



Issue 6- March 2008

## Introduction

Research into agriculture has recently re-emerged as a development priority for many of the major donor agencies. This has been further galvanised by the World Bank World Development Report for 2008, which identified under-investment in agricultural research as a feature of below expectation development in many countries. The realisation of the importance of agricultural development comes at an important juncture- we are now past the half way stage to the Millennium Development Goals targets of 2015, with agriculture and food security playing a significant role in a number of these. With unprecedented levels of collaboration between donors and researchers, this eBulletin looks at the current trends and developments in this fast growing sector with [additional resources](#) available on the LRC website along with details on [how to commission](#) the LRC.

## Agricultural Research, CGIAR Reform and Pro Poor Challenge Programmes



The [Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research](#) (CGIAR) is a strategic alliance of governments, organisations and foundations that support the work of 15 research stations around the world, currently working in over 100 countries. In 2000 a programme of reform was initiated to help strengthen the outputs of the centres while maximising the impact of the research. One of the major outcomes of this reform was the establishment of

Challenge Programs (CP) to facilitate cooperation between research institutes to resolve some of the more complex issues facing agricultural development. Launched in 2003, they cover three key areas of interest:

### [Water and Food](#)

This CP brings together research scientists, development specialists, and river basin communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America to create and disseminate international public goods (IPGs) to improve the productivity of water in river basins in ways that are pro-poor, gender equitable and environmentally sustainable.

### [Generation](#)

Using plant genetic diversity advanced genomic science and comparative biology this programme develops tools and technologies that help plant breeders in the developing world produce better crop varieties for resource-poor farmers.

### [Harvest Plus](#)

The Harvest Plus CP seeks to reduce [micronutrient malnutrition](#) among the poor by breeding staple food crops that are rich in micronutrients through a process called 'biofortification'. This takes advantage of the consistent daily consumption of large amounts of staple food crops by the poor in developing countries, especially women and children, who are most at risk of micronutrient deficiencies in their diet.

A review of the programme in 2006 found that the CPs were achieving their main goals and so a second round of proposals was called, extending the focus to include three new sectors: Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security; High Value Crops; and Combating Desertification (Dryland Degradation). The approval of the final selection of projects under

these new CPs is due at the end of April 2008.

In addition to these global CPs, the [Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme](#) has been created to address the most significant constraints in reviving agriculture in Africa, namely the failures of agricultural markets, inappropriate policies and natural resource degradation within a new paradigm, Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D). This programme fosters synergies between disciplines and institutions along with a renewed commitment to change at all levels from farmers to national and international policy makers

#### Agricultural Research: Other Perspectives

##### **Participatory Farmer Research/ Farmer First**

LRC consortium member [IDS](#) held a meeting in December to review and reflect on the role of farmers in agricultural research for development in the last two decades as part of the [Farmers First](#) approach.

The meeting, which included researchers, practitioners, private sector and farmer representatives, alongside those from international and donor organisations, discussed the continued role of farmers on the frontline of issues such as climate change and food security in a globalised world.

Farmers and farming systems are changing and the resurgence in agricultural research and investment will affect farmers. The question is whether farmers will be engaged in these changes and be able to access the outputs of the research. The [New Agriculturalist](#) has a selection of views from the meeting on the achievements to date and the challenges ahead, including how farmers' initiatives can be harnessed and whether current and future agendas can and will put Farmers First.

##### **Agricultural Research and Natural Disasters**

Natural disasters and conflicts derail agricultural development damaging the infrastructure, social networks and human capital needed to get inputs to farms, and outputs to markets. Is research a priority when farmers' needs are obvious and urgent? Writing on the [ODI Humanitarian Practice Network](#) website Mark Winslow considers how the 15 international agricultural research centres of the CGIAR are addressing this question. He concludes that over the past decade, the CGIAR's post-crisis rebuilding approach has grown beyond technology transfer to emphasise strategic research that helps partners i) diagnose and solve food security problems; ii) rebuild human and institutional capacities for agricultural research; and iii) make relief aid more effective and efficient. Through this more systematic and knowledge-driven approach, the centres' contributions should continue to improve in scope, quality and effectiveness in the years to come

##### **Agricultural Research: International Collaborations and Agendas**

[European Initiative for Agricultural Research and Development](#) is a collaborative network formed of the 25 member states of the European Union, with Norway, Switzerland and the EC. Since its formation in 1995, the main focus has been on improving appropriateness and effectiveness of European Agricultural Research for Development (ARD), helping to the drive policy and research agendas. One of their main areas of focus has been establishing effective dissemination and knowledge management systems, which has led to the development of [The European Information System on Agricultural Research for Development](#) website. This contains a substantial amount of information on recent research and policy changes affecting all aspects of agricultural and rural development

##### **Agricultural Research and DFID**

Through the [Research for Development \(R4D\)](#) portal DFID and the [Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council \(BBSRC\)](#) have joint-funded the Sustainable Agriculture Research for International Development (SARID) initiative, involving 12 research projects that seek to address key challenges to agriculture in developing countries. All of these projects see collaborations between UK research institutions and partner organisations in developing countries. A summary the projects can be found [here](#).

