

Priorities of Stakeholder Decision Makers

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ABSTRACT

While land users directly manage natural resources, decisions made at local, provincial, national, regional, and global levels directly and indirectly influence agriculture and natural resource management. Relationships and perceptions among different stakeholder groups within and among each of these levels are important to informed decision making that can influence our natural resource base and the future of sustainable agriculture. SANREM has been fortunate enough to play a role in several fora that have provided a venue for the issues and opportunities of divergent voices related to sustainable agriculture and natural resources management to be shared and exchanged. These include global electronic conferences, electronic discussions, and face-to-face multistakeholder dialogues. Although clearly not a comprehensive study, the purpose of this paper is to draw on key ideas that have emerged from these fora to provide insights into the SANREM Phase III planning process.

INTRODUCTION

This paper draws on decision maker priorities that have evolved through multistakeholder dialogues and e-conferences in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Partners for Sustainable Agriculture on topics of food security, the multifunctional character of agriculture, sustainable agriculture and rural development, and land planning and management. Additionally, a SANREM e-discussion was held in preparation for the conference to which this paper is being presented.

The key research interest is an understanding of different decision maker priorities as indicated by which sector they represent as well as at which decision making level they are working or making a livelihood. This paper summarizes several findings from these various

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venues. The world is preparing for Rio+10, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in South Africa in 2002 and the SANREM CRSP program is simultaneously preparing for its next phase of activities. The purpose of this paper is to bring issues raised by different stakeholders to bear in guiding the design of SANREM CRSP Phase III.

METHODOLOGIES

The SANREM CRSP in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and in several instances with the International Partners in Sustainable Agriculture (IPSA) have engaged in multiple electronic discussions and stakeholder dialogues. These included:

- *Cultivating our Futures: The Multifunctional Character of Agriculture and Land* (1999) brought together over 1200 electronic participants from civil society, public and private sector to address the importance of the multiple roles that agriculture plays in our society and how to assess the importance of operationalizing these aspects of Sustainable Agriculture. A series of electronic conferences led to the Dutch funded face-to-face conference in Maastricht, Netherlands that was also accessed via a web forum by the e-participants.
- *Broadening the Research Horizon: Integrating sustainable food security dimensions into the National Agricultural Research Agenda* (2000). Two electronic consultations brought together over 400 individuals from the public and civil society sectors to discuss key priority research issues related to food security.
- *SARD Forum, preparing for Rio+10 and the FAO Committee on Agriculture* (2001). Working with the Task Managers of Chapters 14 and 10 of Agenda 21 in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Agriculture (WSSD) and the Committee on Agriculture SARD Forum, key representatives of the major groups of Agenda 21 (Indigenous Peoples, Business and Industry, Nongovernmental Organizations, Trade Workers, and Farmers) participated in an discussion board, followed by an electronic conference (400 individuals) and a face-to-face multistakeholder dialogue held in conjunction with the Committee on Agriculture in FAO, Rome.
- *Multistakeholder Consultation on Food, Agriculture and Land Resources for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development* (2001) In preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, September 2002), the first of a series of US citizens' preparatory multistakeholder dialogues on the issues of food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) and land resources was held. US government representatives heard views of representatives of the major groups of Farmers, Trade Workers, Business and Industry, Scientists, and NGOs to take forward in official preparations at national, regional and international levels.

Although not comprehensive, this paper draws out some of the key issues that divergent stakeholder decision makers find to be priority areas for sustainable agriculture and natural resources management that resulted from these venues. In addition, the outcome of the Multistakeholder Dialogue held at the Commission on Sustainable Development's 8th Session (CSD-8) focusing on agriculture and land, documents from WSSD regional preparatory conferences completed prior to this writing, an e-discussion of the SANREM research partners and interviews carried out in the Philippines, Mali and the Southern Piedmont of the United States through the SANREM CRSP Assessment of Decision Maker Priorities project. This paper focuses on issues related to sustainable agriculture and research and development.

The responses are shown according to the major group from which the individual or group

was speaking. These major groups are based on those identified in Agenda 21. Included in this are representatives of Business and Industry, Farmers, Indigenous Peoples, Non Government Organizations, Science and Technology and Trade Unions and Agricultural Workers. In some cases, the contributions come from representatives of major groups that have utilized the input of numerous colleagues to make their input. In other cases, an individual from one of the major groups has made the contribution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Many issues were raised in the context of the various venues described. We have chosen to identify these according to categories of Resource Management, Livelihoods, and Policy. Within each of the categories, we provide a list of issues raised by different stakeholders or decision makers. Following the issues list is a brief description of perceptions by representatives of Business and Industry, Farmers, Indigenous Peoples, Non Government Organizations, Science and Technology and Trade Unions and Workers on aspects of the issues.

Resource Management

Table 1. Issues Related to Resource Management

Resource Management	
Biodiversity Conservation	Soil Conservation
Agricultural Biodiversity	Conservation Technologies
	Land Degradation
Agroecological Practices	Farmland Conversion
Organic Agriculture	Habitat Maintenance
Integrated Farming Systems	Green Space Conservation
Integrated Livestock and Crop Management	Agroforestry
Integrated Pesticide Management	Fisheries
Appropriate Technologies	Watershed Management
Participatory Land Management	Water Quality and Quantity
Land Use Decision Making	Air Quality
Conflict over Resources	Status of Land Resources
Climate Variability	Health, Food Safety, Labor, and Environment
Awareness of Links between Ag and Environment	Standards
Ecosystem Services and Valuation	Health Impacts of High-Input Agriculture
Agricultural	Lack of Strong Research Base
Waste Management	Extensification/intensification
Alternative Energy Sources	Biotechnology

Within resource management, the following are discussion points that center on aspects of integrated and sustainable farming systems.

Business and Industry view increasing agricultural production per unit area of agricultural land, identifying locally adapted and integrated farming practices as the most appropriate method of sustainable agriculture. Integrated farming systems are based on best practice principles that seek to employ the most appropriate mixture of modern and traditional methods to achieve productivity, efficiency and economy, while providing the social and environmental benefits

sought by society. Industry representatives highlighted the potential positive social impacts of biotechnology.

Farmers representing the views of a broad spectrum of countries identified that the most important resource for SARD is the farmer and should be recognized as a producer and a citizen within her or his community. Farmers are concerned with the present agricultural production systems and the trend towards more intensive and industrial agricultural production. There are clearly uncertainties surrounding genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Land tenure was identified as a prerequisite of sustainable farming.

Farmers stressed the importance of shifting the focus of international agricultural strategies from corporate-driven food production to the small-scale family farmer. Reviving and regeneration of traditional genetic resources will improve biodiversity in agricultural production systems.

Although *Indigenous Peoples* represent only 5% of the world's populations, 90% of world's cultural diversity, about 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity is within their territories. They spoke to the importance of appropriate technology and the rehabilitation of organic systems and agroecology. The maintenance of cultural and spiritual relationships to the natural world, our lands, and our subsistence foods is vital to the conservation of the biodiversity. They asked for the translation of container directions on agro-chemicals to the languages of countries to which they are exported.

Non-governmental organizations stated that the best practices for sustainable agriculture are first and foremost local expressions and are those that are ecologically based – stating that conventional agriculture (intensive uses of agrochemicals and monocropping) is inherently unsustainable. One individual stated that “the green revolution technologies have become ‘islands of success’ in a ‘sea of deprivation’” The high input, energy intensive, corporate style agriculture is not only non-remunerative to farmers but will further erode the fragile ecosystem, natural resources and aggravate rural poverty. They noted that genetically modified organisms posed actual and potential hazards that would undermine agricultural biodiversity and compromise the rights of consumers. One participant noted that the opinions of scientists on GMOs differed widely, and that a moratorium should be put in place until a consensus and further research on their possible effects could be realized. They suggested that farming systems that were not based on purchased inputs were unattractive to private agri-businesses subsequently not supported by them.

