

## Conclusions of discussion group sessions

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The Forum participants met in two discussion groups in the afternoon of the first day and reconvened again in two other groups in the afternoon of the second day. Their conclusions and recommendations were presented and discussed in the last plenary session of the Forum. Ms. Cathrien de Pater chaired the session.

## Group 1 - Scientific underpinning of Agricultural Heritage Concept

*Chairman: Miguel Altieri*

*Rapporteur: Rajindra Puri*

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The group discussed and exchanged ideas how best GIAHS could be best understood and frame scientifically. The group agreed with the description that GIAHS is a “socio-ecological system”. They cannot be characterized neither agricultural systems nor ecosystems, they are not places or practices, they are not people, and they are not ideas. They are systems that are made up of the interaction of all of these things – people, places, biological organisms, practices, and ideas. These systems are not the product of industries, of markets, of science, of inventors, policies, ministries, development agencies, or NGOs. They are the product of cultural evolution – that is, of the cumulative knowledge, experience, ideas, and ways of organizing society that have been built up and adapted over centuries or even millennia. They represent above all the ways that people have met all of their cultural and material needs on the basis principally of local resources over time. As it was explained by Prof. Howard, agricultural heritage systems are social-ecological systems. This term best captures the co-evolution of humans and nature – how humans have shaped the natural world and developed organisms to meet their needs, and in turn how human culture, including religion, values, norms, and social relations have been shaped by the ecosystems in which they live. These systems are not ‘primitive’ or simple. They are extremely sophisticated and complex. The people who nurture these systems may be illiterate but they certainly are not ignorant: it takes an average person living in such a society at least a third of a lifetime to accrue the minimum knowledge necessary just to support a household, and a specialist (for example, in medicines, or in the diversity of specific crops, in religion or a political position) may require two-thirds of a lifetime to learn what she or he must know to be considered as truly learned and capable. They are based upon a very complex set of laws and behavioural norms, as well as webs of social relations. The discussion on the definition and unique char-

acteristics of GIAHS as a social and ecological systems require further study to understand how they interact. This should facilitate the formulation of GIAHS management principles of wider application. The concept should therefore evolve, keeping also in mind the ongoing climate change.

The notion of “heritage” had different meaning for different people. GIAHS are global heritage, they represent the resilience, and best hope, for the future of the human race. GIAHS are also locally important agricultural heritage systems, and very possibly they will only remain such if the people living outside GIAHS, are able to support the people who live in these systems to maintain the resilience of their cultures and their ecosystems given so many negative drivers of change. Because a change in one part of the system will very likely have repercussions throughout the system, and these repercussions are also very likely to involve trade-offs, and are also likely to be far-reaching. The group agreed that there is a need to seek complementation of knowledge of these people with scientific and practical knowledge, to help them to identify their problems, the underlying drivers of change, and a range of potential options that can help to make their systems continue to survive and remain viable, for their livelihood, more resilient both in terms of human and in terms of ecosystem welfare, and to support them in the attempt to analyze and understand the possible trajectories of change given different options.

After discussion, there was a consensus to consider that it was for each local community to determine and agree on what their heritage is, with due attention to what their children may need in the future. The “black box” nature of the GIAHS was recognised and it was agreed that a strategic agenda should be developed and addressed, for conservation and adaptive management of GIAHS, with emphasis on practical applications.

## Group 2 - Review of pilot country experiences in GIAHS dynamic conservation

*Chairman: José Furtado*

*Rapporteur: Luohui Liang*

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The group discussed the experiences gained in the case studies covering the following pilot projects: Andean Agriculture - Peru, Chiloe Agriculture - Chile,

Rice-Fish Agriculture - China, Ifugao Rice terraces - Philippines, and Oases of the Maghreb in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Summaries of the country case

studies had been circulated and were briefly presented. The case studies had provided welcome opportunities for interaction and exchange of experience among project leaders. The absence of indigenous community participation in the case study process was regretted, however. It was noted that each pilot project area covers several ecosystems and the interfaces among these ecosystems are critical as regards their biodiversity in particular, and require special attention in the dynamic conservation of GIAHS. The main problems and challenges facing each pilot project were reviewed.

Among these, out-migration, the introduction of new technology and external market influences were recognized as threatening all projects. It was noted that the approach and focus of the projects varied, however. The projects in China, the Philippines and the Maghreb focussed more on specific, discrete systems, while those in Chiloe and the Andean Altiplano took an area-based/ territorial/land use system approach. The landscape approach was suggested as it could cover all the aspects of the GIAHS.

