



## **Awareness Raising Conference on Horticulture for Development**

**25 June 2007**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A group of 38 participants from the public, private, NGOs, civic and international organizations, mostly representing Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) nations, was hosted by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) at Wageningen in the Netherlands from 21-22 June 2007 to finalize a position paper and presentation for presentation at the Awareness Raising Conference on Horticulture for Development (ARCH) in Brussels on 25 June 2007.

The CTA is an institution serving the interests of ACP countries within the European Union (EU) and advocate strongly for the *Global Horticulture Initiative* (GHI). The need to build awareness for horticulture among European international development agencies was raised during a meeting on September 8, 2006 involving the EU Director General for Development and a small group of horticultural leaders. It was recognized that the widely dispersed 'horticulture for development' community had to be better organized and EU support is indeed vital in building institutional capacity for support to horticulture.

Advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) and science provide unprecedented opportunities for the scientific community to take collective action for impact on poverty and malnutrition. The GHI, a consortium of international organizations and agencies already involved in horticultural research and education for development will utilize these advances to enlist a global network to develop programs that will offer economic opportunities and food security for the poor.

A strong horticulture sector is an engine for economic growth, creating jobs, supporting agribusinesses, and generating income to a greater degree than staple crops. Furthermore, horticultural crops can provide the micronutrients that are essential, yet lacking, in the diets of half of the world's population.

The key themes that should be reinforced in the Brussels ARCH meeting on 25 June 2007 were decided during the discussions in the Wageningen meeting. This paper aggregates their thoughts into a single summary statement.

### **KEY THEMES:**

- I. Creation of sustainable employment and wealth creation***
- II. Food safety, health and nutrition***
- III. Supportive policies, services and infrastructure***
- IV. Education, training, outreach and awareness***

### **I. Creation of sustainable employment and wealth creation**

**Constraints:** Through media, Europeans see massive poverty from warfare and conflicts around the globe but *an even greater stream of refugees* is on the march from rural to urban areas and from developing countries to developed countries due to under- and un-employment. Joblessness prevents heads of households from making a decent earning to support themselves and their families. Life in unsanitary

and ungoverned urban slums – regardless of location in the north or the south – is intolerable and degrading, leading to violence, crime, prevalence of drugs and insecurity. With no jobs or a chance for self-respect, family values become degraded and civil society transforms from cohesive communities to lawless seedbeds for intolerance and insurgency.

### **How GHI can address the constraints?**

Horticulture is labor intensive and has the highest economic returns per unit of effort and square meter of productive area. Not all people in rural areas are farmers – some people are involved in processing and services such as picking, cleaning, packing, transporting, marketing and providing services. The rural non-farm income generated from salaries paid to these people generally stays in the countryside, giving people the money for their basic needs. The aggregation of these individual actions is sometimes called the “multiplier effect”. That is why development can sometimes prosper best when focusing on the middle sized farmer who can develop as an entrepreneur and pull others out of poverty by providing them with jobs.

If horticulture is to reach its potential in supplying jobs it will need to organize farmers to produce what sells, delivering the product in the right quality and quantity and at the right times to supply the global food chain. This is easier said than done. Using farmer associations it will be possible to provide the essential specific information on seed and fertilizer inputs, organic or traditional production recommendations, plant protection, market information, standards of quality, certification schemes and post-harvest processing.

GHI effort will work on both domestic and export production; however, we recognize that meeting export standards will also improve domestic standards and infrastructure; while focus on the domestic market should decrease waste, encourage sustainable agricultural practices and assure affordable availability of high value crops for local communities.

Public-private partnerships are certainly part of a successful formula. The public sector is mostly ill-equipped to provide the necessary information for survival in a commercial marketplace. The consolidation now taking place in the fruit and vegetable commodity markets will make it difficult for small producers to feed into a value chain because of bigger middlemen who are buying ever greater quantities.

The private sector should be encouraged to help farmers improve efficiency through contract farming arrangements. Some responsibility can be born by the public sector that includes providing information, monitoring of fair trade practices and organizational assistance to farmers that would otherwise not be able to keep up with the demands of the private sector.

## **II. Food safety, health and nutrition**

**Constraints:** In general, the high value crops will bring better nutrition to the population – especially women and children – than commodity crops. A comprehensive description of potential opportunities and constraints for high value crops in each country is needed to inform all stakeholders and to identify the value capturing role of women in the process. The horticultural sector in developing countries is mainly run by women and empowerment of women leads to better family health and education.

