

Highlights of General Discussion:

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The general discussion was chaired by Dr. Iwanaga with Dr. Ito, Dr. Noguchi and Dr. Caldwell JIRCAS, respectively, as co-chairs.

During the first part of the general discussion, which was devoted to major issues brought up during the symposium, a large number of comments dealt with the potential contributions and limitations of farmer participatory research. Most of the participants recognized the benefits of this approach, in particular Dr. Sanchez (ICRAF) in addition to Dr. Norman (Kansas State University) and Dr. McArthur (Hawaii University). Dr. Norman mentioned that farmer participatory research was compatible and consistent with the current trends of democratization, decentralization and role of government in many nations of the world and was particularly suitable in the case of heterogeneous production environments. Dr. Williams (ICLARM) considered that this approach was most appropriate for areas with low potential and low density populations. However, several participants pointed out some of the limitations of this approach. Dr. Brader (IITA) cited the high cost, Mr. Samejima (JICA) indicated the difficulty in selecting the right farmers and the problems associated with scaling up, also mentioned by Dr. Prathapar (IWMI) and Dr. Mc Arthur, while Mr. Otoo from Ghana indicated the need for taking into account socio-cultural aspects, particularly in Africa. Comments on other topics included the role of information technology in the dissemination of knowledge, with emphasis placed on the content (Dr. Craswell, IBSRAM). Dr. Jayawardena (Department of Agriculture, Sri Lanka) mentioned that international collaboration should contribute to the promotion of capacity building in strategic and basic research in developing regions. He also pointed out the major role played by animals in agriculture and the need to pay a great deal of attention to semi-arid environments. He also suggested that efforts should be made to attract young people to agriculture. All the participants agreed on the importance of postharvest technology and Dr. Norman mentioned that the CGIAR system should focus more on postharvest technology, while Dr. Sanchez emphasized value-adding in postharvest technology and suggested that the use of the term " Value-added product transformation" would be preferable.

In the second part of the general discussion, several suggestions were made for the future orientation of JIRCAS activities. This was related to the previous presentation of Dr. Maeno, Director General of JIRCAS who had briefly reviewed TARC/JIRCAS contributions to date and offered four research strategies for the coming years: strategic basic research including biotechnology and information technology, comprehensive research with environmental and socio-economic components, postharvest technology research with emphasis placed on the prevention of postharvest losses and value-adding, and strengthening of the collaborative approach. Dr. Craswell and Dr. Dar (ICRISAT) suggested that JIRCAS should utilize information technology for the promotion and dissemination of technology in the developing regions. Dr. Brader indicated that JIRCAS should not only carry out studies on the prevention and control of postharvest losses but should also be involved in the development of methods of control of preharvest losses, for example integrated pest management (IPM). Dr. Prathapar indicated that since Japan is primarily a country with mountains, and hence watersheds, it should extend its large expertise in watershed stabilization to developing countries. Dr. Bie (ISNAR) suggested that JIRCAS should strike a balance between strategic basic research and adaptive

research. Dr. Sanchez added that since farmer participatory research is being promoted in many international research centers, JIRCAS could benefit from the experience gained by these organizations for the implementation of some of its programs, while building on its strength in basic and strategic research. Dr. Norman also mentioned that JIRCAS could adopt a consortium approach (already advocated by Dr. Craswell) to develop linkages with institutions which have more experience in farmer participatory approach than JIRCAS.