

CALL FOR CANDIDATURES FOR A YOUNG RESEARCHERS SEMINAR
Exploring Agricultural Research for the future:
A dialogue between young researchers from the South and the North
Montpellier, France, March-April 2010

The French Initiative for International Agricultural Research (FI4IAR: a joint venture of Inra and Cirad) in collaboration with Agropolis Fondation and with the support of the Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD) is organizing its first biennial seminar for young researchers working in developed and developing countries. Entitled "***Exploring Agricultural Research for the future: a dialogue between young researchers from the South and the North***", the event will provide an opportunity for doctoral and post doctoral students to dialogue and to establish links between young researchers from the North and the South.

Envisioned to be a regular event, the first of a series of Young Researchers Seminar (YRS) will take place during the Global Consultation on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD), scheduled for 28 March – 01 April 2010. The idea of organizing a GCARD is one of the major outputs from the recent reform process of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). The GCARD is a biennial meeting that will replace the CGIAR Annual General Meeting and the Triennial Conference of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR).

GCARD aims to develop a new global agricultural research system, driven by tangible development outcomes and bringing together all those involved in agriculture research for development (AR4D). Organizing YRS during the course of this GCARD will offer young researchers an excellent exposure of what is happening in the international ARD scene.

Objective

This seminar is targeted at young doctoral and post doctoral fellows. Its aim is to provide an opportunity for young researchers from the North and the South to exchange on their research projects, to raise awareness about the stakes for agricultural research in the different regions of the world. It also aims at raising awareness among the researchers of the North regarding the problems of the South, as well as at identifying synergies and complementarities together and building links.

Senior discussants, from different parts of the world, will also be invited to be actively involved during the seminar and bring a new point of view to bear on research projects. They will highlight aspects of the research project they find attractive and innovative. They will also seek to identify links and cross-cutting issues between the research projects

presented during the seminar. Young professionals from the agricultural development sector will also be invited to express their point of view on the outputs of these research projects based on their personal experiences.

This seminar will thus stimulate discussions not only between young researchers but also between young and senior researchers and young professionals from the development sector. Follow-up events are envisioned to be organized where some previous participants will be invited to participate again over the course of the years. By then, the same young researcher at a different stage of his/her career would have interesting insights to share with new YRS participants. Such is expected to contribute to building a dynamic community of young researchers from different parts of the world interacting with each other and jointly producing and sharing knowledge on important issues related to agricultural research.

Topics of the Seminar

The FI4IAR was in charge of organizing an Open Science Network Meeting entitled Partnerships-Innovation-Agriculture in June 2008 with a view to mobilizing the international scientific community and other potential stakeholders, and defining research priorities. The meeting revolved around issues related to “innovation” and “integration”. This meeting was attended by more than 300 people from 50 different countries and witnessed some very passionate and insightful discussions. This event prompted the organizers to continue working on issues related to innovation and integration in order to understand these issues better in the context of wider and ever evolving challenges facing agricultural research.

The seminar will gather some 40 young researchers who will reflect on how innovation and integration are factored into their respective research work, what are the obstacles faced, what are the institutional and organizational prerequisites, etc.

For instance, some of the questions that could be broached under these two topics are:

1. Session 1 on Innovation

In spite of the fact that the most recent studies on the dynamics of innovation underline the importance of interactions between the inventors and the innovators, right from the conception phase of new technologies, actors in the agricultural research arena are witnessing a growing gap between inventions and end-users. These inventions that are conceived in high performance laboratories, equipped with sophisticated material are disconnected from the end users who work in the field and are considered as mere executors. In agricultural research, one acknowledges readily that the linear model of knowledge diffusion is inefficient, but in reality the practice seems to lag behind. These statements bring to bear the following question: Is it thus not important to revisit the content of innovation processes and knowledge production and not just the form? What are the consequences for agricultural research due to its implication in this “innovative conception” that explores multi-criteria goals (versus “framed conception” that is based on pre-established performance criteria) and which stimulates the generation of knowledge and technologies aimed at changing the systems into new and more efficient forms of production? How important are interactive knowledge networks in facing emerging

challenges? How does one take into account that innovations can be technical, organizational and social in nature?

