

ORCA discussion forum - Week 4 Summary

Thanks to all for a fruitful discussion! We were delighted to see a number of detailed comments in this, our final, week. Below is a summary of the week four only – a full summary of the entire dialogue will be available in mid-January.

There was some concern that allowing ORCA to fund institutions that do not focus exclusively on organic agriculture would weaken our efforts, while others favored this approach. The *advantages* of having research institutes that are not "all" organic be eligible to apply are: (1) in some regions of the world there are few institutes and they necessarily have to work with diverse constituencies; (2) we might exclude some of the best research programs (as many do not focus on organic agriculture but provide essential green technology research that will help advance organic agriculture); and (3) some of the non-ORCA work may provide important and stable funding for the institute. The *disadvantages* are: (1) the institute may not have the necessary dedication to organic and thus may alter its research agenda in the future, reducing the ORCA investment to a short term gain; and (2) we may choose institutes that are "best" at this moment in time, rather than strategically choosing those, given a longer term horizon, will ultimately be "best."

It was again emphasized that ORCA build upon the organic movement, and perhaps be redesigned to be a more flexible "center without walls," looking first to facilitating transnational research among existing institutions. For instance, participants suggested we consider the CoreOrganic network, through which European institutes collaborate on organic research. Participants also expressed a need to emphasize North-South collaboration.

The question of how to ensure new institutions are included to the full extent possible was raised. How can ORCA avoid limiting itself to certain originally selected centers? Another question put forth was that of how ORCA will retain institutional memory as individuals come and go. It was suggested that ORCA facilitate regional meetings and/or expositions on organic agriculture research. Another participant emphasized the importance of using internet resources to maintain and disseminate the knowledge the ORCA collects; others gave additional, specific input as to how ORCA might best disseminate organic production knowledge and encourage the adoption of organic methods.

A number of comments continued the dialogue on the ORCA design, including specific centers. Regarding climate change, participants for the most part suggested that be a cross-cutting theme. Building upon dialogue from previous weeks, it was suggested that socioeconomic research be incorporated into the various geographic or ecosystem centers. Another participant proposed including plant pest management in the ecosystem centers in addition to the Post Harvest and Safety center. The feasibility of a Nutrition center was called into question. A new resource concentration was recommended – reducing food waste between the farm and the fork. This may fit in under the Post Harvest and Safety umbrella.

Many laid out specific stakeholders that need to be incorporated into ORCA:

- Farmers
- Researchers
- Consumers
- Extension Agents
- Certifiers/Accreditors
- Agribusinesses/Processors
- Governments

Many thanks once again to all those who participated in the discussion forum! We look forward to strengthening the ORCA proposal by taking into account your suggestions.