Science and Technology representatives noted that agricultural advances often bypass small farmers and that trends of biotechnology are enhancing monocultures and further industrialization of agriculture. There are many examples of farmer-led and NGO led agroecological initiatives that have resulted in enhanced food security and environmental conservation regeneration. Recent data gathered by Jules Pretty at Essex demonstrates that more than 9 million households have used agroecological approaches regenerating about 29 million hectares throughout the developing world. Research should aim at developing mixed farming systems that integrate annual crops with perennial crops, livestock and trees, and emphasis soil fertility management, organic matter, moisture conservation, erosion control, and nutrient recycling. Agroforestry, intercropping and organic farming as well as the rehabilitation of traditional foods are important. The focus should be on increasing yields of crops that form a large part of poor peoples’ diet and income.

Trade unions and workers identified waged agricultural workforce as untapped, skilled workforce

with generations of knowledge on food production and the food system. Participation by workers in decision-making on all aspects of food production is not being promoted. They noted that training in integrated pest management would clearly serve as an alternative to using hazardous pesticides ensure the recognition of their role and contribution – past, present and future - to SARD

There was general agreement that the diversity of the world's farming systems called for a variety of technologies and approaches. A few comments from *Government* representatives noted that there is a crisis in prevailing agricultural models in developed and developing countries. There is the further need for diversification of agricultural systems. They pointed to the importance of conservation of genetic resources and the recent problems of animal health and food safety.

Livelihoods

Table 2. Issues Related to Livelihoods

Livelihoods

Market Opportunities	Food Security
Improved Farmer Income	Food Safety
Improved Community Revenues	Production
Food Prices	Access to Food
Agricultural Risks	Access to Land
Farm Economy and Regulations	Non Destructive Livelihood Scenarios
Promoting diversified enterprises	
Empowerment for Informed Choices for Farmers	Losses of Rural Society
Institutional capacity at different levels to design, negotiate plans that benefit population	Opposing stakeholders
Wage Workers and Labor Standards	Interface of local and scientific understanding
Contract Farming	

Business and Industry felt that market-oriented approaches that stimulate entrepreneurship and facilitate economic growth are the means by which to promote sustainable agriculture. Increased market opportunities can foster sustainability for farmers. Partnerships between public and private industries were cited as one way to use technology to enhance social development.

Farmers presented the case of women in the agriculture sector and proposed that conversion to sustainable agriculture should be a gradual process with support mechanisms put in place for the farmers, particularly women, engaged in this change process. Access to credit would be critical for small farmers and title to land is essential as collateral for credit. Farmers need market opportunities. This means fair prices for their products and a more level playing field for their trade. Without remunerative prices farmers cannot invest in the best agricultural methods for sustainable agriculture. Programs to provide farmers with secure tenure are important.

Indigenous Peoples suffer from a lack of food security and income. Access to credit and strengthening organizational capacity are called for. It is important that they can strengthen their own *in situ* systems of registering and protecting traditional knowledge; the recognition of

self-determination and the collective ownership rights to lands territories and natural resources. Historical prejudices have lead to the systematic exclusion of what people need to live a dignified life.

Non Government Organizations identified security of land tenure as the basis of food security. Land reform was seen as a means to address the inequities in land tenure patterns and enable broad-based economic development by creating local markets. One individual noted that local private voluntary efforts of farmers and allied civil society groups started with little policy or public agency support.

Science and Technology argued that pressure for cheap food production has caused unreliable farm incomes, pressures on small-scale producers, reduced food security, concerns over food safety, loss of competitiveness for third-world producers, problems for animal welfare and environmental damage. Despite increases in food production, food insecurity is linked to massive poverty, poor distribution of land, and the pressures of globalization that emphasize agro exports away from basic food crops. One colleague raised the issue of developing “sustainable food habits”. Building an awareness of value of local resources and products can help eliminate the ideology that what comes from developed countries must be good because the citizens have higher standards of living. Short term goals, inadequate funding, lack of inclusivity, ties with Agribusiness, lack of local orientation, lack of education and infrastructural support and lack of political have limited our progress.

