



## **AARINENA 14<sup>th</sup> General Conference**

# **“Agricultural Research and Innovation: Fostering Governance and Sharing Models”**

**27-29 November 2018**

**Atlas Asni Hotel, Marrakech, Morocco**

### **Conference Brief**

# **AARINENA 14<sup>th</sup> General Conference**

## **Agricultural Research and Innovation: Fostering Governance and Sharing Models**

*organized by*

**The Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in Near East and North Africa (AARINENA)**

**&**

**The Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA) Morocco**

Agricultural sector in the Near East and North African (NENA) region is facing critical and unprecedented challenges that might undermine its sustainability. These challenges are related to, the high human pressure on water and soils, the loss of local genetic resources, and more globally the development of farming models that are not always suited to the economic size of small-scale farming which is prevailing in the region. These difficult challenges of the NENA agriculture would be even harder when we consider the negative effect of global warming. Climate change which is expected to affect in an unprecedented way the whole NENA region touching several strategic sectors such as agriculture and water, therefore hampering its contribution to food security in the region. In order to recover from such effects, agricultural research institutes should deliver effective and durable innovations and technologies that are consistent with sustainable development. Hence, investing in developing the capacity of research and innovation systems of NENA region is of paramount importance and should be top priority for sustainable and inclusive development.

Indeed, the NENA region is globally suffering from a syndrome of “waste of knowledge”, referring to investments in generating knowledge which is not necessarily useful to the final users and more broadly the society. In addition, the actual innovation pathway is widening the technological gaps with developed countries. This syndrome is revealed by three indicators, i/ the low capacity of the education system (mostly universities) to work with concerned stakeholders and beneficiaries for turning out the knowledge produced into innovation, ii/ the dominance of “imported innovations” which are not necessarily well integrated into the local technical, economic and social contexts of use, and finally iii/ the high unemployment and underemployment rates of graduates in the different agricultural disciplines.

This overall observation is essentially linked to two major issues: i/ the low capacity of the existing systems for Agricultural Research & Innovation to establish open and iterative relationships with the different stakeholders to better cope with short and long term needs and expectations; ii/the lack of efficiency in current Agricultural Knowledge & Technology Transfer & Exchange processes (*In its broad sense, Knowledge & Technology Exchange & Transfer should embed the different missions of agricultural*

*extension*). These processes are still dominated, in the NENA region by top down linear models of agricultural transfer which are often lacking to integrate properly some important structural components of an Agricultural Research & Innovation Systems (such as for instance the bridging institutions and agro-business and agro-enterprise).

Given the several challenges facing the NENA agriculture, it is indeed clear that not only research efficacy in terms of development of relevant scientific concepts into technological potential applications is required. The design of well governed and institutionalized pluralistic Systems for Research & Innovations as well as the development of efficient processes for Knowledge & Technology Exchange & Transfer are both expected to play a strategic role in enhancing the capacity of NENA agriculture to cope with current and future challenges under the globally negative context imposed by climate change. The NENA countries should be embarked in new scientific development trajectories and models of research governance and strengthen and stimulate technological development, diffusion and transfer. The objectives of such exchange would be to secure that knowledge and technology delivered to farmers and other concerned professions are adequately fitted to their needs, expectations and capacities.

In this context, it is worth to emphasize the need for a holistic view embracing all the functioning mechanisms required to ensure the efficacy of Knowledge & Technology Exchange & Transfer within the Agricultural Research & Innovation Systems.

Accordingly, we have focused the present “AARINENA General Conference” on the strategic topic of “Agricultural Science and Innovation: Fostering Governance and Sharing Models”.

**This conference will focus on the following technical objectives:**

1. Present and discuss the rationale for a change of paradigms in Knowledge & Technology Exchange & Transfer in the NENA region.
2. To present the state of the art regarding modern pluralistic Agricultural Systems for Research & Innovation and processes of Agricultural Knowledge & Technology Exchange & Transfer (including the extension services) and the governance frameworks required for their development.
3. To discuss the different approaches for the design of adapted and modern pluralistic Agricultural Research and Innovation Systems. The objectives of those AR&I Systems will be to generate the most effective processes of Agricultural Knowledge & Technology Exchange & Transfer for providing different categories of farmers and professionals in the NENA region with the required technologies and knowledge.

4. To discuss the role of public, private and civil society organizations in driving research on developing the required innovations and for exchanging/transferring more efficiently technologies and knowledge to rural farm households. The role of these organizations within a broad agricultural innovation network will be discussed, taking into consideration the growing recognition of market-driven extension systems.
5. To reviews practical experiences and success stories at global, regional and country levels and to analyze the factors and enabling conditions required for their sustainable implementation and for generalizing them to other contexts of the NENA region.

**The expected outcomes of this conference are:**

1. To agree on the needed paradigm shifts in agricultural research and innovation;
2. Sharing the knowledge of the structure and functioning of Agriculture Research and Innovation Systems and knowing their different models;
3. Be aware of the different approaches and operational models of and processes for Knowledge and Technology Exchange & Transfer and how they could fit in the contexts of the NENA Region, and to share success stories from the Region;
4. Identify and agree on the main elements for Regional frame work for development of effective and modern National Research and Innovation systems.

**AARINENA will present at this 14<sup>th</sup> General conference its new strategy and strategic plan aimed to enhance its role and contribution as a major regional actor working closely with its constituencies from the member countries to develop national and region capacities in agricultural research and innovation.**

This conference will target, in addition to AARINENA constituencies other **NENA actors involved in Systems of Research & Innovations and Knowledge & Technology and Exchange & Transfer including researchers, development personnel, technologists, extension and advisory services network members and experts, farmers, NGOs, young professionals and agro-industry representatives.**

**Venue and Date:**

The conference will be held at Atlas Asni Hotel, Marrakech, Morocco on November 27-29, 2018.