

GlobalHort, the global horticulture initiative



celebrated its 5th birthday at Agropolis International

Date : 08 April 2011

Venue : Agropolis International, Montpellier, France

On the occasion of its five years of activity, GlobalHort presented to the scientific community in Montpellier and to its partners, the history, action plan and some current accomplishments of GlobalHort, before opening a debate on its perspectives for the future.

Three presentations were given on GlobalHort from its inception to the present time: I. Genesis and history¹ by Jacky Ganry (Cirad-DGDRS); II. Implementation and evolution² by Rémi Kahane (Executive Secretary of GlobalHort); III. Example of applied action and partnership³ supported by GlobalHort by Hannah Jaenicke (independent consultant, past Executive Secretary of Crops for the Future).

A few days before his retirement, Jacky Ganry detailed the background and major steps that went into the creation of the Global Horticulture Initiative (GlobalHort) by underlining the decisive roles of AVRDC and CIRAD. CIRAD made particular use of its competences with the former Fihor department and its international collaborations to encourage ISHS and FAO to climb on board. It is still the trio of CIRAD-ISHS-FAO that presently carries the Initiative. Rémi Kahane was in the best position to provide an overview of the three stages of the life of GlobalHort which he has managed since its launch: the Taiwanese period (2006-07), the Tanzanian period (2008-10), and the Italian period (2011). Every period was marked by progress in the definition and the realization of the objectives of GlobalHort, but also by constraints connected essentially to the funding of its activities. The information supplied by Hannah Jeanicke on one of the GlobalHort-supported research for development projects provided an opportunity for measuring the unique role of GlobalHort to coordinate, involve and stimulate the actors of the horticultural sector in search of innovation for development.

Following the presentations, a **Round Table** was moderated by Bernard Hubert, President of Agropolis International. The invitees from very diverse organizations were asked to provide their reactions to the presentations and an evaluation of the future of GlobalHort in a very competitive funding environment. Some propositions that were posed are ones which GlobalHort has to seize.

- Norman Looney, past president of ISHS (International Society for Horticultural Science) and current Board Chair of GlobalHort, commenced the debate by mentioning that the international system of agricultural research was not sufficiently open to the horticultural sector. He also highlighted the fact that nutrition was not being stressed enough. He stated that, "The fault is certainly due to the fragmented and redundant forces of the horticultural sector that makes coordination difficult... GlobalHort experienced it!" He recognized that horticultural activities were more risky (perishable produce, crops strongly dependent on inputs) and consequently required more support for training. This is an area in which GlobalHort now had to concentrate its efforts.

¹ « From its roots to the sprouting of GlobalHort » <http://www.agropolis.fr/pdf/actu/2011-globalhort-presentation-histoire-globalhort.pdf>

² « From AVRDC to FAO, a roadmap and future full of traps for an initiative highly prized but thought-provoking » <http://www.agropolis.fr/pdf/actu/2011-globalhort-from-AVRDC-to-FAO.pdf>

³ « Recipes for success » <http://www.agropolis.fr/pdf/actu/2011-globalhort-recipes-for-success-Montpellier.pdf>

- Robert Habib, Scientific Director of the Department Persyst at Cirad, recognized that funding was the major challenge of GlobalHort at present. He then described the organization of Cirad in order to underline that horticulture was central in at least three research units, and in one cross-cutting action dedicated to higher education: Agreenium.
- Sylvain Berton, Head of operations at Agrisud International, NGO specialized in horticulture in developing countries, underlined the importance of the role of GlobalHort in supporting applied projects on the field combining a multiple partner and a multiple sector approach. He repeated that the actors of development need research to show success from innovation transfer and be able to measure/estimate its impact.
- Sylvie Avallone, researcher in nutrition at IRD, research unit NutriPass, raised the essential question of the role of GlobalHort which connects the plant sector to that of nutrition. She used the specific example of traditional vegetables to fight deficiencies in vitamin A. She stated that “The funding of research in nutrition is not easy and can largely benefit from actions of promotion and from coordination led by GlobalHort.”
- Mark Holderness, Executive Secretary of the Global Forum for the Agricultural Research (GFAR), spoke about the critical situation connected to the financing of GlobalHort. He noticed that a growing number of similar small-scale international organizations met with the same kind of difficulties: Prota⁴, Crops For the Future, Non Timber Forest Products for example. He suggested adopting an integrative approach by inviting these organizations to join a collective action introduced by GFAR on the occasion of the extension of the International Treaty on the Plant Genetic Resources (ITPGR). “All partners have the same problem of not being able to establish a critical mass so why not develop a unified promotion of common goals to become visible and audible?” He suggested that organizations should no longer concentrate on their niches (under-utilized plants, ligneous products of the forests, horticultural plants) but on their macroeconomic meaning; such as benefits for human health, sustainable traditional cropping systems, and household income generation. He had already invited many organizations⁵, of which GlobalHort was one, to think together on common values for the sustainable use of “minor” plant species, and to imagine collective actions, including research projects and funding campaigns.
- NeBambi Lutaladio, team leader, Crop Diversification, Division of Plant Production and Protection (AGPM) at FAO, reminded everyone of the tradition of partnership with CIRAD by making reference to the co-organized events on urban agriculture, nutrition (FAO-WHO initiative Profel), and the visit of Jacky Ganry who served as a visiting scientist in 2008. He also reminded the group that there had been collaborations with GlobalHort well before FAO entered the Executive Board, in particular the All Africa Horticulture Congress in 2009, the Urban Peri-urban Horticulture conference in 2010, and the Profel (2008) and Profav (2011) workshops. He highlighted the progress made thanks to the “synergizing action” of GlobalHort to allow the linkage of horticulture and nutrition, to generate data where it is missing, and to turn the research results into innovation through the decisions and actions taken by policy makers.
- Emile Frison, Director General of Bioversity International, paid tribute to Jacky Ganry who was the first one to have identified the momentum when horticulture became a priority [in research for development]. He stated that the failure of the proposed Co-Hort Challenge Program was more due to the seizure of AVRDC than to the contents of the proposal. Since then, the absence of another horticulture proposal was not due to a disengagement of the CGIAR from this sector, but due instead to the break during the reform of the CGIAR. Besides this, the crisis of food prices strongly influenced policy-makers and donor agencies to concentrate its efforts on staple crops. He recognized that “Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that the CGIAR centers are not interested in horticultural crops. Bioversity International in particular and other centers such as Icrisat and Ciat, lead projects on fruit and vegetable crops, in a fragmented way.”

