Mountain Partnership
Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions (SARD-M) Initiative

Workshop Summary

BACKGROUND

The leading members of the SARD-M Initiative met in Rome on 6 October to discuss priority areas of action related to SARD-M which members could pursue in the immediate future within this Initiative. The overall objectives were to:

- To define priority areas for action that could be further developed at the Meeting of the Mountain Partnership members (Cusco, 28-29 October 2004).
- To explore potential synergies among partners and with other initiatives.
- To strengthen existing communication/information channels and begin to create new working mechanisms.

The SARD-M Initiative workshop followed a two-day meeting on "Designing and Implementing New Policy Packages for SARD in Mountain Regions" that took place on 4-5 October, also at FAO. The meeting was hosted by FAO's interregional and multi-stakeholder Project for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions (SARD-M) and was the Second Meeting of the Adelboden Group, which serves as a platform for discussion of policies and policy instruments, exchange of experience, and preparation of initiatives. The First Meeting of the Adelboden Group took place in Rome, Italy, on September 2003 providing advice for the formulation of the SARD-M Project Document.

Building on the outputs from the two-day SARD-M Project meeting, the workshop also intended to help the members of the Mountain Partnership and the SARD-M Project to identify common priority areas and produce draft work-plans and strategies for action promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountains. This will avoid any duplication of efforts while strengthening the coordination of existing and planned activities undertaken by different stakeholders.

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The following participants met to discuss working themes and priorities to be presented at the Cusco Conference for the SARD-M Initiative:

Vlatko Abdonovski, MAKMONTANA
Benedicto Sanchez, BIND
Kamal Banskota, ICIMOD
Jeanette Gurung, WOCAN
Carlos Alberto Cattaneo, Argentina
Peter Trutmann, CIP
Participant Presentations
The meeting began with brief presentations from participants highlighting their work and the ways in which the organisations they represent might benefit from and contribute to the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions (SARD-M) Initiative.

Eduardo Alberto Alfaro Ross, Bolivia
FDTA Altiplano is a foundation that supervises many development projects in the Bolivian highlands, working with small farmers and supporting rural development. Poverty, gender and environment are major issues to be prioritised. It is hoped that participation in the SARD-M Initiative will lead to an exchange of experience and knowledge and information.

Carlos Alberto Cattaneo, Argentina
The Government of Argentina has a variety of programs and organizations that help small farmers, a high percentage of whom live in mountain regions. Up to now these groups have worked in isolation, without guidance from a group like SARD-M Initiative. It is the Government’s view that future action at local and national level will be made easier through participation in these partnerships, helping to develop more dynamic ways of collaboration.

Benedicto Sanchez, BIND
BIND is a NGO directly involved with sustainable mountain development projects in the province of Negros in the Philippines; implementing food security programmes, promoting agrobiodiversity, livelihood diversification etc. BIND is also a participant in national and regional networks. This organization has accumulated considerable knowledge and experience in implementing programmes which can be usefully shared with others. In particular others can learn from BIND’s experiences incorporating livelihood support with natural resource management. BIND can also contribute to a discussion in terms of commodity and trade relations, especially relating to fair trade, organic standards and certification. This organization sees the SARD-M Initiative as an opportunity to learn from other experiences, especially at the policy level.

Frank Gaskell, Euromontana
There are three main areas where Euromontana’s activities crosscut with SARD-M Initiative:

1) Multifunctionality and positive externalities. The process of embracing a broader concept of land management that recognises the public service
performed by mountain communities (farmers and others) in natural resource management and environmental security – protection from avalanches, conservation of watersheds, preservation of the landscape etc.

2) Promotion of quality products. The globalisation and homogenisation of products has created a real opportunity for mountain areas – by opening up the demand for differentiated products. Mountain products have the advantage of being differentiated and projecting the image of ‘pure’ and ‘clean’ associated with the mountains, all of which can be harnessed to the benefit of mountain dwellers. Euromontana is currently developing a ‘tool box’ of best and worst practices regarding local labelling and meeting European-level regulations, which will be made available on their web site.

3) As a focal point for the SARD - M Project, Euromontana is interested in training and capacity building, and is currently looking for funding sources for these activities.

