



## **Italian Agriculture Research for Food Security in Times of Crisis: The Italian System meets the Alliance of CGIAR Centres**

**A Conference to be held in Rome, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

**Sala Aldo Moro**

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**Piazzale della Farnesina**

During the year 2008 agriculture has been at the centre of the World attention. The sudden and dramatic rise of prices between the end of 2007 and the first half of 2008, lead to spontaneous rallies forcing more than 40 countries to take extraordinary measures to face the food crisis. The following World financial crisis, from the second half of 2008, has affected all countries.

The "L'Aquila Food Security Initiative"<sup>1</sup> adopted at G8 Summit by the world leaders<sup>2</sup> stresses the urgent need for decisive action to free humanity from hunger and poverty. The Initiative recognizes that food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture must remain a high priority. The Declaration states the necessity for the global food security agenda to be focused on agriculture and rural development promoting sustainable agricultural production and a greater productivity and economic growth in the rural world through appropriate policies.

Therefore, agricultural research is called upon to play a substantial role in contributing to the identification of short and long term solutions that will reduce the impact on vulnerable groups, ensure sustainable growth of developing countries, and contribute to greater global stability, for the benefit of both developing and developed countries. Responding to this challenge requires a shared effort and a worldwide coalition of the whole agricultural research system to address the challenges launched by the G8 Summit.

It appears that a strengthened international effort is needed to:

- Rethink (agricultural research) strategies and priorities to combine medium and long term development objectives (e.g. sustainable development, natural resources management), with short term objectives (e.g. poverty eradication, global food security), and

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.g8italia2009.it/static/G8\\_Allegato/LAquila\\_Joint\\_Statement\\_on\\_Global\\_Food\\_Security%5B1%5D,0.pdf](http://www.g8italia2009.it/static/G8_Allegato/LAquila_Joint_Statement_on_Global_Food_Security%5B1%5D,0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *The Joined Declaration on Global Food Safety ("L'Aquila Food Security Initiative") was approved by G8 Countries and by Algeria, Angola, Australia, Brazil, Denmark, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Libya (President-in-Office of the African Union), Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, China, Korea, Senegal, Spain, South Africa, Turkey, Commission of the African Union, FAO, IEA, IFAD, ILO, IMF, OECD, The Secretary General 's UN High Level Task Force on Global Food Security Crisis, WFP, the World Bank, WTO and by the Alliance for a green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Bioversity/ Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), Global Donor Platform for Rural Development, Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR)*

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- Join forces, build the critical mass, and agree on actions which are needed to implement these strategies.

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), hosted by FAO, representing the various stakeholders (e.g. research, education, farmers, civil society, and private sector of national and regional research systems), has recently launched the First Global Conference on Agriculture Research for Development (GCARD), which will take place on March 2010 in Montpellier (France).

Relevant to this framework is the ongoing evolution of the system of 15 centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). The CGIAR represents the most advanced international agricultural research network addressed at developing countries. The main objective of the CGIAR is: "contribute to the achievement of food security and the eradication of poverty in developing countries, through research, partnerships, capacity building and support for policies, promoting sustainable agriculture based on the proper management of natural resources".

Italy, through the Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has been a member of the CGIAR since 1974. By 1997 the annual contribution reached 4 million euros per year<sup>3</sup>. Italy actively participates in the governance of the CGIAR system and in the mechanism of European coordination, the European Initiative on Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD), which brings together the European Commission and the Member States (plus Switzerland and Norway). Italian support to CGIAR is partly unrestricted for activities at the Centres, and partly restricted for specific projects and programmes. Specific projects and programs relate to geographical priorities (Africa, conflict or post-conflict countries, the Mediterranean areas, Balkans, Middle East and Latin America) and thematic priorities of the Italian Development Cooperation, such as biodiversity conservation, environmental protection, natural resources management, the promotion of agriculture, in particular of smallholder poor-resources farmers, rural development and gender policies.