Trade unions identified the importance of agricultural labor standards to promote sustainable employment and employment condition. Waged agricultural workers and their trade unions can play a greater role in food safety and food security issues.

Some comments from *Government* recognized the impact of low prices for agricultural goods, placing the viability of small farmers and national agricultural systems in peril. The need to increase farmer income and offer new economic opportunities, or face increasing poverty and unemployment was indicated. A developing-country delegate noted that, while for developed countries sustainable development might be a matter of lifestyle, for developing countries it was primarily a matter of livelihood.

Policy

Table 3. Issues Related to Policy

Policy

Political and Economic Stability	Policy related to income distribution and food demand increase
Monitoring International Agreements	
Multi-sectoral Cooperation	Policy Analysis of market prices and incentives
Decentralization	Tools to evaluate changes in land management practices relative to agricultural investments
Legal instruments for the sustainable use of natural resources	Supporting farmers to reduce pollution
Effective Participation on all policy making levels	Overcoming conflicting governing bodies – harmonizing multiple agendas
Participatory Planning Processes	Lack of coherence between national and local policies
Support for decentralized management of natural resources and sustainable land use	
Policy Advocacy and Farmers' Organizations	
Public Support for Agriculture Research	Secure Land Tenure and Land Reform
Increased information for decision making	Rural and Urban Biases
	Inconsistency with electoral transitions

Business and Industry proposed policies that would align food prices, dismantle government price support systems, promote trade and investment in the agri-business sector, and harmonize control systems. In order to build an enabling framework to attract financial resources for sustainable agriculture, needed are political and economic stability, inclusiveness, accountability and good governance.

Farmers noted that agriculture does not operate in isolation but is affected by the constraints and aspirations of the society that surrounded it. They stated that peasants and small-scale farmers were traditionally under-represented in decision-making related to agricultural production. With regard to getting at sound trade regimes, farmers identified the following as key components: a stable policy environment, adequate rural infrastructure, an appropriate regulatory framework, effective stakeholder participation mechanisms, increased resources for development, and improvements in technology transfer mechanisms.

Indigenous peoples also called for effective participation on all policy-making levels along with the democratization of financial institutions. Indigenous Peoples carry diverse traditional knowledge and practices that are threatened by globalization. Representatives expressed concern over national laws that allowed the unhampered exploitation of their lands and territories.

Non Government Organizations noted that a major threat to sustainable agriculture was unbridled trade liberalization. Agricultural policy designs tend to be dominated by the powerfully linked interests of industry, urban markets and trade. Rather than enhancing sustainable development, globalization caused subsidies and cheap imports that have subsequently undermined local productivity. Organizations called for a reassessment and examination of the true impact of globalization on social, ecological, technological and economic grounds. They noted that international forces (e.g. governments and UN bodies) have prevented and precluded the establishment of such important programs that develop the capacity of these many people to

improve their lives and to encourage them to participate in the growth and development of their countries and of the world economy. Affluent countries have never willingly carried out actions that infringe upon the standard of living of their populations. True partnerships among stakeholders require confronting major challenges such as access to land and the forces of globalization, especially trade policy and prices for exported raw materials. Such forces undermine sustainable agriculture making family farmers, indigenous peoples, rural women and other stakeholders ill prepared to collaborate with governments.

Science and Technology noted that Globalization has intensified problems associated with policies that have inadvertently increased poverty and increased environmental degradation. Poverty, population growth, natural resource depletion and environmental degradation are linked in a vicious cycle. Representatives called upon the United Nations to provide the political support for an alternative agricultural development approach, engaging in a real partnership with NGOs, farmers organizations, environmental groups and consumer groups in the search for a more socially just and economically viable agriculture.

