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THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH ON DRY AREAS (ICARDA)  
UP TO JANUARY, 1976

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## The History and Development of the International Centre for Agricultural Research on Dry Areas (ICARDA)

This paper briefly outlines the sequence of events from the point when the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) initially expressed interest in the state of agricultural research in the Near East and North Africa, to the main events preceding the first meeting of the Board of Trustees of ICARDA in January 1976.

In April 1972, at one of its earliest meetings, TAC identified the semi-arid winter rainfall zone covering a large portion of the Near East and North Africa as an important ecological area with specific crops and significant agricultural problems not adequately serviced by any of the existing international agricultural research centres. It was decided at this meeting to commission a team to:

- 1) review the research needs and priorities of the countries of the Near East and North Africa;
- 2) assess the adequacy of ongoing research programs to meet these needs; and
- 3) if necessary, recommend measures to reinforce research on the main problems.

### Skilbeck Mission

Professor Dunstan Skilbeck was selected to head this mission which spent six weeks in the region during March and April 1973. The Mission report pointed out that the gap between demand and the domestic production of grains and livestock in the region was widening, and that the productivity of natural resources was actually declining in some areas. The Skilbeck Mission recommended the establishment of a new international agricultural research centre to deal with these and other regional problems. TAC examined the Skilbeck Report at its sixth meeting in July 1973, and appointed a Working Group under the Chairmanship of Dr. Hopper to examine this report in more detail.

### The TAC Working Group

The Working Group, which met in Rome in November 1973, agreed that the research needs of this region could only be partially met by the work of existing international centres, and that a small coordinating centre or "relay" station would not be sufficient. The Working Group recommended that a strong international research centre be established with Consultative Group support.

TAC discussed the recommendations of the Skilbeck Mission and the TAC Working Group at its seventh and eighth meeting, held respectively in February and July 1974.

### CGIAR International Centres Week Meeting

The Chairman of TAC, Sir John Crawford, reported to the Consultative Group, during the Centers Week meeting at the end of July 1974, that TAC felt a genuine case had been established for a substantial internationally supported research program in the region.

TAC recommended the establishment of an international centre with its headquarters and research program located in the Lebanon. TAC also recommended that one or two associate centres be created since no single country could adequately represent the full range of ecological conditions to be found in the region. It was suggested that one of these should be in the high altitude, cold winter zone and the other in a North African country representative of a true Mediterranean climate. While stations would be located in different countries, the TAC suggested that ICARDA should have only one Board and Management responsible for all of the research stations.

TAC's preliminary assessment indicated that such a centre would require in the order of \$6 to \$8 million (at 1974 prices) for annual operating requirements after approximately five years of operation.

### Research Program

TAC recommended that the centre's research program be composed of three main elements: crop improvement, soil and water management and sheep

husbandry, but emphasized that these three program elements would all be components of the main research thrust on improved farming systems.

TAC recommended that genetic research in the crop improvement program be confined to wheat, barley and grain legumes, with work on other crops being restricted to the use of well adapted varieties in cropping systems. A supply of these latter varieties could be readily obtained through the development of cooperative relations with other international centres, especially with CIMMYT for maize varieties and with ICRISAT for sorghum, millet and chick-pea varieties.

TAC suggested that the livestock improvement program should incorporate the sheep breeding work being carried out by ALAD, the Ford Foundation's Arid Lands Agricultural Development Program. The main emphasis, however, should be on improved husbandry and nutrition focusing on the stratification of the sheep industry between range rearing and the finishing of immatures on arable land through the introduction of forage crops into the crop rotation system.

Finally, TAC foresaw a need for a strong research program on climate, soil and water management in this region where erosion and aridity are such critical constraints. TAC saw the main thrust being aimed at the improvement of cultural techniques in rainfed areas. The centre should act mainly in a catalytic capacity in relation to irrigated agriculture through the transfer of information and methodology to national programs.

#### CGIAR Subcommittee for the Establishment of ICARDA

The recommendations of TAC were accepted in principle by the Consultative Group during the International Centers Week Meeting in July 1974 and the Consultative Group approved the formation of a Subcommittee to carry forward planning for the establishment of ICARDA. The Subcommittee was instructed to explore the interest of potential donors from the Middle East and North African regions. Membership of the Subcommittee was open to all interested donor members of the Consultative Group.

With approval in principle from the Consultative Group, a Preparatory Donor Committee met in October 1974 to prepare the terms of reference for the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee's role, as defined at this meeting, was similar to that undertaken by other Consultative Group subcommittees established to make arrangements for the creation and operation of three other international centres; ILRAD, ILCA and ICRISAT.