## Agricultural Research Resources

The [Users Perspective With Agricultural Research and Development](#) (UPWARD) website has news and information resources on participatory research and development (PR&D) and innovations for sustainable rootcrop livelihoods. A partnership programme of the International Potato Centre it aims to promote information sharing and support networking among PR&D professionals and organisations, especially in Asia and the developing world.

The [Australian Centre for Agricultural Research](#) is the Australian government's official agency for research for development. Its main partner countries are those in Asia and the Pacific where priorities are for projects which demonstrate clear, deliverable and sustainable benefits to end users in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

## Additional Resources

### Household Economy Approach Guide

The Household Economy Approach (HEA) is a livelihoods-based framework for analysing the way people obtain food, non-food goods and services, and how they might respond to changes in their external environment - a negative shock, such as a drought or crop failure, or a positive policy change, such as a cash transfer scheme.

Co-financed by [Save the Children UK](#), the [Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme \(RHVP\)](#), and [FEG Consulting](#), the [Practitioners' Guide to the Household Economy Approach](#) provides practical 'how to' tools for those involved in the fieldwork and analysis of HEA assessments. It will also be a useful refresher for experienced practitioners. This guide will be complemented by two forthcoming publications - *The Household Economy Approach: A guide for programme planners and policy-makers* and *The Household Economy Approach Facilitator's Resource Pack: Guidance materials for trainers* later in 2008.

### Livelihoods Network Annual Workshop

The [Livelihoods Network](#) held the Third Annual Workshop in November 2007. The aim of workshop was to continue peer support and knowledge-sharing on the application and relevance of Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches (SLA) to current development issues. The report summarises the discussions and priorities of delegates and draws upon the [blog entries and PowerPoint](#) presentations of participants.

### Research & Policy Papers

The Royal Society has published a paper on '[Biodiversity-climate interactions: adaptation, mitigation and human livelihoods](#)' following on from a workshop in June 2007 which looked at the losses of biodiversity caused by overexploitation, pollution, invasive species and habitat change over the last fifty years. How the impacts of climate change on biodiversity are managed will have increasingly significant implications for human health and wellbeing, economic livelihoods, and ecosystem services including climate regulation, with urgent action required

The [New Agriculturalist](#) is an online journal with reports and resources for those interested in agricultural for development.

Earthscan have published [An Introduction to Sustainable Development](#) aimed at both new practitioners and those who want to update themselves on the latest thoughts and theories.

## Events & Training

### Agriterra Competition

To celebrate their 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2008 Agriterra (the Dutch organisation for agriculture) is organising '[Agriterra's Innovation in Rural Development Contest](#)'. Innovative ideas, plans or business proposals on agriculture and rural development are welcome as long as they contribute to poverty reduction. For more information visit the website: [www.agriterra.org](http://www.agriterra.org)

### AU Livelihoods in Semi Arid Africa Seminar

The African Union is hosting a conference on '[Development of Rural Livelihoods in Semi-Arid Africa: Issues, Challenges, and Opportunities](#)' in Ethiopia on 29/ 30 April 2008 to bring

together actors from across Africa and partners agencies to document activities and build a platform for broader policies coordination. Registration is by 21 March.

#### The LRC: The Bigger Picture & Contacts

The [Livelihoods Resource Centre](#) is managed by [HTSPE](#) in association with [IDS](#), [ODG](#) and [Coffey](#). The LRC provides services in two areas: specialised **commissioned services** for DFID Advisers and **core resources** posted on the website and eBulletin.

#### Contacts

For comments or suggestions on content, please email: [Jessica Riordan](mailto:Jessica.Riordan@htspe.com)

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For all other enquires relating to the Livelihoods Resource Centre, please email [lrc@htspe.com](mailto:lrc@htspe.com) or visit our website [www.livelihoodsrc.org](http://www.livelihoodsrc.org).