2. Session 2 on Integration

The new context, in which today's rapidly changing world is faced with a wide and evolving range of demands and challenges, calls for establishing strategies that are more efficient and sustainable than existing classical or standard approaches. Agricultural research is now faced with the challenge of taking into account and "integrating" new elements. Some of these challenges are:

- Integrating multi-scale parameters (spatiotemporal and organizational) ;
- Integrating new disciplines that are not fully represented in agricultural research institutes whether physical sciences or human and social sciences;
- Integrating the multiple functions of agriculture (the production of ecological services, rural livelihoods, employment, ...)
- Integrating the roles and activities of new actors and understanding the role played by the various actors "exterior" to agriculture in agriculture's transformation.

This session will examine the need for and the utility of different forms of integration, as well as the obstacles that need to be overcome (conceptual and institutional) in order to institute these approaches.

These cross cutting issues will be illustrated through research projects based on concrete examples from fields such as water, biodiversity, emerging diseases, livestock, integrated pest management, rural development, biotechnologies, ecological engineering,.... and provide new insights and highlight the difficulties faced when dealing with issues concerning innovation and integration when applied to these varied fields.

Target participants

Doctoral and postdoctoral fellows: 40 from the North and the South

The event is targeting young researchers (either at an advanced stage in their thesis work or have recently finished their thesis, i.e., no more than 3 years since completion).

If you satisfy these requirements, please send in your Application to YRS2010@cirad.fr (See Calendar section below for deadline and other requirements)

All travel and accommodation costs of selected participants will be covered by the organizers.

Discussants

Senior discussants will be invited to be actively involved during the seminar and bring a new perspective on the research projects presented. They are expected to highlight the attractive and innovative dimensions of the research projects presented as well as to identify linkages and cross-cutting issues between the research projects presented during the seminar. This is expected to result in the identification of emerging issues on the research frontier and to underline new and emerging questions in agricultural research.

Young professionals will also be invited to express their point of view on the outputs of these research projects based on their personal experiences. They will also seek to identify linkages and cross-cutting issues between the research projects presented during the seminar. Their insights could help enrich the general discussion and debate with the floor that will follow their intervention.

Tentative Planning of the seminar

Day 1: Arrival + 12 presentations

Day 2: 24 presentations

Day 3: 4 presentations + Plenary Session + Field visit

Day 4: Preparation of a Round Table session (by group/by topic...) + GCARD Opening Ceremony

Day 5: GCARD

Day 6: Presentation during the Round Table session organised as part of the GCARD

Presentation sessions for each topic, innovation and integration, will take place simultaneously. Each session (of two hours) will comprise of 3 presentations, comments by 2 senior discussants followed by first-hand account by a young professional. It will be closed with discussion and debate with the floor.

The final presentation during the GCARD could be envisaged as two Round Table sessions:

1st session: Presentations by young researchers

2nd session: A first-hand account by some senior discussants and young professionals expressing their point of view on the importance of organising such events which bring together researchers and professionals from different horizons, the importance of multidisciplinary work, the need to identify the emerging issues and new questions raised on the research frontier etc.

Calendar

- June 25th 2009 : Launch of the call for applications
- September 15th 2009 : Applications closed

All the applicants are requested to send in their dossiers to FI4IAR before the **deadline: 15th September 2009 to YRS2010@cirad.fr**

The dossier should comprise:

1. Curriculum Vitae (no more than 2 pages)
2. A 2-page summary of the thesis (ongoing or one that has been defended in the past 3 years). This summary should respect the following format: (i) problem statement and scope of the study, (ii) methodology, (iii) (expected) results obtained + a specific paragraph explaining how their research project deals with issues related to innovation or has lead to or underlined the necessity of factoring in and integrating different disciplines or scales or new actors or the multiple functions of agriculture.
3. A letter of motivation explaining his/her reasons and main motivations for participating

- September 15th 2009: Application dossiers sent to the Selection Committee
- November 10th 2009: Selection of 40 most suitable dossiers

The selection committee will select 40 dossiers based on the criteria established together with the other members of the committee (such as innovativeness of the research project, letter of motivation, gender, fluency in English and French ...)

- 15th November 2009: Diffusion of the results
- December 2009 : Kick-start the logistics and finalize the concrete planning and organization of the seminar
- January 15th 2010 : Deadline for a detailed description of the research project

The selected applicants should send in a detailed description of their research project (5-10 pages) as well as any published papers or other relevant documents to FI4IAR and Agropolis Fondation by 15th January 2010 to YRS2010@cirad.fr. These dossiers will then be passed onto the senior discussants for critical review and analysis.