

Press Release

Swiss Forum for International Agricultural Research invites submissions for the 2008 SFIAR Award

It is widely recognised that development of sustainable and productive agriculture is essential to address poverty alleviation and economic development in developing countries¹. Agricultural development addresses 6 of the 8 Millennium Development Goals (see annex). As a country Switzerland is an internationally significant contributor to development programmes in agriculture, mainly through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). It is less well known that Switzerland hosts more than 100 research institutions which contribute in various ways to agricultural research with applications for development.

SFIAR

The Swiss Forum for International Agricultural Research (SFIAR) is an informal multi-stakeholder group of Swiss institutions and private individuals interested in agricultural research for development ('ARD'). Members come from research institutions, NGOs, the private sector, farmers' organisations and public agencies. The goals and objectives of SFIAR are:

- a) Sharing information between ARD stakeholders in Switzerland
- b) Promoting the visibility of Swiss ARD
- c) Playing an advocacy role at policy level
- d) Serving as a national partner in international initiatives
- e) Promoting collaboration between actors in Swiss ARD

More information on the SFIAR is available on its website: <http://www.sfiar.ch>

The SFIAR Award

SFIAR has decided to launch the SFIAR Award to recognise recent achievements in Swiss agricultural research projects for development, which relate to at least one of the following characteristics:

- a) partnership, outreach to the farm level, output and impact
- b) product development (or steps thereof)
- c) tool or instrument

The projects have to be carried out with at least one partner in a developing country.

Research results which address the agricultural development challenges of developing and emerging countries are eligible for consideration for the annual award which is CHF 5'000 for an individual and CHF 10'000 for a team. Eligible research can relate to crop production, animal husbandry, agro-forestry, agricultural biodiversity and agricultural ecosystems, fisheries and aquaculture, agribusiness, as well as animal and human health related issues, resulting in improved rural livelihoods and enhanced environmental sustainability. Projects addressing any aspect of sustainable management of the natural resources on which farming depends are also eligible. Research of a national and/or an international public good character, as well as private sector research can be awarded.

Comments

Matthew Cock (current President of SFIAR, and Regional Director, CABI Europe - Switzerland) said:

"By introducing this award, SFIAR intends to raise awareness within Switzerland of the impact that Swiss agricultural research has in the developing world."

¹ For example see World Bank's "World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development" at: www.worldbank.org/wdr2008

Katharina Jenny (past President of SFIAR, and Senior Advisor with SDC, Bern) stated that:

“The SDC is pleased to collaborate with SFIAR to implement this new award scheme which will highlight the role of research partnerships for development.”

Marco Ferroni (Executive Director of the Syngenta Foundation, Basel) commented:

“We are pleased to financially commit towards this annual prize for Swiss agricultural innovation with development impact. The Foundation concentrates on sustainable agricultural projects in semi-arid zones, yet recognises that the reduction of poverty requires a broad range of approaches.”

Application Process

Applicants must briefly apply in English (preferable), French or German, before 30 May 2008 following the guidance provided on the SFIAR website (<http://www.sfiar.ch/award.htm>).

The main selection criteria to be used by SFIAR in determining the winner will be:

- research quality
- demonstration of potential for development impact
- compliance with the guidance (<http://www.sfiar.ch/award.htm>).
- presentation

Award ceremony

The award ceremony in 2008 is expected to occur on World Food Day, October 16th 2008.

Subsequently with the support of SFIAR members and their institutions, the winning project will be highlighted to the public media.

Contact:

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Annex: Millennium Development Goals

marking = Agriculture plays a major contribution

marking = Better nutrition, from improved agriculture, plays a major role in improved immune system response, less disease, and better mental capacity development.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- Target 1: Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
- Target 2: Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

- Target 3: Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

- Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

- Target 5: Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

- Target 6: Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

- Target 7: Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
- Target 8: Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

- Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources
- Target 10: Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water
- Target 11: Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

- Target 12: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system
- Target 13: Address the special needs of the least developed countries
- Target 14: Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing States
- Target 15: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term
- Target 16: In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth
- Target 17: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
- Target 18: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications