

Research for Development in the CGIAR, some issues

Growth in agriculture generally has a disproportionate positive effect on overall poverty because more than half the population in developing countries resides in rural areas. Poverty incidence is much higher in rural areas, reaching 82 percent of rural population in low-income developing countries. Therefore, a necessary component in meeting the MDGs by 2015 in many parts of the world is a more productive and profitable agricultural sector. This can only be achieved in the articulation of four central themes of expanding markets and trade, improving the sustainability of agriculture, mobilizing agricultural science and technologies, and strengthening agricultural outreach, education, and adaptive research.

The ability of the agricultural sector to transform rural economies and the lives of rural producers is intimately linked to application of both existing and new knowledge from the agricultural and environmental sciences. Research on agricultural and natural resource management problems can and should play a key role in helping to meet the MDGs and to reduce poverty, raise incomes, and achieve more sustainable development, particularly in Africa.

Improved technologies and practices alone cannot do the entire job of sustainable agricultural development. A combination of improved incentives and policies, reinvigorated institutions, and increased investments must occur if agriculture is to develop and the benefits are to be spread widely. However, without improved technologies, practices, and policies, few development programs will move very far or have lasting effect. Improved technologies, adapted to farmer needs, capabilities and profitability, are a necessary condition for pro-poor agricultural and rural development

Science and technology capacity is not the only factor relevant to development. It is one component within a set of factors—along with policies favourable to competition and an enabling environment for strong knowledge institutions, sound fiscal and macroeconomic policies, accessible quality education, information and communication technologies systems that permit the flow and dissemination of knowledge and information, affordable and accessible health services, and good governance—that build the climate for investment, growth, and empowerment. These factors are mutually dependent, and strength in complementary institutions becomes more important to science and technology the more deeply they permeate a society and economy. At the same time, the stronger complementary institutions and policies become, the more S&T can contribute to overall development.

These are issues that are important to the CGIAR's efforts to strengthen the research-development linkage and could be discussed by ExCo as we move forward in the support to developing countries.