Bernard Hubert thanked the speakers and invited other participants to contribute imaginative ways to secure the future of GlobalHort.

- Stéphane Guilbert presented the new French federative structure of higher education curricula on farming, Agreenium, the direction of which he has assumed. The EcoHort project is the first one to start under this label and includes Cirad, Montpellier SupAgro and INH-AgroCampus Ovest.

⁴ Plant Resources of Tropical Africa <http://www.prota.org/>

⁵ Meeting on 20-21 January 2011 in Rome :

<http://www.egfar.org/egfar/website/new/eventpage?contentId=3120&languageId=0>

- Pedro Arcuri, Coordinator of the Labex Embrapa (Brazil) in Montpellier, appeared to be particularly interested in GlobalHort and suggested active collaboration possibilities such as expertise in production or in selection of tropical fruits and vegetables, or partnership with small-scale producers.
- Belgium, which was directly invited by GlobalHort to enter the circle of its donors, has been unable to make any decision for several months due to the absence of a federal government. Joseph Kalders, representative of the Federal Service of the Foreign Affairs at the Belgian Cooperation for Development Head Office, made the following remarks:
 - The link between fruits and vegetables and nutrition is now compulsory but not yet demonstrated; GlobalHort has to concentrate on any marker bringing this link to light.
 - The initiatives targeting global challenges exist only at the association and NGO levels, while it is indispensable to target them at a higher level.
 - Challenges bound to city supply and to urban agriculture are crucial and no organization is responsible for them at the moment.
 - GlobalHort has to join forces with others to become more visible and powerful.
- Michel Chauvet, coordinator of Prota-France and in charge of the project PlantNet in Cirad, indicated that Prota ceased to be as the result of the ending of its funding by the BMG Foundation. He proposed collaboration between GlobalHort and the PlantNet project through an information management system on plants of agricultural interest, focusing on mobilizing the hidden knowledge and on maintaining new information generated by projects, both in danger of vanishing in a few years. He stated that “Training of users is a way of collaboration to be investigated.”
- Norman Looney asked what could be expected from the next GCARD in support of GlobalHort? Mark Holderness clearly indicated the coming GCARD be the vehicle for the collective action on Agro-biodiversity answering its general theme on "Environmental resilience". This collective action should focus its propositions on the three objectives mentioned previously [nutrition-environmental servicing-income generation], by preparing well documented strategies and an action plan, all in agreement with the regional networks and fora in Africa and Asia.
- Robert Habib returned to the themes which until now little mobilized the interest of the main donors: nutrition and quality of food products, agro-biodiversity, and environmental sustainability. In these three domains, fruits and vegetables represent excellent models of study for ecological intensification and biotic regulation. “It is necessary to think differently for these crops than for staple crops”, he said. Bernard Hubert added the dimension of urban agriculture in which horticulture represents a major component.
- Jos Kalders underscored the importance of a value chain approach that would allow for the integration of sectors and actors, and underlined the impact of gender of any action targeting the horticultural sector. NeBambi Lutaladio reminded the programs that FAO had already introduced on nutrition (school gardens, Profel), on food city supply (Food for the Cities, Growing Greener Cities), and on the governance (support to the definition of national strategic plans in horticulture) with the aim of raising awareness and capacities.
- Mark Holderness reminded everyone of the necessity for demonstrating the socio-economic impact of horticultural crops (food or non-food-producing) for development. “The production of solid data is indispensable to demonstrate the core value of the horticultural activities”, he insisted. The collective action should facilitate the production of this type of factual document. Jacky Ganry strengthened this by mentioning the additional economic value constituted by fruits and traditional vegetables in these times of food price crisis.
- Emile Frison encouraged further thinking away from the major staple crops in order to acquire sufficient weight and momentum. Is the unification of forces the best way? “Let us rely on and contribute to the initiative of GFAR!” he concluded.

Norman Looney thanked all the participants in these exchanges. He reaffirmed that GlobalHort was ready to take a leading part in the collective action on Agro-biodiversity proposed by GFAR. He thanked Embrapa for their collaboration proposition. He finally reminded everyone that GlobalHort was still in search of support not fully bound to projects, and that he made every effort to insure the future of this initiative. Rémi Kahane was anxious to thank Agropolis International in particular, its President B. Hubert, its Director M. Salas, and its communication Manager N. Villemejeanne, for having kindly and gracefully welcomed and facilitated this event.