



# The Week at ICARDA

International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas

P.O. Box 5466, Aleppo, Syria. Tel.: (+963 21) 2213433. Fax: (+963 21) 2213490, 2225105  
E-mail: icarda@cgiar.org; Website: www.icarda.org

15 May 2008

No. 1021

## Farmers' Conference on Participatory Plant Breeding

Some 53 farmers from six countries exchanged experiences and knowledge through story telling during the Farmers' Conference held at ICARDA Headquarters in Aleppo, 4-8 May. The conference was supported by CGIAR's Knowledge Sharing Project of ICT-KM.

Farmers from Syria, Algeria, Iran, Jordan, Egypt and Eritrea attended the first Farmer's Conference organized by the Barley Research

Program of the BIGM.

At the inaugural ceremony of the conference, Dr Salvatore Ceccarelli, a Consultant with the Barley Research Program, welcomed the participants. He said that



From left to right: Ms Mariam Rahmanian, CENESTA Iran, Dr Salvatore Ceccarelli, Barley Breeder, Dr Kamel Shideed, Director SEPR, Dr Adnan Al Yassin, Director of Dry Land Research, NCARE Jordan, at the inaugural session of the Farmers' Conference



Participants of the Farmers' Conference

Continued on page 3

## Strengthening Ties with The Netherlands and Norway

Initiated by Prof. Louise Fresco, and Prof. Rudy Rabbinge, Chair CGIAR Science Council, an ICARDA delegation consisting of Dr Mahmoud Solh, Director General, Dr Maarten van Ginkel, DDG-Research, and Dr Javed Rizvi, Afghanistan Country Manager, visited The Netherlands from 16 to 18 April to meet with the officials at the Ministry of Development Cooperation, and Ministry



Prof Martin Kropff (second from left), Rector Wageningen University, at a discussion with Dr Mahmoud Solh, Director General, and Dr Maarten van Ginkel, DDG – Research, during the visit of an ICARDA delegation to the University.

of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality in The Hague, and researchers at Wageningen University.

The delegation met with the Rector of Wageningen University, Prof Martin Kropff, and Prof. Rabbinge to convey the Center's desire for specific increased collabora-

Continued on page 2

Dr Mahmoud Solh, DG of ICARDA, Dr Scott Christiansen, Executive Assistant, and Dr Javed Rizvi, ICARDA's Country Manager for Afghanistan, traveled to Oslo, Norway for a donor awareness-building visit arranged during 20-23 April 2008 by Dr Ruth Haug, Professor and Director of the NORAGRIC Department of International Environment and Development Studies at



Dr Javed Rizvi, Country Manager ICARDA Afghanistan, making a presentation in Norway. Dr Ruth Haug, Professor and Director of the NORAGRIC Department of International Environment and Development Studies at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NULS), is to the left of the DG.

the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NULS), and Dr Kjersti Larsen, Associate Professor, Director of the Department of Ethnography at the Museum of Cultural History. Dr Larsen, a member of ICARDA Board, has a 20 percent appointment at NORAGRIC.

Continued on page 2

## Strengthening Ties with The Netherlands

*Continued from page 1*

tion emphasizing dry areas and climate change.

The aim of the visit was to inform the senior officials at the Ministries and Wageningen University about the new developments in ICARDA and to explore areas of potential collaboration. A major objective was to report on the Center's extensive R&D activities in Afghanistan, in which the Dutch authorities have expressed interest.

Dr Solh also met with Prof. Louise Fresco, Professor at the University of Amsterdam to discuss areas of mutual interest. Dr Fresco has been a strong supporter of ICARDA activities in dry areas.

At the Ministry of Development Cooperation, the delegation was received by Mr K. Davidse and other staff members. Drs Solh and Rizvi made presentations on the new ICARDA Strategic Plan and research agenda as targeted towards dry areas where climate change is to hit hardest, and specifically ICARDA's work in 13 provinces in Afghanistan. One particular area of mutual interest that emerged from the discussion was potentially cooperating in the Afghan province of Uruzgan. ICARDA hopes that through collaboration some of the outlined and very successful achievements of the on-going ICARDA activities in other provinces in Afghanistan could be transferred to Uruzgan.