The reform process of the CGIAR was launched at the end of 2008, is considering strategic aspects as well as organizational and financing modalities, in order to identify how to best adapt and anticipate changes and global challenges. This reform provides for the creation of a new framework for the Alliance of CGIAR centres to implement a new strategy for agricultural research in collaboration with the world agricultural scientific network. The strategy will concentrate on three objectives:

- Food for people, to create and accelerate sustainable growth of agricultural production in particular by and for the poorest
- Environment for people, to preserve and improve the use of natural resources and food safety of vulnerable groups in response to climate change and other factors
- Policies for people, to promote policies and institutional changes to stimulate the growth of agricultural production

This process of institutional reorganization and focusing of the ongoing research priorities is well underway with major parts of the reform concluded in 2010

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<sup>3</sup> Since 1997 the Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare (IAO) provides support to MAE-DGCS on ARD and CGIAR issues. The objective of this support is also to foster research partnerships between the national agricultural research system, the international system, European research, and research systems of beneficiary countries.

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A parallel process is ongoing in Italy to promote a multi-functionality strategy for agriculture, as recently highlighted by the Conference of the Deans of Agriculture Faculties. This new strategy responds to the radical transformations begun in 1990s which brought a major change in EU Common Agricultural Policy. This new vision fits into a renewed global context, recognizes the strategic value of agriculture for the development of all countries and for the welfare of all peoples, allowing large areas of strategic convergence across developed and developing countries.

With this perspective, the Italian agricultural research system needs to develop a more systematic approach towards emerging and developing countries issues. It needs to refocus its research objectives and priorities. This development is particularly important since Italy's participation has so far been restricted to individual researchers with limited support from Universities and national research organisations. This ad-hoc and fragmented approach has been somewhat effective in contributing cutting-edge research to global challenges, but has not fully exploited the capabilities of the national system.

The search for synergies and partnerships between the Italian Agricultural Research system and the Alliance of CGIAR centres is an important step to identify new ways of cooperation between national and international systems. This important step will contribute to build the critical mass needed to give substance to the G8 commitments. For this purpose a Conference has been conceived to promote open dialogue between Italy's policy-makers and agricultural research organisations, and the Alliance of CGIAR centres.

The Conference pursues three main objectives:

- Contribute to identify a common agricultural research agenda for poverty reduction and long-term global sustainable development.
- Share information, join forces, and improve mutual understanding between national and CGIAR systems.
- Discuss the way forward for building synergies and partnerships between the Italian agricultural research system and the CGIAR system.

The following actors are expected to attend the meeting:

- Italian Ministries concerned with programming and financing agricultural research at national and international level (MAE, MIPAF and MIUR)
- Organisations of the Italian agricultural research system (CNR, CRA, INRAN, ENEA, ISS, IAO, Universities ....)
- The Alliance of CGIAR Centers.

The Conference will be divided in two sessions:

- A morning session to present policies, ongoing transformations and institutional opportunities at the national and at the international level.
- An afternoon session to present strategies and programmes of CGIAR centres and Italian Organisations to the scientific community.

An indicative programme has been prepared with full details on the agenda to follow shortly.

Morning session

- Opening (MAE/CNR/IAO/Alliance)

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- Italian Development Cooperation and CGIAR (MAE)
- The Global Forum for Agricultural Research and the First Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GFAR)
- The new CGIAR (Alliance of the CGIAR Centres)
- Italian strategy for agricultural research (MIUR)
- Agriculture Research for development in Italy (tbd – invited speaker eminent scientist)
- The Italian agro-food policy and globalisation (MIPAF)

### Afternoon session

- WARDA, IFPRI, ICARDA, BIOVERSITY, ILRI, ICRISAT (confirmed participation)
- CNR, CRA, INRAN, ENEA, ISS, University
- Italian Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (IAO)

For any further information on the meeting please feel free to contact M. Andrea Di Vecchia - Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR) at the following email address: [a.divecchia@ibimet.cnr.it](mailto:a.divecchia@ibimet.cnr.it)