

ASTI – AARINENA Close Collaboration receives a high interest in WANA region

The Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI) initiative, led by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), has launched a project to collect and analyze recent investment and human capacity trends in agricultural research and development (R&D) in West Asia and North Africa. This project is implemented in close collaboration with the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA) and the main national agricultural R&D agencies of Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey and Yemen. In each participating country, the survey aims to collect information from a complete set of government, higher education, and private-sector agencies involved in agricultural R&D. The project outputs will include a series of country briefs, a regional report, outreach activities, and downloadable datasets. All outputs will be made available on the ASTI website (www.asti.cgiar.org).

ASTI has been the principal source of internationally comparable data and policy analyses on agricultural research systems for two decades. ASTI's mission is to provide up-to-date information and subsequent analyses on investment, capacity, and institutional trends in agricultural R&D in low- and middle-income countries worldwide. This information assists R&D managers, policymakers, donors, and other stakeholders in improved priority setting, decision-making, and policy formulation at national, regional, and international levels. Better-informed policy decisions will ultimately enhance productivity growth in agriculture, economic development, food security, and poverty reduction. The ASTI initiative has identified four objectives in fulfilling its mission: a) provide up-to-date, high-quality datasets on agricultural R&D; b) conduct further analysis of agricultural R&D datasets; c) communicate data results and analysis for policy formulation and advocacy; and d) build capacity for data collection and analysis.

WANA Overview

The ASTI-AARINENA Implementation and Training Workshop on "Tracking Agricultural Research and Development Investments and Capacities in the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) Region" was held in Amman from 12-13 December 2012. This workshop was attended by more than 18 participants representing national and regional focal points of R&D and leading national research organizations in WANA. The focus of the training was mainly on familiarizing national and regional focal points with the ASTI online workplace/data management tool, the survey forms, the methodology, and the data collection procedures. During group discussions, current challenges and capacity gaps in terms of data collection and analysis were discussed, and additional data and analysis needs assessed at national and regional level. Other notable points of the workshop included:

- An assessment of the agencies involved in agricultural R&D in WANA countries, including those in the government, higher-education, nonprofit, and private for-profit sectors was prepared

-A short overview of the institutional and agricultural science and technology policy developments since 2000, including the institutional changes that various agencies have undergone were updated

- The survey forms were distributed and collected to all agencies and input survey data in the ASTI data management tool

- IFPRI staff cross-checked the data for accuracy, consistency, and international comparability purposes and discussed the results with national collaborators with respect to possible data inconsistencies or omissions that may need to be addressed

- IFPRI staff conducted country visits to Algeria, Jordan, Oman, and Turkey aimed gather qualitative information, face-to-face interviews with key institutions, getting a sense as to the importance of the remote institutes, raising the response rate of agricultural R&D agencies

- Completed the implementation survey rounds in countries of Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen. Survey rounds are in process in Egypt and Turkey

- Created and generated country data files (CDFs) from DMP for Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen. Reviewed and cleaned data, estimated missing data, and prepared follow up questions.

Presently, the national ASTI focal points are working in conjunction with IFPRI project staff to prepare country briefs and fact sheets, as well as other country outputs on recent agricultural R&D investments and human capacity trends on the basis of the information provided through the survey, the overview prepared, and other relevant documents and preparation of the country brief. Objectives include disseminating the country brief and main messages to all agencies targeted in the survey, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders, preferably through the conduction of a stakeholders workshop by January - February 2014.