In 2009 the Ministry will be reviewing its support to the CGIAR centers. This came up for discussion and the Ministry officials indicated their keen interest in the Change-Management Process the CG is undergoing to which ICARDA is contributing.

At the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, ICARDA team was received by Mr J.P. Hooijer, Director General, and his staff. Here too ICARDA's new strategy for dry areas research with NARS was presented, along with the Center's specific undertakings in Afghanistan. It was apparent from the discussion that we all shared the conviction that agriculture deserves the renewed attention that it is currently receiving, though driven by such unfortunate events as



**Prof. Rudy Rabbinge (right), Chair CGIAR Science Council, talking to Dr Mahmoud Solh, Director General, and Dr Maarten van Ginkel, DDG-Research .**

increased prices for major food crops and dwindling global food stocks.

The ICARDA delegation expressed its appreciation for the continuous support of the Netherlands Government to sustainable agricultural development in the developing countries.

The opportunity to dovetail work in the Afghan province of Uruzgan again emerged from our discussions. As agreed during the meeting, a concept note is being developed by ICARDA management on research for development to indicate what sort of research and technology transfer activities can be initiated and developed in Uruzgan through joint collaboration.

Mr Hooijer will be leading a Dutch delegation to Afghanistan soon, and Dr Rizvi will meet the delegation in Kabul, in addition to possibly Dr van Ginkel, to discuss in more details the possible collaboration in Afghanistan.

The team also had discussions with several scientists: Dr Jan Fongers, Account Manager Asia, WUR, Dr Henk Jansen and Dr Steven Starmans of polytechnic branch, WUR, Dr Bertus Bronkhorst from organization for practical training, Dr Anton Haverkort, Dr Jules Bosch and Dr Gert Kema (Plant Research International), Dr Marja Thijssen of Wageningen International, who has cooperated with ICARDA in the past in NARS training, Mr Jochen Froebrich of Alterra, Dr Richard Visser of plant sciences group, and Dr Bert Visser of Centre for Genetic Resources.

## Strengthening Ties with Norway

*Continued from page 1*

On 21 April, ICARDA delegation met Dr Arild Skara, Senior Advisor, Agriculture and Rural Development, and Dr Jan-Erik Studsrod, Senior Advisor, Agriculture and Environment, at NORAD - the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation; and were joined by Bard Vandvik, Higher Executive Officer / Afghanistan Desk Officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

On 22 April, the delegation drove to As, 50 km south of Oslo and met Dr Ellen Merethe Mangus, Director, Bioforsk - the Norwegian Institute for Agricultural and Environmental Research - and Dr Trond Hofsvang, Head of the Entomology and Nematology Department. Bioforsk is located on the campus of NULS. Dr Hofsvang took the delegation around to show half a dozen labs and intro-



**Left to right: Dr Trond Hofsvang, Head of the Entomology and Nematology Department, Bioforsk -- the Norwegian Institute for Agricultural and Environmental Research; Dr Ruth Haug, Professor and Director of the NORAGRIC Department of International Environment and Development Studies at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NULS), Dr Ingrid Nyborg, Ingrid Nyborg, Associate Professor, NORAGRIC, Dr Mahmoud Solh, Dr Scott Christiansen.**

duced ICARDA delegation to available staff as a sample of current research interests.

Dr Solh presented a seminar and talks continued with the staff of NORAGRIC in the afternoon that

included participation of visiting staff from Pakistan (COMSATS Institute of Information Technology in Abbottabad), who were earlier trained at NORAGRIC. The visit ended with a tour of the university.

## Farmers' Conference on Participatory Plant Breeding

Continued from page 1

the Farmer's Conference, the first of its kind to be held, has been organized as a joint activity among different partners. The objective of the conference is to bring farmers from different countries together to share their experiences and learn from each other. It is also an opportunity for the farmers to visit a research center like ICARDA, he said.

