

Year of CfP: 2010

Project 1000-002

Project title: Organisation of a conference of stakeholders within the European program "ARIMNet" (Agricultural Research In the Mediterranean), October 28 and 29 2010, Palma de Majorque, Spain

Unit managing the project: INRA SDAR (INRA)

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Countries involved in the project: France, Italy, Algeria, Spain, Turkey, Egypt, Portugal, Morocco, Greece, Tunisia, Israel, Cyprus, Balearic Islands

Subthematic axes: IPB-1 (Integrative Plant Biology 1: *Genetics and genomics, plant breeding, ecophysiology*), IPB-2 (Integrative Plant Biology 2: *Plant pests and diseases, integrated crop protection, population ecology*), STDI-1 (Socio-Technical Dynamics of Innovation 1: *Agri-environmental innovations, agri-ecosystems, resources management*), STDI-2 (Socio-Technical Dynamics of Innovation 2: *Agri-food innovations, food and non-food use of plant crops*), STDI-3 (Socio-Technical Dynamics of Innovation 3: *Innovation processes, social management of innovations*)

Objectives:

Agriculture in the countries of the Mediterranean basin is facing common issues and challenges (e.g. management of natural and genetic resources, plant and animal health, food security and food safety, sustainability of agricultural production in a context of climate change...). Agronomic research, however, is scattered within the EU members as well as in Mediterranean partner countries. There is thus a great need of coordination among the different research programs.

The ARIMNet project, financed by the European Commission, is expected to help coordinate national research activities and identify common research programmes among the countries of the Mediterranean area, address fragmentation of efforts and exploit synergies. As a first step, ARIMNet has collected information on the national research programmes that are currently implemented in the region. Analysis of these data is under way. On this basis, ARIMNet is organizing a Conference of Stakeholders. The event aims to contribute to the mobilisation of the Mediterranean Agricultural Research community (and beyond) and the various stakeholders to identify together and share research priorities.

Approximately 100 persons are expected to attend the conference, which should permit a good representation of different stakeholders, while allowing an open international debate and creating a space for a constructive dialogue among the different participants. The Conference should allow the definition of joint research actions as well as cross-cutting research programs.

Action carried-out and results obtained:

The conference of the stakeholders was organised under the responsibility of INIA (Spain) as member of the ARIMNet Project (www.arimnet.net/), an ERA-Net of the FP7, supported by the European Commission and coordinated by France (INRA). The objectives of this project are to promote synergies and raise cooperation between Mediterranean countries participating to it through a better and shared knowledge of agricultural research programmes and in carrying out ambitious research projects that cannot be undertaken at an individual level.

ARIMNet is gathering twelve countries (6 EU members, 1 associated country and 5 other Mediterranean countries), thirteen major institutions and two associated international institutions, the CIHEAM (Centre International des Hautes Etudes Agronomiques Méditerranéennes) and ICARDA (International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas).

Aim and scope of the Conference

In a first phase, ARIMNet has collected information on the national agricultural research programmes that are currently run in the region. This information deserved to be confronted to the priorities that have been set out for the region in the area of agricultural research. On this basis, the purpose of the Conference of Stakeholders that ARIMNet has taken the initiative to organise was to contribute to the mobilisation of the Mediterranean Agricultural Research community (and beyond) and the various stakeholders to identify together and to share research priorities in order to prepare the decisions of the Steering Committee of ARIMNet on the future calls that should be launched in 2011. The Conference of Stakeholders was a key event in the process of selecting agricultural research areas that could be opened for further calls to trigger coordination of national programmes in the Mediterranean basin. It was a good opportunity to get over the paradox of the region that concentrates almost all the main global issues concerning agriculture and agricultural international research without being visible at the global level.

Organisation of a conference:

This conference was held at the Universitat Illes Balears (UIB), Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 28th-29th October 2010. It has gathered 78 participants from the 12 Mediterranean countries of ARIMNet and various stakeholders groups : National and regional agricultural research services, research councils, agricultural universities or university agricultural departments, agro and agro food industry, regional and international organizations, farmers organizations, NGOs (consumers organizations and other organizations involved in environmental issues).

It was organised in two parts: the first one aimed at giving to the participants a global picture of the stakes, challenges and opportunities in the Mediterranean for agriculture and agricultural research, the second one to debate on the priorities. This second part was considering both scientific areas – on the basis of the programmes that are currently run in the Mediterranean – and design of calls and management of research projects to better integrate the issues of innovation, capacity development and involvement of stakeholders in the design and run of the projects at the Mediterranean scale. It was prepared by an analysis of the current programmes (an outcome of the first phase of the ARIMNet project) and three parallel sessions devoted to innovation, capacity development and involvement of the stakeholders in the whole process.

Preparation of the recommendations to the Steering Committee of ARIMNet

The major result of the conference of the stakeholders is the recommendations to the Steering Committee of ARIMNet defining the agricultural research areas that could be opened for further calls to trigger and strengthen coordination of national programmes in the Mediterranean basin. A document has been produced summarizing the scientific areas that should be considered for priorities, the common general objectives and the six common thematic areas identified together. The discussions of the conference also led to strongly recommend to the Steering Committee to add value to the current Mediterranean projects through promoting a more integrative approach, in science (scale and scope) and in the design of the call.

Prospects for the future:

On the basis of these recommendations, the Steering and the Management Committees of ARIMNet have engaged the preparation of the call, defined the general orientations of the call and criteria of selection of the projects. A workshop gathering the ARIMNet members, the funding bodies that will support the call and scientific experts will be held in Athens, on April 12th and 13th, 2011. The aim of this workshop is to better elaborate on the scientific terms of reference of the future call and to define shared rules of management, accepted and agreed as a common basis by all the funding bodies. The ARIMNet call, integrating these recommendations of the conference of the stakeholders, should be then launched at the end of June 2011 and the projects should start at the spring 2012.

Furthermore, during the conference, the Secretary General of AARINENA proposed to set up a joint platform between AARINENA and EFARD on the Mediterranean stakes and challenges to overcome the deficit of visibility and presence of the region at the global level and to push it as a key area for addressing the global issues agriculture is facing. That is another result of the conference.

Beyond the ARIMNet project itself, the ARIMNet partners are thinking to various initiatives in a long term perspective to strengthen the building of a Mediterranean Agricultural Research Area and community.

Total Agropolis Fondation funding: €30,000

Funding categorie(s): Agropolis Fondation small grants: support for the organization of high-level scientific events (conferences, seminars)

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Keywords: Mediterranean – conference – agriculture – research priorities -