Trade unions promoting the international acceptance of core agricultural labor standards as a central component and measure of sustainable agriculture given the growing impact of multinational corporations. They emphasized the need for trade and investment regimes to promote the social dimension of sustainable development. Current patterns of control and distribution were the most pressing issues and stated that the rules must be changed that govern trade and investments that widen gaps between the rich and the poor.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE WITH RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

Because Research, Education and Technology Transfer are used to address the issues identified above related to Resource Management, Livelihoods, and Policy, we do not present an extended list of issues. Rather, we focus on stakeholder perceptions of the priorities related to what is needed in the context of research, education and technology transfer.

Business and Industry representatives said that good agricultural practices require continued investments in research and development in the agro-food industry and integrated management approaches that can improve efficient use of seeds, nutrients and resources. Agribusiness has increasingly taken up research and development activities since there has been a decline in public investments and the need for productivity increases. They recognized education, training, information and extension activities as being necessary for comprehensive knowledge and sustainable food systems. Sustained relationships between stakeholders are important for achieving SARD. They promoted empowering farmers to make informed choices and stated that education and training are important tools to allow communities to develop appropriate solutions at the local level. Participatory models of knowledge transfer and joint problem solving are the most likely approaches to create lasting solutions adapted to local conditions. Speaking to the development of new technologies, they emphasized the need for additional research and the right to choose from technologies which are accepted or rejected based on sound science rather than emotional reaction.

Farmers stressed that research must be farmer-driven and built on traditional knowledge. An increase in public sector funding and available resources was called for to support farmer-to-farmer cooperation, extension programs and information centers. Farmers noted that skills building is required to make a successful career in farming by choice rather than lack of

options. Training should support and enhance traditional practices. Without strong, representative organizations, farmers are unequal players. Farmers should establish relationships with all levels of government, from the community level up to the international level. Partnerships are needed between farmers' organizations, research institutes, and consumers' organizations. Farmers' groups were skeptical about partnerships with multinational companies in the agro-food sector.

Indigenous Peoples suggested that indigenous knowledge and science can work hand in hand. If knowledge is power, it is important to avoid using information to benefit specific interests of science while marginalizing small farmers. To link science and traditional knowledge, there was strong support for increased focus on intellectual property rights, indigenous rights, protection of indigenous cultures, and new codes of conduct. Indigenous peoples' representatives proposed the use of their education programs, founded on their cosmovisions, as models for sustainable food systems. They noted a willingness to work with non-indigenous partners on issues related to food safety, culture, environment, genetic resource erosion, and intellectual property rights issues and stated that all partnerships must be based on equality.

Non-governmental organizations acknowledged that training, education, research and capacity-building needs, including their cultural and spiritual dimensions, must be approached and supported in a holistic way. This effort must recognize the central role of farmers (farmer-driven agricultural research) and indigenous peoples in research and development. It was suggested that it will be critical to develop education and information policies to disseminate knowledge of sustainable food systems and their relationship to food security to raise awareness of consumers and other non-farmer stakeholders. One NGO noted that all of the research has already been done, over the last 30 years pretty much all of the solutions have been devised and tested - what is holding back implementation of sustainable agriculture is the lack of political will, and the surplus of consumer ignorance and apathy. Human dignity and participation remains unaddressed. Research and development targeting needs of men and women and small-scale farmers, and in support of indigenous knowledge are seen as essential. Research and development must be able to deliver site-specific solutions and increased funding is required for research on ecological approaches to farm management.

