

Meeting of Sponsoring Organizations of IISAST Expert Consultations

Ministere des Affaires étrangères, Paris
17 January 2008

Key Decisions and Actions

Participants:

Chris Addison, communiq.org
Peter Ballantyne, IAALD
Hugo Besemer, WUR
Thierry Doudet, CTA
Phillip Edge, CABI
Jean-Francois Giovannetti, MAE
Johannes Keizer, FAO
Ajit Maru, GFAR
Enrica Porcari, CGIAR
Stephen Rudgard, FAO

Apologies:

Abigail Mulhall, DFID

DEFINITION OF POLICY FRAMEWORK – AND MANIFESTO – FOR THE INITIATIVE

1. The policy framework included in the draft report of the 2nd IISAST Expert Consultation provided the main topic for discussion. It was agreed that a “manifesto” would be highly beneficial for the initiative, in terms of laying out the substantive agenda that was being addressed. Currently the initiative’s policy profile is unclear, and lacks a reference to the top level development issues. A manifesto could act as a common declaration at a global level on collaboration and consistency between various stakeholders from NARS, NGOs, politicians, and farmers’ representatives.
2. The requirement was recognized for (1) a common vision and (2) concrete actions. The former would describe what the initiative/partnership is trying to achieve, so stakeholders don’t get confused. A common vision with clear and strong message(s) would form the basis of advocacy, and could form the basis for stakeholders to flag their activity as being consistent with a global declaration on the global role of information for agricultural research for development (ARD) and rural innovation systems. The initiative would then become an umbrella with specific set of principles in a declaration with a mechanism to review the framework. Each stakeholder could follow its own agenda, according to its institutional priorities and constraints, but be potentially under the common umbrella. Incentives for adhering to the common principles could be identified.
3. In terms of scope, it was acknowledged that the initiative should not attempt to encompass all communication in the wider environment of rural innovation systems. Considerable discussion then followed around the central theme(s) of the manifesto, which led to unanimous agreement on the principal focus of enhancing the availability and accessibility of information in the public domain (not just public goods) for agricultural research for development and innovation. Some detail was then added to this central statement, which it was agreed would be composed after the meeting into the draft manifesto (see point 11).
4. As an adjunct to the definition of the main substantive theme, the principal purpose(s) of the three Task Forces were then discussed and agreed as part of the manifesto.

IDENTITY OF THE INITIATIVE

5. It was agreed that the IISAST title was inappropriate for the overall initiative. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that the initiative should henceforward be known as: "Coherence in Information for Agricultural Research for Development" – CIARD.
6. The CIARD initiative's members were taken to be the institutions and individuals that had participated in the two IISAST Expert Consultations, which it was decided would be called the CIARD "Community".

IDENTITY AND NATURE OF THE "FACILITATING BODY"

7. It was agreed that the "facilitating body" identified in the 2nd IISAST Consultation would be known as the CIARD "Core Group", and that it would be maintained as an informal body, without a formal agreement requiring signature by the parties.
8. The Core Group was initially taken to be the seven sponsoring organizations of the 2nd Expert Consultation, together with CAB International. The Task Force moderators (Chris Addison and Hugo Besemer) were also considered to be members.
9. It was agreed that Cirad should be invited to join the Core Group immediately.
Action: Jean-Francois Giovannetti to invite Cirad to join the Core Group.
10. Participants agreed that no other organizations would be invited to join the Core Group until the "manifesto" had been completed. IDRC and the Gates Foundation were identified as possible early candidates to be approached to join the Core Group.
11. The Terms of Reference of the CIARD Core Group were agreed as follows:
 - to advocate, foster, and enhance coherence in information for agricultural research for development;
 - to review and monitor the manifesto, policy framework, and procedures of the CIARD initiative;
 - to initiate, facilitate and coordinate the Task Forces under the CIARD initiative, to be defined by the biennial Expert Consultations in terms of their objectives, outputs and activities¹;
 - to organize future biennial Expert Consultations;
 - to provide feedback to the wider CIARD Community.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

12. It was agreed that initially the main points of the manifesto should be drawn together as quickly as possible into a short summary (perhaps 250 words) in draft, from the narrative report of the discussion at the meeting. **Action:** Chris Addison, Peter Ballantyne, and Johannes Keizer to prepare the draft summary manifesto, and then to share it for comment with the Core Group and the wider CIARD Community.
13. It was further agreed that a consultant should be hired to expand the summary manifesto into a more detailed policy document, that described the impact and importance of the manifesto, and a complementary range of promotional/advocacy material. Stephen Rudgard stated that the funds for these activities would be found from its project with DFID. **Action:** Stephen Rudgard to follow up as and when appropriate.
14. It was agreed that the manifesto would be formally launched at the IAALD-AFITA-WCCA Congress, in Japan in August 2008. Other events were identified at which the manifesto should be promoted after its launch, amongst which were the meetings of the regional forums, such as APAARI (April) and AARINENA (October) and the CGIAR Annual General Meeting (Mozambique, December).
15. It was agreed that Task Forces should be established or removed only by the wider CIARD Community at the biennial Expert Consultations.

¹ January 2008: Current Task Forces are Advocacy, Capacity Building, and Content Management.

16. Advocacy Task Force: The urgent priority for the Task Force was identified as being to coordinate development of policy briefs and good practice reports, supported by implementation stories and case studies. It was acknowledged that dedicated resources would be required to develop these materials.
17. Capacity Building Task Force: The choice of lead organization was discussed, given FAO's wish not to be in the leadership all three Task Forces, but no obvious alternative was found. It was recognized that IAALD, CTA, and Cirad would participate, and that a call for expressions of interest would be forthcoming. The need for an external independent facilitator for the Task Force was identified, and suggestions for candidates were invited.
18. Content Management Task Force: There was considerable discussion on the need for adequate description(s) of international systems and tools for information on agricultural research for development, which was identified as a priority for the Task Force during the 2nd Expert Consultation. It was noted that Barbara Hutchinson had recently developed a paper on the topic, and that this would provide an excellent basis for development of an open wiki (with appropriate guidelines) on software tools and applications for contributors in the initiative to expand on, so that stakeholders can establish quickly what resources exist and what they comprise. The future development of web-ring(s) in agricultural research and development was also identified as a priority for the Task Force.
19. Community platform: It was recognized that the facility identified at the 2nd Expert Consultation was primarily intended as a collaboration tool providing working spaces for the three Task Forces, referencing existing Communities of Practice. In that context, the community platform was strongly supported by the Core Group.

REPORT OF 2ND IISAST EXPERT CONSULTATION

20. It was agreed that the report of the 2nd IISAST Expert Consultation could now be finalised, incorporating the inputs received from Koen Beelen, Thierry Doudet and Barbara Hutchinson. There was also general agreement that the need for subsidiarity should be made clearer in the report – that the regional organizations are critical and must be supported by the international partners. **Action:** FAO to finalise report and distribute.

OTHER INITIATIVES

21. Impact assessment methods: The need for a set of tools/approaches for impact assessment was identified given the apparent lack of reported evidence of impact on agriculture by ICT. There was general recognition that the CTA initiative to develop the SMART Toolkit² should be taken up by the CIARD initiative. **Action:** Thierry Doudet to ask CTA colleagues to provide a briefing on the SMART Toolkit with the Core Group.
22. Other events: It was noted that a workshop on "Adoption of ICT-enabled information systems in ARD" would be organized by GFAR and IAALD at the IAALD/AFITA Congress in Japan.

² Smart Toolkit: http://www.cta.int/smart_toolkit/