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For Immediate Release

Historic Dialogue between Agricultural Scientists, Farmers, Policymakers, and Other Key Development Actors Charts New Path Towards Ending Hunger and Poverty

*“Montpellier Roadmap” Outlines Priorities of Farm Research for Development Agenda;
Focus on Farmers, Women in Decision-making*

MONTPELLIER (31 March 2010) —Failure to prioritize agriculture and rural development at the same level as other sectors like health and education has left many developing countries with gaps in capacity needed to meet the Millennium Development Goal of reducing hunger and poverty. It has also left them unprepared for coping with rapid climate change and a population explosion expected to occur by 2050, according to experts at the close of the first Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD),

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia—the two regions inhabited by roughly 95 percent of the world’s poor and the most malnourished—were identified as “battlegrounds” for the fight to cut hunger and poverty. Official Development Assistance (ODA) to agriculture has dropped significantly, falling from a peak of 17 percent in 1979, during the height of the Green Revolution, to a low of 3.5 percent in 2004. It also declined in absolute terms: from USD 8 billion in 1984 to USD 3.5 billion in 2005.

“Millions of people around the world are enduring lives of hardship and misery today. We are collectively and personally responsible for this tragedy,” said Dr. Monty Jones, 2004 World Food Prize Laureate and new head of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) during an emotional closing address. “I am personally ashamed.”

Jones acknowledged that there have been tremendous successes in agricultural research. “We should be very proud of that,” he said. “But we should have achieved far more than we have. However, I believe that we have begun the process to put the structures, activities, and programs in place here at GCARD that will enable us to end poverty in this world.”

The GCARD meeting brought together more than 1,000 researchers, policymakers, farmers, donors, and members of civil society from every region of the world to develop a new agricultural research for development (AR4D) architecture that is geared toward reducing both hunger and poverty. It is the first time all key players, from farmer to donor, have gathered to iron out an action plan for AR4D.

“The conference has enabled all constituents to have a voice, and those voices will be included in the future of agricultural research to help us face the problems we have,” said Adel El-Beltagy, outgoing chair of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research.

The “Montpellier Road Map” was presented at the close of the conference to provide a framework for linking science and innovation to the needs of farmers and the rural poor.

Addressing gender in agriculture, partnerships, and capacity building of national and regional programs were crosscutting themes throughout the conference. Women account for as much as 80 percent of Africa’s food production but they only receive five percent of agricultural extension training and 10 percent of rural credit. Only a quarter of agricultural researchers in Africa are

women, and only 14 percent of the management positions in agricultural research and development are female.

“Investing in gender is non-negotiable,” said Mary Njenga, a Kenyan researcher “It must be in all programs.” The participants discussed the need to determine how to empower women researchers and women farmers in order to influence policy and other interventions that affect them.

Civil society groups advocated for a strong role in the process. “Food providers must be at the center and in the governance of agricultural research at the international, regional and national levels,” said Dr. Assetou Kanoute, with the Association for Development of Production and Training Activities, Mali. “We cannot selectively involve farmers and NGOs in discussing thematic programs, while completely shutting them out of the discussion of governance of agricultural research.”

“The CGIAR came to GCARD to listen to our stakeholders to get the inputs from all concerned about the priorities we should have,” said Dr. Carlos Pérez del Castillo. “After three days of substantive discussions, our expectations have been fulfilled. We are going home with another set of insights that will help us further shape the strategic results framework and the mega programs.”

A draft Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) was presented at GCARD to elicit further feedback from stakeholders on eight thematic areas of research. The SRF guides the development of a results-oriented research agenda that will address major global challenges. These discussions and inputs will be used to inform the final version of the strategy and an initial set of mega-programs adapted from the thematic areas. The hope is that three of the mega-programs will be fast tracked and ready to function by the end of 2010.

The themes of the proposed key areas of research included: agricultural systems for the poor and vulnerable; enabling agricultural incomes for the poor; optimizing productivity of global food security crops; nutrition and health; water, soils and ecosystems; forests and trees; climate change and agriculture; and agricultural biodiversity.