The Consultative Group Secretariat undertook the responsibility of acting as fiscal agent for ICARDA and as temporary executing agent.

The Preparatory Committee decided that the name of this centre would be the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas with the acronym ICARDA.

The Director of ALAD, Dr. Robert Havener, was asked to prepare a budget and program of work for ICARDA based on the research program outlined in the Skilbeck Report and modified by TAC.

The Consultative Group endorsed the work of the Preparatory Committee at its meeting in October 1974. At this time twelve donor members pledged a total of \$350,000 for an Exploratory Fund to be used by the Executing Agency for the establishment of ICARDA.

#### First ICARDA Subcommittee Meeting

The first meeting of the Subcommittee on ICARDA was held in February 1975 with fourteen member agencies of the CG attending.

The Chairman of the Subcommittee, Dr. Hopper, stated that he had visited a number of countries in the Middle East and North Africa and every country he visited had accorded a warm welcome to the concept of an international agricultural centre in the region. Several countries had also expressed an interest in joining the Consultative Group as donor members.

The Chairman indicated that, having visited the Bekaa Valley in the Lebanon, he felt additional land would be required in Syria, particularly

for farming systems research. The Chairman explained that while an associate station in Algeria had originally been considered, TAC now felt that further development there could be delayed until the completion of facilities in Syria and the Lebanon. The proposed station in Syria could provide ecological conditions similar to those found in Algeria. It was suggested that TAC could review the need for an associate station in Algeria with the Board of Trustees of ICARDA at a later date.

The Subcommittee also discussed the necessity for a research program in the high plateau, cold winter regions. The TAC had been concerned for some time about the needs of the high altitude, winter rainfall region and it had identified Iran as an ideal environment in which to conduct this research. However, it was felt that a decision on Iran should be delayed until the views of the Government of Iran could be ascertained.

Dr. Havener presented a draft paper entitled "ICARDA: A Preliminary View", in which he outlined various notional models for the staffing and development of ICARDA. The Subcommittee agreed to have a draft proposal prepared which could be distributed to members of the Consultative Group outlining in detail the nature and organizational structure of ICARDA.

The Subcommittee agreed that the appointment of an Executing Agency could take place as soon as three conditions were met: 1) the Subcommittee members were given a clearly defined Program of Work and Budget for the Syrian and Lebanese stations; 2) the proposal to establish a high plateau station was clarified; and 3) the availability of financial resources to carry out a minimum program was assured.

These three conditions were met in the following four months. A detailed proposal outlining ICARDA's general mandate and development program, along with cost estimates was prepared by Drs. Havener and Hardin and circulated to the Subcommittee members. This document is entitled "Proposal for an International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)" and is dated May 7, 1975. Secondly, the Chairman of the Subcommittee, and the Chairman of the CGIAR, visited Iran and received a

positive response from the Government of Iran to their invitation to join the Consultative Group and to explore the possibility of locating a high plateau station in Iran. Thirdly, the Chairman of the CGIAR circulated a memorandum to Consultative Group members in May indicating that the members of the Subcommittee had expressed a willingness to provide approximately \$2.8 million for ICARDA's requirements in 1976.

#### Second ICARDA Subcommittee Meeting

With the assurance of financial support, the development of a more comprehensive budget and program of work for ICARDA, and Iran's indication of interest in hosting a research station, the second Subcommittee meeting was held in June 1975. Mr. Harold Graves had replaced Dr. Hopper as Chairman of the Subcommittee by this time.

The Subcommittee appointed the International Development Research Centre as Executing Agency with the objective of establishing ICARDA as an effective, independent and legal entity. The Executing Agency was given the following terms of reference:

- 1) the preparation and negotiation of legal agreements with each country and the preparation of a draft constitution or charter for ICARDA;
- 2) identification of candidates for election to the Board of Trustees and solicitation of nominations for Director General for examination by the Board of Trustees;
- 3) the selection, acquisition, planning and development of suitable sites;
- 4) the elaboration and refinement of a program of work and budget for ICARDA;
- 5) the purchase of necessary equipment to enable start-up operations to commence; and
- 6) the recruitment of a Project Development Officer.

The CG Secretariat continued to act as fiscal agent and the Executing Agency has since provided a periodic accounting to the Secretariat for all expenditures undertaken on behalf of the Subcommittee.

