

Annual Steering Committee Meeting of CACAARI in Tbilisi, Georgia on September 15, 2009

The Annual Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutes was held in Tbilisi, Georgia on September 15, 2009. The meeting brought together Steering Committee members from eight countries of the region – Dr. Levon Minosyan from Armenia, Acad. Asad Musaev from Azerbaijan, Dr. Guram Aleksidze from Georgia, Dr. Abdrahman Ombaev from Kazakhstan, Acad. Jamin Akimaliev from Kyrgyzstan, Acad. Hukmatullo Ahmadov from Tajikistan, Dr. Muhammed Nepesov from Turkmenistan and Dr. Bakhtiyar Kamilov from Uzbekistan, as well as partners from Georgian agricultural organizations and CGIAR-CAC Program. Present were also Dr. Faisah Taha, Director General of ICBA and Dr. Kamil Shideed of ICARDA, as well as Dr. Ajit Maru of GFAR.

The meeting was opened by Abdushukur Khanazarov, Executive Secretary of CACAARI, who welcomed the participants and wished them a productive meeting. He was followed by Chairman of CACAARI, Hukmatullo Ahmadov who reported to the participants about CACAARI activities for the period from September 2008 to August 2009.

The Chairman briefed the audience about CACAARI's goals and aims and organizational structure, as well as its past achievements. The introduction was followed by information on CACAARI's activities to increase membership base. Acad. Ahmadov informed participants that letters were being sent to potential members throughout the region and that thirty five organizations have requested membership in the organization. Highlighting the fact that CACAARI is also extending membership among non-traditional ARD partners, farmer and nongovernmental organizations, private sector and universities, Chairman Ahmadov stated that the CACAARI Constitution was being amended to incorporate two new Consortia – Consortium of Farmer Organizations and Consortium of NGOs.

Acad. Ahmadov also informed participants that human resource capacity of CACAARI was strengthened and that a full time Assistant Executive Secretary (Mr. Anvar Rahmetov) and part-time ICT officer (Mr. Sherzod Qosimov) were recruited to facilitate CACAARI activities. In the final part of his briefing, Chairman Ahmadov's introduced to participants the process of Regional preparations for the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development: the Regional Review Study, electronic consultations and the face-to-face meeting in Tashkent in October.

Chairman Ahmadov's briefing was followed by Dr. Ajit Maru's report on the global GCARD process, its aims and relation to the CGIAR reforms. Dr. Maru explained that GCARD is a series of biennial conferences to provide an action plan and strategy for improved agriculture throughout the world. The needs of the farmers and the poor are the cornerstone of the whole process, which involves a wide variety of stakeholders alongside scientists – civil society, private sector, consumers, policy-makers, education and extension organizations etc.

The presentation was followed by information on how the Conference was organized – the GFAR and the six regional for a constituting the GFAR were responsible for regional preparations, including the drafting of the regional review and organizing of electronic and face to face consultations.

Dr. Maru's presentation was followed by quite a few questions, including those on the relationship of GFAR to the CGIAR reforms, usefulness and availability of previous regional priority setting exercises and stakeholder groups involved in the process. Participants then thanked Dr. Maru for a very informative presentation.

After Dr. Maru's report, the Executive Secretary Dr. Khanazarov passed the floor to Dr. Surendra Beniwal, CACAARI Consultant who then presented the Regional Review, a document that thoroughly analyzed agricultural research needs and priorities of the region and identified areas and researchable issues which can have the most impact on the poor. Dr. Beniwal's deep analysis is impossible to summarize in a paragraph, CACAARI staff decided to publish the whole presentation on their website <http://www.cacaari.org/activities/reports>. Dr. Beniwal's presentation was a subject of tremendous interest from participants and due to the number of questions asked by participants, went way over the time allocated for it. In the end, participants thanked Dr. Beniwal, who is also the founder of the CGIAR-CAC Program and one of the first CG scientists to come to the region, for the excellent job he did with the Regional Review.

After the coffee break, the Steering Committee reviewed the amendments to CACAARI Constitution. Several issues were raised about changes needed in view of CACAARI's extending membership to various regional stakeholders. Due to a large number of suggestions, the Chairman proposed that the Constitution's finalized draft is approved at an extraordinary meeting during Tashkent Face-to-face regional consultations on October 16-17.

The Chairman then expressed his concerns about ownership issues with the Regional Review and proposed that Steering Committee members form a GCARD Regional Review Task Force. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kazakhstan nominated national candidates for the Task Force immediately, others committed to doing so shortly.

It was during the Tbilisi meeting that the issue of membership fees was given a new impetus. The participants agreed that membership fees are crucial for CACAARI's financial stability and agreed on the amounts for international members. The amounts for NARS organizations are to be finalized till the Extraordinary meeting of CACAARI Steering Committee in Tashkent.

Overall, the Tbilisi meeting was a very short (only half a day), intensive and productive one. We want to thank the participants for their very useful comments and suggestion and the CACAARI leadership for their effective work.

For more information on CACAARI, its activities and new initiatives; for the Steering Committee Meeting minutes, presentations and photos please visit us at www.cacaari.org

Anvar Rahmetov

Assistant Executive Secretary

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Participants of the SCM exchanging views on the new CACAARI Constitution.



CACAARI Chairman Hukmatullo Ahmadov(right) and Executive Secretary Abdushukur Khanazarov listening to the presentation on GCARD process.