Vlatko Abdonovski, MAKMONTANA
MAKMONTANA has a particular interest in mountain policy. A mountain policy programme has now been developed for Macedonia. A series of broad-ranging policies for mountain areas based on the SARD principles has been placed on the government agenda, and will be introduced as law by 2008.

Peter Trutmann, CIP
As a member of CGIAR, a group of research centres around the world with a particular focus on food security and natural resource management, CIP taps into the resource of many scientists in different fields, and proposes to act as a link to these resources in order to help focus demand-driven concrete action within the SARD-M Initiative. CIP itself (based in the Andes with partners elsewhere) is in a position to share its experience (tried and tested approaches, successes and failures), in the sectors of watershed management resources, policy analysis, genetic diversity and other natural resource management issues – such as water and soil management. It is also now moving towards helping to develop quality product opportunities and linking farmers with markets.

Kamal Banskota, ICIMOD
ICIMOD has been working for 20 years in mountain development and has acquired a substantial body of knowledge and experience along the way. ICIMOD believes that the emphasis within the SARD-M initiative should be on sharing and learning from one another. ICIMOD has successfully brought together member countries within the region (China, India, Pakistan etc.) and introduced development concepts that are now being utilised by these member states. In terms of policy ICIMOD gives considerable importance to the conceptual framework of approaches to mountain development – what makes mountain areas different from lowlands. They believe that policy should be devised from the bottom up, starting from small samples or pilot programmes. The organization offers its own expertise, in addition to tool kits on manuals on a variety of subjects, such as gender, mountain tourism and energy.

Jeanette Gurung, WOCAN
Women Organising for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management – WOCAN -is a new organization that works towards integrating gender perspectives in policy-making, and also empowering women themselves – in particular developing
their capacity to make themselves heard, as well as finding spaces for women’s voices in different fora. WOCAN plans to work with governments as much as possible and hopes that membership of the Mountain Partnership and its initiatives will provide links to government focal points.

The SARD-M Project
Following the brief presentations from the participants, Stéphane Jost, (SARD-M Project FAO) provided an overview of the SARD-M Project and the results of the previous a two-day meeting on "Designing and Implementing New Policy Packages for SARD in Mountain Regions".

The main focus of the 4-year SARD-M Project (2005-2008), hosted by FAO, is to help formulate, implement and evaluate policies promoting SARD in mountains at all levels with the aim of enhancing livelihoods in mountain regions. There are three connected sub-objectives:
1) Raising awareness of the need for SARD mountain-specific policies
2) Building capacity to promote SARD mountain-specific policies
3) Supporting the implementation of SARD policies for mountain regions

The SARD-M Project team is currently setting out the main activities for 2005 – finalising the building of the partnership and establishing partnership agreements with regional and country focal points, improving communication materials, working on coordination mechanisms, and continuing with networking activities. The three priority activities selected for 2005 are the following:

1. Assess strengths and weaknesses of mountain policies including social, economic, institutional and environmental aspects, in relation to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development principles. This analysis will capitalise on existing literature, partners’ experiences, and case-studies possibly in Latin America and the Mediterranean region

2. Strengthen local institutions, by developing training materials and courses, in close collaboration with NGOs, producers associations, cooperatives, etc

3. Analyse positive and negative externalities of mountain regions through a comparative review of existing methods and tools.

At the same time the search for donor support continues. One of the main priorities now is to develop synergies with the Mountain Partnership and also with other SARD related projects.

The Adelboden Group and its relationship to SARD-M Project.
The Adelboden Group was formed at the first Adelboden conference in 2002 organised by Switzerland in close collaboration with FAO, a group representing governments at national and decentralised levels, international organisations and civil society interested in SARD in mountain regions that became an advisory, consultative body for the SARD-M Project contributing notably to the design of the yearly priority activities. The Adelboden Group is broadly representative – government, international organisations and civil society – and has an international
structure. It is also intended that the group serve as a platform for projects and discussions related to SARD-M. In this regard, it was suggested that the Adelboden Group join the Mountain Partnership to provide advisory services to the Partnership.