Science and Technology asked that government find ways through international cooperation to enhance rather than decrease the numbers of research and development institutes in the agricultural sector and sustainable development. One researcher commented that institutional research capacity remains weak, government support is low, and donor support is capricious and suggested regional initiatives to meet the challenge. The most immediate challenge is to develop and mobilize cutting edge science and disseminate information relevant to limited resource farmers and their constraints. This means "changing practices, revisiting traditions and empowering farmers". It was suggested that it is more important to extend meaningful knowledge complemented by information about the ways it is generated, so that techniques can be replicated according to local conditions. Science wants to improve technology to increase production often forgetting that the technology is unaffordable to limited resource farmers. Contract farming has diminished the capacity for farmers to work in a participatory fashion with researchers. A joint effort and greater emphasis on interdisciplinarity is required to raise efficiency of production, enhance quality and productivity of resources, ensure protection of forests and natural habitats, maintain biodiversity and minimize the adverse effects of climate variability, especially on fragile areas. Technology transfer to limited-resource farmers still requires extension services that are often weak in many developing countries. In some cases, the only active outreach is done by the chemical input industry that is focused on

marketing products. Measures to strengthen technology transfer and diffusion through the encouragement of local innovation and technological development are needed and environmental measures should not be used by developed countries as new protectionist measures. It will be necessary to restore a different kind of resources management ethic based on social and ecological values and on global and holistic perspectives through educational programs. One researcher identified that research challenges demand appropriate technologies that are: 1) based on indigenous knowledge or rationale; 2) economically viable, accessible and based on local resources; 3) environmentally sound, socially and culturally sensitive; 4) risk averse, adapted to farmer circumstances; 5) Enhance total farm productivity and stability.

Trade Unions and Agriculture Workers asked for expanded education and training programs to include training in sustainable agriculture. Linkages with small farmers' organizations and trade unions were seen to enhance sustainable agriculture.

In response to some of these suggestions, a few *Government* representatives emphasized the need for training of farmers and local leadership to achieve a "multiplying effect" in rural areas as well as the need for capacity and institution building of civil society in various national contexts, in part to better represent their constituencies, make empowerment effective and build genuine partnerships amongst all actors. They noted the importance of dialogue, with each partner keeping their end of the bargain, and arriving at a common level of information and language for fruitful discussion and to work together harmoniously.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the ideas drawn upon for this paper, it is evident that there are similarities among the stakeholder opinions, both in terms of the issues as well as the proposed solutions, but there are also differences both subtle and less so.

As an example, all stakeholder groups saw partnerships as important to sustainable agriculture, however they viewed them differently. Business and Industry cited partnerships between public and private industries as a means to enhance social development, while NGOs acknowledge that true partnerships among stakeholders require confronting challenges such as access to land, policies, and globalization. Representatives of Science and Technology state that true partnership must be developed among NGOs, farmers' organizations, environmental groups, and consumers in order to have a more sustainable and equitable agriculture. Farmers identify themselves as the key resource in sustainable agriculture and indicated skepticism about partnerships with multinational companies. Indigenous Peoples showed a willingness to work with non indigenous partners in order to better sensitize them to their concerns. Trade unions saw the value of working in partnership with farmers' organizations. Several stakeholder groups indicated that the partnerships must be "true" and "equal". On the other hand, in the case of biotechnology and trade liberalization, greater differences among stakeholder perceptions were apparent.

Most of these fora took place at a global scale and subsequently more broad-brush issues were raised. A number of these fora included stakeholders speaking in front of governments and subsequently it was rarely a dialogue with government. When designing research and development projects it is important to engage all stakeholders at all levels in the decision making hierarchy. To address this, SANREM has developed an interview protocol to assess different priorities of different stakeholders at the local, provincial, national and regional levels. This protocol entitled "assessment of decision maker priorities" has been tested in the

Philippines, Mali, Ecuador and in the Southeastern United States. Designing research and development activities using global fora and more in depth assessments should ensure that our work continues to be demand driven and provide meaningful input to participatory and informed decision making.

Electronic Conferences and face-to-face multistakeholder dialogues have provided new and important venues for capturing the insights of the many voices that influence and are influenced by sustainable agriculture and natural resources as well as allowing for the exchange of ideas and the debate of proposed solutions. It is important that these avenues of information exchange serve to inform demand driven research and development as well as participatory decision-making.

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