The discussion group stressed the importance of identifying further the environmental services and benefits provided by the pilot projects and their beneficiaries at local, national and global levels. While some

services essentially benefit the local community, others are also of general public interest at national and global levels (e.g. carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation) and therefore justify investments and other support at these levels. Strong disparities were found to occur between the local community level and the higher levels of GIAHS as regards the flow of information, organization, technology and power control. The impacts of these disparities on local communities require further assessment, as also those created at all levels by inappropriate policies and inefficient institutions, globalization and modern technology. The use of the 5 capitals approach was suggested for these impact assessments. A diagram was presented illustrating these relationships and their impacts at different levels, emphasizing the local community level as the entry point and the ultimate focal point and showing the bottom-up and top-down linkages with the higher levels and the horizontal linkages. In further discussion, it was recognized that the present pilot projects do not cover all the categories of systems (e.g. the slash and burn systems of Latin America are not covered). It was also noted that the principles emerging from the case studies of pilot projects were likely to change as the coverage and components of the GIAHS concept widens.

## Group 3 - Creation of a globally, nationally and locally recognized “World Agricultural Heritage Category”

*Chairman: Stuart Harrop.*

*Rapporteur: Sally Bunning*

The group noted that legal frameworks already exist in fields similar to that of the GIAHS and discussed the rationale for a new framework vs. that of using the umbrella of the World Heritage Convention. The scope of the WHC was very wide and essentially dealt with the preservation and protection of diverse, mostly non-agricultural heritages. The focus of the GIAHS, on the contrary, was more specifically on agriculture, agricultural biodiversity, poverty alleviation and food security. Its dynamic conservation approach was also different from preservation as meant by the WHC. GIAHS needed, therefore, to obtain special recognition with its own framework and, to this end, develop its own links with the institutions and ongoing processes concerned with its fields of activity.

Among the questions to be addressed by an international framework, the group identified the concept and actual purpose of GIAHS (protection and/or sustainable development? and what for?), the scope of the protection (an area? a site? a system? the existing rights?), the nature and components of the heritage to

be considered (agricultural and cultural) and the criteria determining its international value and the procedure of listing and delisting the GIAHSs. The emphasis placed on the local community by the GIAHS, also created problems for an international framework as each community is usually made of different individuals and social groups with different rights and demands (for example, for agrarian reform). It was therefore necessary to launch an international process capable of averting possible conflicts of interests and influencing national legislations related to the GIAHS. Above all, the GIAHS needed to formulate further its international mandate, agree on standard definitions in the terminology used for the projects and set more clearly its programme priorities. Annex 3 showed a listing of agenda item for the CGRFA, to start this process.

## Group 4 - Organization of a multi-stakeholder management structure for GIAHS programme implementation

*Chairman: Henk Kieft and Ximena George-Nascimento*

*Rapporteur: Frank van Schoubroeck*

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The group had wide-ranging discussions on the mode of implementation of the GIAHS initiative, particularly on how it should work at local and national levels. It recognized that the programme management structure should be flexible and adapt to the local context by working through existing institutions, using and strengthening their existing administrative and governance procedures. In general, a layered management structure (global, national, meso-level and community) should be adopted with a multi-stakeholder steering process at each level to develop a vision and an organisational set-up for its particular tasks at that level. The multi-stakeholder mechanisms should involve, at each level, the public and private sector organisations concerned, NGOs and academic institutions. Co-ordination between levels should take place through representation from other levels and through a management protocol. The management protocol should ensure that all action levels and actors contribute to enhancing the self-determination of the GIAHS communities; each level get authority to carry out its task without undue interference from other levels, in line with the subsidiarity principle; and all levels hold each other accountable. Technical committees should be set-up to guide the programme at each level.

At global level, the steering committee should meet more regularly to support FAO in giving the programme more operational direction.

As an overall guiding principle, the group also recommended that all stakeholders involved in the programme and all management levels work essentially to improve the living conditions of the GIAHS communities in all the dimensions of poverty alleviation (e.g. DFID/Livelihoods, ESO/DAC, OESO/DAC, FAO-Sustainable Livelihoods Assessment Frameworks). While the above recommendations were generally endorsed in the ensuing discussion of the plenary, it was stressed that flexibility, access and equity of access should be facilitated throughout the different levels of the proposed management structure (for the women in particular). Informal networks should also help in the promotion and implementation of the programme.

It was also recommended that the GIAHS institutional machinery should not be developed at the expense of action in the field and concern was expressed at the potential proliferation of committees.

Finally, it was agreed that the GIAHS required that top-down management habits needed to change radically and bottom-up procedures should be developed, while at the same time promoting both vertical and horizontal cooperation among all levels of the management structure.