### **How GHI can address the constraints?**

GHI envisages very specific activities and outcomes that will contribute to improve incomes and life quality of smallholder producers: (a) improved diet and health of farm families and farming communities through reliable production and consumption of fruits and vegetables; (b) introducing varieties and cultivars with high nutrient content; (c) ensuring food safety through improvements to the horticultural value chain, (d) improved incomes of smallholder farmers and rural communities by diversifying agricultural systems to include high value horticultural crops and (e) achieving production levels of horticultural crops that exceed family requirements. Finally, as in developed countries, we need to get the "junk food" out of the schools.

Some simple things can be done to exploit existing opportunities or to fill information gaps. For example, organic agricultural production is a *de facto* condition in many low input systems and certification and monitoring schemes would have the dual purpose of maintaining organic standards but also quantify the quality and level of contaminants in fruits and vegetables produced. Technology transfer of newly bred varieties with a better composition of essential amino acids, vitamins, minerals and co-factors needed for proper human physiological functions would be important contributions to farming systems and communities in the target regions.

### **III. Supportive policies, services and infrastructure**

**Constraints:** Unless the proper policy environment is in place to foster the growth of the horticulture sector, much of the effort will not bear fruit. The World Bank has developed an agricultural business plan for one of its regions that states it will concentrate support for supply chain development where there is a clear government interest in strengthening the incentives for private participation. Indicators of commitment include price reform, trade liberalisation, the withdrawal of the state from marketing, and the establishment of governance arrangements for producers' associations and public agricultural services that will make them more responsive to private operators' priorities.

Some argue that rural zones are dynamic, competitive and modernizing. Others respond that rural societies, with their agrarian political structures, low productivity, protectionism and subsidies, are a burden on the rest of the economy. In reality, both things are happening at the same time -- the countryside a cauldron of pressing social concerns but also a launching pad for a potential world-class high-value export sector. This dualism is at the core of the rural policy dilemma faced by many governments.

### **How GHI can address the constraints?**

Policy reform is not limited to developing countries. Developing products must reach markets and there are too many standards, they are too complicated and demand different things. An international public good would be to disentangle and harmonize this multiplicity of standards. The current situation adds considerably to costs because no single standard is universally acceptable, forcing a duplication of certification.

National programs are just starting to mainstream business development services (BDS). Donors are increasingly aware of the need for record keeping, accounting and financial planning. For example, BDS could focus on: (1) product assembly and grading services; (2) quality assurance services; (3) access to material inputs; (4) business skills; (5) appropriate technology; (6) establishment of labels and other

promotional information; (7) research and development; and/or (8) financial brokering.

Horticulture requires intensive infrastructure support – i.e. high costs of inputs; set up infrastructure required to foster good quality of inputs; support to market research. More attention should be given to cost benefit ratios and time needed to break even on fruit tree cultures that might be advantageous in developing countries. Governments need to develop long-term vision based on sound analyses and judgments combined with risk avoiding strategies that diversity farming systems.

Reallocation of funds for research was a frequently heard lament during the course of the discussion. Propping up cereal prices and subsidized water for commodity crop production can block out opportunities to explore new and possibly more efficient and profitable ways of structuring agricultural production. New thinking will be needed to free up funds for transportation infrastructure that will single-handedly contribute to significantly reducing crop losses due to inadequate handling and transport.

#### **IV. Education, training, outreach and awareness**

**Constraints:** Imagine trying to do business without a market information system to present the choices; an extension system that could explain the regulations; a record keeping system to track costs, profits or loss; or educational and research institutions to produce future generations of horticulturists. Making the public aware of these production and marketing chains can make the difference between success and failure – bringing the product to that attention of the public and setting off trends that send niche crops from obscurity to common household names.

#### **How GHI can address the constraints?**

Horticulture is very knowledge intensive and dynamic. Lack of human, institutional, and research capacity inhibits innovation, technology adoption, and the development of solutions to address key constraints. The development of participatory methodologies and effective education and extension networks, involving public, private, and civic sector collaboration, will strengthen the technical capacity of horticultural producers and improve the efficiency of current production and marketing systems.

In our global food chain, courses and faculty need to modernize and become more market-driven. To get jobs in the private sector and to be a part of this emerging food system, graduates need additional skills like problem-solving and decision-making skills, regardless of whether they are in technical or managerial positions. Courses and curricula need to be reformed.

This level of education needs strengthening through local schools and via distance education in developing so called graduate farmers. With this capacity, the farming community can move quickly in getting organized into groups, seeking markets and securing the latest technology. Nearly all agricultural extension workers were trained for a supply driven extension system but know very little about market development, high value crops or organizing farmers into groups and linking them to supply chains. By organizing farmers into groups then linking these groups to markets will: (a) achieve economies of scale; (b) strengthen the position of farmers in dealing with traders and processors; and (c) organize rural women as self-help groups, first into specialized horticulture groups and then into farmer associations, putting more food on the plate and in getting more girls into schools.