The CG Secretariat stated that probably more than \$3 million would be available for use by ICARDA in 1976. On the basis of this substantial support, the Subcommittee instructed the Executing Agency to prepare a program of work and budget for ICARDA based on the optimum model outlined in the Havener/Hardin proposal. This model proposed a centre with an annual operating cost, by 1980, of approximately \$8 million in current dollars.

The Subcommittee examined the Havener/Hardin document and approved in principle the mandate and scope of the program as outlined in that document. It was suggested by the Subcommittee that ICARDA should not exclude itself from work in the marginal areas of lowest rainfall and that the Charter of ICARDA emphasize the importance of cooperation between ICARDA and national, regional, and other international research programs.

The objectives of ICARDA, as modified at this meeting, were incorporated in the charter of ICARDA.

The Subcommittee discussed the size and composition of the Board of Trustees of ICARDA and decided that the Board should not exceed fifteen members. Each host country would be asked to appoint one member to the Board of Trustees.

#### Third ICARDA Subcommittee Meeting

The third meeting of the Subcommittee was held on July 30, 1975 just before International Centers Week. Sixteen governments and agencies were now represented on the Subcommittee, with the addition of Iran, Italy and Saudi Arabia as members.

The Executing Agency informed the Subcommittee that they had retained the services of two consultants to carry forward the development of ICARDA. Dr. Omond Solandt was appointed Senior Consultant to the Executing Agency



and Dr. Robert Havener was appointed Technical Consultant.

The Executing Agency submitted a Program of Work and Budget for ICARDA for 1976 which was accepted by the Subcommittee. The Budget included 2.3 million dollars for operating requirements and 1 million dollars for capital requirements in the calendar year 1976. The budget request for \$1 million for capital did not include ALAD equipment valued at approximately \$200,000 which the Ford Foundation had offered to donate to ICARDA.

The Executing Agency estimated the 1976 Budget primarily on the basis of the cost of maintaining the existing research programs in the region. The crop improvement program would continue to focus on building up the ALAD germ plasm base and on trials currently underway in national and regional programs. Farming systems activity would concentrate initially on two aspects:

- 1) an analysis of production constraints; and
- 2) exploratory work on the development of improved farming systems, including animal husbandry.

Four symposia/workshops and a newsletter were planned under the budget heading Communication and Training. It was expected that capital development work in 1976 would concentrate on site planning in the Lebanon and Syria and preparation of designs for facilities and detailed planning for the site in Iran.

The Executing Agency presented a draft of the ICARDA Charter and a model country agreement to the Subcommittee. These were accepted by the Subcommittee with some modifications.

#### Fourth ICARDA Subcommittee Meeting

The fourth Subcommittee meeting was held in Washington in October 1975. The Subcommittee was now composed of seventeen governments and agencies with the addition of New Zealand as a member. The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development attended this Consultative Group for the

first time as an observer and indicated its interest in becoming a donor member.

Dr. O.M. Solandt presented a report to the Subcommittee outlining the process achieved during the two missions which he headed to the Middle East in August and October. Suitable sites had been identified in the Lebanon, Syria and Iran and their acquisition by the host countries for leasing to ICARDA had been agreed upon in principle with the respective host governments. Satisfactory alternate sites had been selected in the event that the preferred sites could not be acquired.

The Executing Agency reported that the draft Charter had been accepted in principle by the three host countries. The Consultative Group as a whole gave approval the next day for the Executing Agency and the three co-sponsoring agencies of the Consultative Group, namely the IBRD, UNDP and FAO to sign the Charter on behalf of the Consultative Group. Signing of the Charter was completed in November.

The Executing Agency stated that substantial progress had been achieved in preparing acceptable country agreements with each of the host countries. Iran had indicated its willingness to sign an agreement with the Executing Agency by the end of January, and the Government of Lebanon subsequently indicated its willingness to sign an agreement as soon as this could be arranged. Discussions were continuing with the Government of Syria, as the question of ICARDA had yet to reach the agenda of the Council of Ministers where the necessary policy decision would be made. It was not possible to say when a signature date for the agreement could be finalized. The ICARDA Subcommittee agreed that the Executing Agency could sign these agreements in each country as soon as it was apparent that the necessary constitutional requirements had been met.

Anticipating some delay in the assumption of full responsibility for ICARDA by the Board of Trustees of ICARDA, the Subcommittee instructed the Executing Agency to commence start-up operations including the initial engagement of staff, procurement of equipment, acquisition of sites, and other

necessary activities.