In response to the CGIAR’s proposed thematic areas, participants suggested that there was a need for greater refinement of the breeding and agricultural systems for the vulnerable programs. Specifically, the CGIAR was asked to broaden its focus to include crops other than the major food staples of rice, maize, and wheat and for the agricultural systems program to be defined from regional to global as opposed to global to regional.

“There is a much greater need to focus research on poor farmers and vulnerable groups in the varied agricultural regions of the world,” said Pérez del Castillo. “The role of partnerships will be huge in order to achieve impact on the ground in poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.”

The conference participants endorsed the following characteristics for a more effective AR4D system, and as the baseline upon which to build and assess progress at the next GCARD in 2012.

1. Adopts a problem-solving approach to priorities with a focus on selectivity, with regional and regional organizations as the foci;
2. Focuses on *researchable or proven* technologies and/or their delivery to meet farmer constraints on technology adoption;
3. Addresses constraints identified through regional consultations e.g., human resource development, incentives for scientists, accountability and effectiveness of *multiple* partnerships.

4. Facilitates the rapid generation of innovations in support of the spread of knowledge and technologies to small holders and delivery of services to reach the poor;
5. Promotes effective use of collective capacities, particularly networks, by strengthening key relationships among research, development (extension, seed suppliers, the banking sector) and farmer actors;
6. Actively achieves increased investments in human, institutional and financial resources;
7. Promotes coordinated operational linkages among donors and development partners, aimed at monitorable development impacts;
8. Increases mutual and equal accountability among all stakeholders;
9. Commit to action;
10. Achieves credible monitoring, evaluation and reporting on what has changed.

The stakeholders who should commit to this AR4D system were outlined as the following:

- National policy makers of developing and developed countries;
- All stakeholders at the local, national, sub-regional, regional and international levels engaged in and/or supporting agricultural research knowledge and information systems including the CGIAR, and advanced research, educational, and extension institutions;
- Donors, foundations, intergovernmental agencies, including bilateral and multilateral institutions and development banks;
- Private sector, including small, medium and large agricultural input companies, food companies, agricultural banks, insurers and the agribusiness sector;
- Farmers organizations and CSOs/NGOs at all levels;
- Representatives of the poor and women;
- Stewards of the environment.

“The difference between this meeting and previous meetings is that we are committed and accountable to this road map, and it is going to guide our activities in the coming year,” said Jones.

“I feel that GCARD was successful in creating new ideas for how to move forward,” said Uma Lele, former Senior Adviser to the World Bank and lead author of the global report released at GCARD, *Transforming Agricultural Research for Development*. “But the proof will be in what we do between now and the next GCARD. We need for donors to make the contributions that I know they are capable of making.”

According to the report, meeting the backlog of underinvestment alone will require agricultural research investments in developing countries to increase to 1.5 percent of agricultural GDP, more than double or triple current investments in scientific and institutional capacity.

“We need action, action, action, and abolition, not alleviation, of poverty,” she said.

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GCARD meetings, organized through the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), will be held every two years. GCARD will replace the GFAR triennial conference and the annual general meetings of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. Agropolis International and the CGIAR partnered with GFAR to help organize GCARD 2010. For more information, please visit: www.egfar.org/egfar/website/gcard.

The **Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR)** was established in 1998 to bring together all those involved in shaping and determining the future of agriculture. GFAR uniquely mobilizes partners from science and society to reform and strengthen research and extension systems around the world, to increase their impact in development. Sectors represented in GFAR include UN Agencies, the CGIAR, national and regional agricultural research and extension systems, development funding agencies and organizations representing farmers, the private sector and civil society.

The **CGIAR** is a strategic agricultural research alliance dedicated to generating and applying the best available knowledge to stimulate agricultural growth, raise farmers' incomes, and protect the environment. It supports 15 research centres worldwide conducting groundbreaking work to nourish the future. For more information, please visit www.cgiar.org.