



8 June 2005

Announcement of Small Research Grants

Setting Agricultural Research Priorities For Rural Livelihood Improvement in the Dry Areas

Background:

About one billion people live in the world's dry areas¹. These people are among the world's poorest; perhaps 70 percent live on less than \$2 per day. Many are heavily dependent on agricultural production; despite the arid conditions, more than half the inhabitants of dry areas eke out a living from agriculture, producing crops such as lentils, barley, and fava beans, along with sheep and goats.

Over the years, many economic development programs have offered little to rural people in these regions. Government investments have tended to favor manufacturing and service sectors, but jobs in these sectors have remained scarce. One of the few realistic pathways for development is through improved technologies that assist small-scale agriculture. Better crop varieties and management practices may be able to improve the livelihoods of the world's dryland farmers, and thus to reduce poverty.

The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) is an international institution with headquarters in Aleppo, Syria. Founded in 1977, ICARDA defines its mission as "to improve the welfare of poor people and alleviate poverty through research and training in dry areas of the developing world, by increasing the production, productivity and nutritional quality of food, while preserving and enhancing the natural resource base." ICARDA is one of 15 international research centers operating under the aegis of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

ICARDA's current priorities include the targeting of research to problems of poverty and rural livelihoods in the dry areas. ICARDA's recent medium-term plan has identified a need to focus the institution's research on poverty alleviation, particularly in relation to "mega-problems" such as water scarcity, desertification, biodiversity loss, and the lack of diversified options for rural livelihoods. ICARDA's.

To help its research meet these priorities, ICARDA is making funds available through a competitive grant process that would award small sums of money (perhaps from \$500 up to \$10,000) to individual graduate students and faculty at US universities. These small grants would support fieldwork in ICARDA mandate areas and will focus on explaining the causes of rural poverty in the dry areas and in identifying agricultural research priorities for improving rural livelihoods. The research conducted under the small grants program will contribute to the research of ICARDA's mega-project on "poverty-livelihood analysis and impact assessment".

¹ For the purposes of this document, "dry areas" are those regions of the world where the crop growing period is restricted to fewer than 180 days annually because of limited rainfall. ICARDA is responsible for non-tropical dry areas (i.e. subtropical and temperate dry areas) In addition to the areas of West Asia, Central Asia, and North Africa, the region also includes portions of China, Latin America, and southern Africa.

The conditions for the small grants are given below:

1. The research can be conceptual or empirical but should be directly related to the impacts of agricultural research and technology on poverty in the dry areas. Examples might include research that identifies agricultural research priorities for rural livelihood improvement in a particular area, or ex post impact assessments of research with respect to poverty alleviation.
2. The applicant/s should be based in a US academic institution. However, collaboration with researchers and institutions in host countries is welcomed and encouraged.
3. Duration: The time period for completing the research plan should not exceed two years. Shorter research plans with clear achievable outputs will be advantageous. (For example, a small grant funding a summer project would be appropriate.)
4. The budget for the small grant research proposals can range from US\$ 500 to US\$15,000 per year.
5. The research proposal should be no more than 2,000 words and should include: Applicant names, titles, and institutional affiliations; background and justification; brief description of methodology; expected outputs; and (if appropriate) a list of relevant references.
6. The proposal should also include a rough budget showing the main expense items and giving a brief justification.
7. Applicants should also include c.v.'s for themselves and any principal collaborators.
8. The applicants will produce a report or document of major findings.
9. ICARDA reserves the right to ask recipients to write a brief document discussing the implications of their research for ICARDA and its other missions.

Where to submit proposals:

The proposal should be sent by e-mail to Professor Douglas Gollin (Williams College, USA); e-mail: [dgollin@williams.edu].

Deadline:

The proposals should be received not later than August 30, 2005.