A woman farmer at a seed market.

ICRISAT genebank at Patancheru.

Framework and recommending strategies for improvement in the context of relief seed assistance.

- A project Post-planting assessment of 2004/2005 agricultural relief programs in Zimbabwe was implemented and involved a national survey to assess the impact of NGO assistance in 15 districts throughout Zimbabwe. Another project – Monitoring and assessment of agricultural relief programs in Zimbabwe – implemented a national farm survey designed to assess the impacts of relief inputs on crop yields and farm household production.

- A two-part project (a) Support for sustainable utilization of genetic diversity in foxtail millet germplasm collections held in trust by ICRISAT, and (b) Support for a global plan of action on the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture involved the processing of germplasm for conservation and distribution; maintenance and regeneration of germplasm with low seed viability and low seed stock; and the development of the foxtail millet core collection.

- Using markets to promote the sustainable utilization of crop genetic resources: ICRISAT is one of several collaborators in a multi-country assessment led by FAO of the relationship between seed and grain markets and local level diversity and welfare. ICRISAT is implementing the Kenya case study portion of the project, which entails the adoption of the standardized project methodology to the Kenya context in collaboration with FAO and other project partners.

- Development of materials and utilities for the improvement of structural and lexical consistency of AGROVOC is an ongoing project at ICRISAT.

Conclusion

The partnership between FAO and ICRISAT has forged strong and effective bonds in activities geared towards our common goals – alleviating poverty and protecting the environment. Let us continue to build even stronger ties in the future to help the poor of the SAT!

Introduction

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has had links with ICRISAT since 1984. Since then the partnership has grown stronger and more vital. ICRISAT and FAO projects run across a wide variety of topics, across many countries. FAO and ICRISAT have collaborated in over 32 projects in the last five years alone. ICRISAT is grateful to FAO for its partnership and support, and looks forward to joining forces to do Science with a Human Face to help build a world without hunger.

ICRISAT Honored by visit of FAO DG

ICRISAT was honored by the visit of Dr Jacques Diouf, the Director General of FAO to its headquarters at Patancheru on 4 January 2006, the first of its kind by any DG of FAO. On this occasion ICRISAT conferred the “Distinguished Fellow of ICRISAT” title on Dr Diouf.

Recent Collaborative Projects

Farmer Field Schools in Zimbabwe

Over the last five years ICRISAT staff based in Bulawayo have worked closely with FAO’s Harare Office. In 2000, ICRISAT and FAO began the development and promotion of Farmer Field Schools (FFS) for integrated ‘soil, water, and nutrient management’ with Zimbabwean NARS. The collaboration was particularly successful and provided a dissemination avenue for much of ICRISAT’s emerging soil and water management work, and culminated in a Farmer Field Schools Facilitators’ Manual that captured the lessons learned and materials developed. The work now forms the basis for many interventions led by Catholic Relief Services.

Agricultural Relief Programs in Zimbabwe

In 2003, following consecutive droughts in southern Zimbabwe, ICRISAT began working closely with FAO’s Emergency Response Team for the country. This collaboration was aimed at developing guidelines for Agricultural Relief Programs in Zimbabwe, and included monitoring the quality of seed relief initiatives and the technical support and promotion of improved fertilizer use and conservation agriculture. ICRISAT staff regularly participates in the monthly coordination meetings of relief agencies organized by FAO, and contribute to the FAO-convened Task Force on Conservation Agriculture.

Microdosing/Warrantage and FAO Projet Intrants

The best long-term example of FAO/ICRISAT collaboration has been in the area of microdosing/warrantage. ICRISAT, IFDC, CIAT/TSBF and other partners developed the microdosing fertilizer technology in Niger over a ten-year period. Warrantage (inventory credit based on
using grain as collateral) and microdosing have since been tested by an FAO-led consortium of NGOs, ICRISAT, and CIAT/TSBF in Niger with good results, and with other partners across the Sahel. In two project phases over a six-year period, FAO led a consortium of over 30 NGOs in extending microdosing/warrantage to poor farmers, with technical backstopping of ICRISAT and CIAT/TSBF. In the FAO-led Projet Intrants, NGOs started over 300 producer groups and/or credit co-ops to provide the warrantage institutional innovation that makes possible the use of microdosing fertilizer. About 10,000 farmers are now using microdosing with warrantage in Niger. The total impact is that more than 15,000 households are using microdosing across the Sahel.