**SARD-M Project and the Mountain Partnership working together.**
Aside from cooperation on this initiative, SARD-M Project should also link with other relevant existing initiatives of the Mountain Partnership, especially the Policy and Law initiative, and the Sustainable Livelihood initiative. It is important that duplication of activities is avoided, and that the both move forward alongside one another on a converging path, stimulating between them a discussion of realistic concrete activities with a clear idea of how the two can support each other mutually. Defining roles and ways of working together will be an ongoing process, given that both projects are in the early stages. The fact that their respective frameworks are still flexible rather than fixed should be viewed as an advantage. Each offers potential, synergies and opportunities.

**Other Priority Issues and Themes for the SARD-M Initiative**
Building upon the presentations and activities identified during the SARD-M Project meeting, participants were then invited to identify other priority issues, gaps in knowledge and potential synergies between participants and their organisations. During this brainstorming session a number of priority issues emerged, including awareness raising, policy advocacy, and capacity building that would compliment the SARD-M Project priority activities for 2005 and be considered as a possible basis for joint future activities for the SARD-M Initiative members.

**Awareness raising**
The issue of awareness raising came up repeatedly as a theme in discussions. The consensus is that there is a poor understanding of what SARD is, at any level. Therefore a generalised awareness raising campaign targeting all levels is of vital importance in promoting the concept and better understanding of SARD. It was suggested that the awareness raising work use social marketing and behaviour change techniques similar to how the international community has address HIV/AIDS.

An important aspect of an awareness campaign would consist in putting across an understanding of how issues are interdependent when it comes to mountain development, an approach that links also to policy. Alleviation of poverty needs to be closely linked with environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods/quality products. Ecology and marketing, organic agriculture, environmental conservation, marketing, food security – all these elements are compatible and interdependent.

An awareness campaign could significantly support ongoing policy and capacity building activities related to SARD by developing a saleable package around which to tailor and refine the general message of SARD-M. This kind of awareness campaign could be targeted to attract potential donors.

**Payment for environmental services**
The concept of payment for environmental services is one that could usefully be brought to the fore (again, as part of an awareness campaign) and contribute to efforts to narrow the gap between poverty and environment, and linking both to sustainable agriculture. Mountain regions provide valuable services of providing
water and maintaining landscapes and ecosystems. The much larger picture needs
to be conveyed, with an awareness of the relationship between highlands and
lowlands.

**Poverty alleviation and combating out migration.**
In many developing countries the main priority is improving conditions for people in
mountain regions and keeping them in the mountains. It was suggested that keeping
people in mountains ought to be the banner of SARD and the problem of out
migration can be used as an effective communication tool. Sustainability is the key
issue in tackling poverty and out migration. It was suggested to use the problem of
outmigration as a banner theme “*Keep people in the mountains. It is inefficient to
sacrifice mountain settlements and their assets*.”

**Policy advocacy**
Policy is only useful if it is reaching its target. Thus policy makers need to be
persuaded to focus funds in impoverished regions, and this means targeting
awareness at government level and also promoting a bottom up approach based on
small pilot projects, bringing in those not previously involved in policy implementation.

**Gender**
Gender is an important cross-cutting issue. The all-important role of women in
agriculture – especially in the mountains – needs to be recognised. Women are also
an untapped resource – in many cases they have proved to have great
entrepreneurial skills. It was suggested that it would be a good thing to adopt a
commitment as a group, in all activities, to a gender perspective, in other words
integrating a gender perspective throughout Mountain Partnership activities. Gender
sensitivity can also be closely linked to policy. In lobbying for funding for programmes,
the Mountain Partnership could specify that there must be a gender dimension
provision in order for a programme to be approved.

**Climate change**
Another suggestion was to link agriculture and rural development to climate change
issues. This is another aspect of SARD that could benefit from awareness raising:
underlining the importance of carbon sequestration, maintaining forests and land use
in general. The idea proposed was that policy incentives be made for clean
development and sustainable agriculture projects. Now that the Kyoto protocol is
likely to be ratified, there will certainly be funds made available for this kind of project.

**Microfinance**
The group heard a short presentation from PlaNet Finance, a member organization
of the Mountain Partnership on the role of microfinance in developing small scale
demonstration projects and capacity building.

**Next steps**
Participants were asked, having identified these priority themes, to take a leading
role in moving the process forward and in guiding the discussion at the upcoming
Cusco Conference.