The Executing Agency agreed to begin start-up operations for ICARDA although it reiterated its desire to turn over responsibility for the establishment of ICARDA to the Board of Trustees as soon as possible. It felt that the members of the Board designate had a much greater competence to undertake this activity than the Executing Agency had.

The Executing Agency estimated that approximately \$65,000 of the ICARDA Exploratory Fund would be utilized by the end of 1975, leaving a balance of about \$230,000 to be carried over to 1976 for start-up activities. The Subcommittee gave its approval to the Executing Agency to draw upon the start-up funds allocated to ICARDA for 1976.

The Subcommittee then proceeded to select eight members to the Board of Trustees of ICARDA. The Charter of ICARDA provides for a Board of fifteen members of which three would be designated by the host governments and the Director General of ICARDA would serve as an ex officio member. The remaining eleven members of the Board were to be appointed by the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee decided to elect only eight members to the Board at that time, leaving three members to be appointed later by the Subcommittee in consultation with the Board itself. It was felt that this would give the Board members some flexibility in determining the composition of the first Board of Trustees.

#### CGIAR Pledging Meeting

Sixteen donor members of the ICARDA Subcommittee pledged a total of \$3.23 million to ICARDA for the calendar year 1976 the following day at the full Consultative Group meeting. One donor has yet to confirm its contribution of \$500,000. The Consultative Group Secretariat will turn over any remaining unspent funds to the Board of Trustees of ICARDA when the Board takes over full responsibility for ICARDA from the Executing Agency.

#### Executing Agency/Ford Foundation Agreement

Following the decision of the Subcommittee to proceed to the

establishment phase of ICARDA, the Subcommittee instructed the Executing Agency to ensure that the relevant activities being carried out by the ALAD program in the collection, testing and exchange of plant genetic materials in cooperation with national and regional programs of the area were not disrupted. The Executing Agency subsequently signed an agreement with the Ford Foundation in which the Executing Agency agreed to reimburse the Foundation for the salaries of selected ALAD personnel and the administration costs of maintaining relevant portions of the ALAD program for a one-year period beginning January 1, 1976. The Project Development Officer was given the responsibility for managing the reduced program.

There is no commitment in this agreement for ICARDA to maintain any particular aspects of this program or to employ any of the personnel designated in this agreement. The intention of this agreement was to maintain the momentum of ongoing research of relevance to ICARDA until the Board of Trustees and its new Director General could select their own staff.

The estimated maximum cost of maintaining this program for one year is \$1.837 million. The budget attached to the agreement contains a list of the names of the senior scientific and administrative staff which the Ford Foundation undertook to try to contract for this one year period.

This agreement also indicates the Ford Foundation's willingness to provide the services of Dr. Havener as Project Development Officer. The terms of his contract indicate that he will be available as Project Development Officer on approximately a half-time basis until February 1, 1976. He will then be available one week per month until June 30, 1976. Dr. Havener has indicated that he will not be able to serve as Project Development Officer beyond June 30.

#### First ICARDA Board of Trustees Meeting

The Board members designate met for the first time in London, January 5-7, 1976 for an informal briefing session. His Excellency

Dr. Taher Obeid was elected Chairman designate of the Board and a Search Committee to select a Director General of ICARDA was formed.

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EVENTS IN THE EVOLUTION OF ICARDA

1. The Third meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee, Rome, April 10-13, 1972.
2. The Skilbeck Mission - March-April 1973.
3. The Sixth meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee, Washington, July 25-August 3, 1973.
4. The Working Group, Rome, November 1973.
5. The Seventh meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee, Rome, February 1974.
6. The Eighth meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee, Washington, July 24-August 2, 1974.
7. International Centers' Week, Washington, July 29-August 2, 1974.
8. The Preparatory Committee of the Consultative Group for the establishment of an international centre for agricultural research in the Near East and North Africa, London, England, October 1-2, 1974.
9. The Consultative Group Meeting, Washington, October 30-31, 1974.
10. The First meeting of the Subcommittee on ICARDA, Rome, February 10-11, 1975.
11. The Second meeting of the Subcommittee on ICARDA, Washington, June 6, 1975.
12. The Third meeting of the Subcommittee on ICARDA, Washington, July 30, 1975.
13. International Centers' Week, Washington, July 28-August 1, 1975.
14. The Fourth meeting of the Subcommittee on ICARDA, Washington, October 29, 1975.
15. The Consultative Group Meeting, Washington, October 30-31, 1975.