**Dates for the Sahel**

ICRISAT and the FAO’s Crop and Grassland Service (AGPC) have had excellent long-term collaboration on date palm. The joint work has been done in four Technical Cooperation Programs (TCPs) led by FAO and in an IDRC-funded project led by ICRISAT. It has so far borne fruit in the deployment of about 2000 smallholder market gardens in eight Sahelian countries, which use gravity drip irrigation.

**Future Collaboration between ICRISAT and FAO**

**Oasis – a new CGIAR initiative**

A new system-wide research initiative called ‘Oasis’ to combat desertification brings together the research-for-development efforts of the Alliance of Future Harvest Centers of the CGIAR in support of UNCCD. On behalf of Oasis, discussions are underway to involve the FAO/AGPC as a strategic partner in the Oasis Challenge Program.

**Dates for the Sahel: new activities**

A proposal for date palm development was submitted to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) by UNCCD on behalf of ICRISAT, FAO and other partners in 2003, and the first tranche of funding (for training) was received in 2006. A delegation of the partners met with a high level group at the IDB in February 2007 to pursue this further. An MoU was signed and the IDB confirmed that it would continue to fund the training component of the proposal, and would also provide funds for the establishment of a tissue culture laboratory at ICRISAT’s Sahelian Center at Sadoré, Niger.

**Date Palm Research Consortium**

ICRISAT and FAO/AGPC have agreed to establish this consortium, whose objectives will be networking and sharing knowledge related to research and development work on date palm in sub-Saharan Africa.

**Biofuels – Global Consultation and Joint Research**

FAO/AGPC is carrying out work on jatropha in Burkina Faso and sweet sorghum in China (using Chinese material). ICRISAT is researching the various aspects of biofuel crop production and processing with sweet sorghum, jatropha and pongamia. AGPC and ICRISAT have agreed to co-host an international consultation on sweet sorghum.

**Phosphorus Proposal**

FAO worked closely with ICRISAT in the mid-1990s to prepare a publication and a substantive proposal on ‘Genetic manipulation of crop plants to enhance integrated nutrient management in cropping systems – Phosphorus’. FAO/AGPC and ICRISAT are now planning to work again on optimization of P use in crop production.

**Pigeonpea in the Sahel**

FAO, with technical support from ICRISAT’s East and Southern Africa Team, will introduce pigeonpea in its on-going project in Burkina Faso, in which pigeonpea will be planted in fields of Brachiaria to provide a source of biological nitrogen.

**Fresh fruit and juice industry in West Africa**

ICRISAT has invited FAO to join in a consortium that will include University of California-Davis, University of Florida, CIARD, CIAT, ICARDA, and other CG Centers, as well as private industry in Europe, USA, and the Sahel region. The proposed program includes an implementation strategy for substantially increasing production of citrus and exotic fruits by smallholder and large farmers, development of the value chain – local processing and marketing capacity for regional and international markets, as well as starting a food technology lab and a production and business training program.

**Agricultural extension using ICT/KM**

Collaboration is to continue on cutting edge ICT/KM issues, such as AGROVOC, topic mapping and areas associated with new modern forms of agricultural extension.

**FAQ support for ICRISAT Projects**

Many projects have recently been supported through the funds generously provided by FAO. Some of these are listed below:

- **Impact of HIV/AIDS on gendered information flows related to seeds among rural producers – Case Study in Chokwe District, Mozambique:** The research focused on understanding how knowledge and information flows operate in practice and the likely impact of HIV/AIDS on these systems. This understanding can help to improve the effectiveness of external interventions aimed to strengthen local coping capacity in the face of crisis.

- **The project entitled A relief seed quality assessment through seed sampling and testing, and a review of the regulatory framework for seed in Zimbabwe focuses on assessing the quality of seeds being distributed through NGOs.** The funds are also used for collecting and logging samples of relief seed and documenting seed sources. In addition, it is used for evaluating the regulatory