Dr Kamel Shideed, Director SEPR, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Director General. He described the conference as a great opportunity for the farmers as well as the researchers. The conference will help farmers and scientists exchange knowledge and experiences. Apart from these benefits, this meeting will expand regional integration and he hoped that the bilateral interaction will continue beyond the conference.

Ms Mariam Rahmanian from CENESTA, a non governmental organization based in Iran, said that it is a ground breaking conference. "The conference establishes that ICARDA takes farmers seriously and gives them importance in its research activities. Some of the farmers would not have seen a research center and the conference gives them an opportunity to visit an international center and interact with scientists," she said.

Dr Adnan Al Yassin, Director of the Dry Land Research Program of National Centre for Agricultural Research and Extension (NCARE), Jordan thanked ICARDA for organizing the conference. He said that Jordanian farmers involved in the participatory plant breeding program and attending the conference would benefit from sharing their experiences with farmers from other countries in the dry areas.



Participants visiting the fields

Dr Mahmoud Solh, Director General, met the participants during one of the sessions and heard their experiences about participatory plant breeding.

During the next four days the participants visited ICARDA facilities and farmers' fields in Souran, about 100 km South of ICARDA where they interacted with local farmers. Each day the farmers had sessions devoted to story telling, which gave them an opportunity to narrate their own experiences and learn from other farmers.

Dr Stefania Grando, Principal Barley Breeder, said the conference achieved its objectives of collecting and consolidating farmers' knowledge, which will help scientists in better targeting their research to address farmers' needs. Also, the conference was successful in establishing linkages between national level networks of barley farmers in these six countries.

The participatory barley breeding program was first implemented in Syria in 1997 and the model and concepts were gradually applied in other countries.

## International Recognition for John Ryan

Dr John Ryan, Soil Scientist, has been invited by the American Society of Agronomy to be part of a Taskforce whose mandate is to foster interest and activities of the Society in international agriculture. In addition to officers at the ASA headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin, the Committee is composed of internationally recognized agricultural scientists, including current (Roland Buresh, IRRI; J K Ladha, IRRI; John Ryan, ICARDA) and former

staff members of the CGIAR system. The Committee is chaired by Dr Ladha, who is based in Delhi, India.

In addition, Dr Ryan has also had the honor of being nominated by the Irish Soil Science Society as Honorary Member of the International Union of Soil Scientists. Dr Ryan is current Chairman of the IUSS Commission on Soil Fertility and Plant Nutrition.

### Ali Sbeih gets MSc

Mr Ali Sbeih, a researcher from the GCSAR, Lattakia, has successfully defended his MSc thesis entitled "Variability within *Ascochyta fabae* Populations in Syria and Identification of Sources of Resistance within Syrian faba bean landraces."

Mr Sbeih carried out his research work at ICARDA and at Al-Snouber Research Station (Jableh) under joint supervision of Drs M. Hassan (Tishreen University) and B. Bayaa (ex ICARDA pathologist, now at Aleppo University), in collaboration with M. Abang (ICARDA). The Examining Committee accorded Ali the Masters Degree with 95% note

rating Honorable. ICARDA's Scientific & Logistic Support to Ali was publically acknowledged. Mabrouk Ali

### Congratulations

BIGM Program staff (especially Biotechnology group) extend heartiest congratulations to Tawfiqq Istanbuli and Hadia Kousa who got married on Friday, 18 April 2008. Alf Mabrouk!

### Condolence

We have learned with great sadness of the demise of Mr. Jalil Janho, father of Mrs. Hala Hamati, Executive Secretary of ICARDA's

Amman Office. We offer our sincere condolences to Mrs. Hamati and her family. May the Lord have mercy on his soul and grant Mrs. Hamati and her family the strength to endure this difficult time.

### Quote of the Week

*"Movement is a medicine for creating change in a person's physical, emotional, and mental states."*

- Carol Welch