the future perspectives for each Consortium.

Thereafter, Mr. Rahmatov presented a draft version of each Charter for discussion by the meeting participants. After the presentation, the participants were provided ample opportunity to go over the draft of the Charter together clause by clause, for either approving it or proposing modifications. At the end of discussions in each meeting, participants approved and adopted Charters of respective CAC-CFO and CAC-CNGO. The participants also agreed on the future steps to be taken by each Consortium. One important resolution adopted during these two meetings was that the word "Caucasus" should be replaced with "South Caucasus" to truly reflect the geographical locations of the three countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia) that are associated with CACAARI. Minutes of the two meetings were prepared by Mr. Anvar Rahmatov and circulated for sharing with the meeting participants and other CACAARI stakeholders.

Preparation of a Summary Report by the Lead Consultant and its Presentation at GFAR-SCM

A Summary Report of the GCARD process in the CAC region was prepared by the Lead Consultant, Dr. Beniwal and submitted to the GFAR Secretariat for circulation for the GFAR SC Meeting in Alexandria, Egypt. This Summary report was presented to the GFAR SC meeting in Alexandria by Dr. Beniwal, who was invited to attend the SC Meeting as an observer.

Preparations for and Coordination of Logistics for GCARD-2010

In February 2010, the CACAARI Secretariat had finalized the list of possible participants as per national and stakeholder groups. Special attention has been given to balancing country representation and ensuring a fair stakeholder representation. The final list has been approved by the Chair, CACAARI, and submitted to GFAR.

CACAARI Secretariat has acted as a focal point for all the GCARD invitees from Central Asia and Caucasus facilitating communication between GCARD organizers and delegates and assisting with documents and visa procedures.

Publication materials were prepared and printed for distribution GCARD. A paper on 'CACAARI Strategy for Positioning at GCARD' was drafted, distributed, approved and acted upon. Each participant was delivered a copy of "GCARD CAC Highlights for Participants", a brief document prepared by the CACAARI Lead Consultant Dr. Beniwal for GCARD delegates. Also, key members of the CACAARI delegation have been provided with the CACAARI business cards.

The CACAARI Secretariat provided logo for GCARD banner and has uploaded key regional documents for inclusion in the GCARD-2010 USB drive that will be distributed among the meeting participants at Montpellier.

Reporting by the CACAARI Secretariat as per the Letter of Agreement

The Assistant Executive Secretary Mr. Anvar Rahmatov submitted in mid-August a short write-up on the preparatory activities for the Regional Consultations for GCARD to Mr Mark Holderness, Executive Secretary, GFAR Secretariat, in mid-August 2009.

For the GCARD process in CAC, the CACAARI Lead Consultant Dr. Beniwal submitted, on behalf CACAARI, the following documents to GFAR:

- A draft report of the Regional Review of the CAC region on AR4D needs and priorities in electronic form (in a format communicated by GFAR), in English, as per the ToR attached for the Regional Review.
- The final report, which was duly reviewed by the CACAARI Steering Committee.
- Specific questions relevant for CAC, which were addressed in the e-consultation.
- A Summary Report on the GCARD Process in CAC region.
- Final Report on the GCARD Process in the CAC region.

After the GCARD F2F Consultations, the Assistant Executive Secretary, CACAARI submitted the following as per the LoA:

- List of participants with their contact details.
- Proceedings of the regional face-to-face consultation workshop conducted as per guidelines in electronic form in English.
- Proceedings of the workshop organized for formation of the CAC region Farmers' Organisations Consortium (CAC-CFO).
- Proceeding of the workshop organized for formation of the CAC region NGO Consortium (CAC-CNGO).
- The final synthesis report on all the activities (the present document).