

## Senior Officials Meeting

Palais de Congres de Versailles, Versailles, France

3 March 2011

# Meeting Report

## OVERVIEW

Following on from a week of events comprising meetings of the Research Groups separately and together and a meeting of the Governance Group, the second Senior Officials meeting took place on 3 March 2011. It was chaired by Marion Guillou (Présidente de l'INRA) for the morning session and Eric Allain (Directeur de la Direction Générale des Politiques Agricole Agroalimentaire et des Territoires, Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation de la Pêche, de la Ruralité et de l'Aménagement du Territoire) for the afternoon session.

This report is a summary of the key discussions and outcomes of the senior officials meeting.

## PARTICIPANTS

The meeting was attended by participants representing 29 Alliance member countries and five observer countries. For a full participant list, please refer to Appendix 1.

- Alliance Members attending : Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, UK, Uruguay, USA, Viet Nam.
- Alliance Members unable to attend : India, Russia
- Observers attending: Brazil, China, European Commission, Republic of Korea, South Africa.

## MEETING OUTCOMES

The meeting achieved the following outcomes:

- Research Groups and Cross-cutting Groups to prepare presentations of their Action Plans for the Alliance Ministerial Summit
- Draft Charter finalised pending editorial changes to be made by the Secretariat and will be circulated to Alliance Members and Observers for domestic approval processes.
- Governance Group to develop an Alliance Communication Policy for adoption at the first Alliance Council meeting.

# SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

## OPENING ADDRESS

1 The opening address was given by Jean-Marc Bournigal, Directeur de Cabinet du Ministre de l'agriculture, de l'alimentation, de la pêche, de la ruralité et de l'aménagement du territoire. Bournigal reminded participants that agriculture was a source of GHG emissions and was directly impacted by climate change, but also had significant sequestration potential. The role of the Alliance in pooling research efforts and serving as a scientific exchange platform was thus key in addressing climate change. Bournigal supported the idea that the focus of the Alliance should be on mitigation and urged greater involvement from researchers of developing countries. He argued that research should be carried out bearing in mind all aspects of sustainable development and not just GHG emissions.

2 Marion Guillou, Présidente de l'INRA, opened the morning session. Her speech focused on the importance of agriculture for addressing climate change, the challenges that mitigating agricultural emissions presents, and the important role of the Alliance. Participants were reminded that the Alliance does not compete with other international research bodies or replicate discussions in the UNFCCC. The research objectives and efforts of INRA were highlighted.

## SECRETARIAT UPDATE

3 The Secretariat provided an update of progress in the Alliance since the first Senior Officials meeting in April 2010. It was noted that the Alliance membership had grown in the past year to 31 member countries.

4 The Secretariat presented the results of the research stocktake and reported on the initial meetings and activities of the Research Groups. Senior officials were also informed about progress in the development of the Charter and the intention that Ministers sign the Charter at a Summit to be held in June. Finally, the Secretariat provided information on the ongoing outreach efforts to partner organisations and research programmes and noted the work underway to update the Alliance website.

## REPORT BACK FROM RESEARCH GROUPS

5 Following on from the separate meetings of each of the Research Groups that took place in various locations in France on 1-2 March and the joint meeting of all Research Groups. For the Research Group meetings that had been held on the afternoon of 2 March, each Group presented the results of their discussions to the senior officials present. (Refer to separate PDF presentations.)

6 Senior officials were appreciative of the work that had been done by each of the Research Groups and supportive of the action plans that had been developed. As comments were made on each presentation, a common thread of comment focused on how to characterise "success" in the Alliance context. Participants described this as:

- "Research that explains", "research that predicts" and "research that supports decision making";
- Agricultural systems that produce what we need, that will protect the natural resource base, and is economically viable; and
- The most efficient balance of kg production / m<sup>3</sup> water / CO<sub>2</sub>.

7 In response to a question as to whether there was a need for a particular Alliance focus on countries with the largest agricultural productive capacity, several officials noted again the collective goal of the Alliance to increase food production whilst decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. The collaborative research effort would benefit all Alliance countries.

8 The value of the research stocktake exercise was acknowledged although the difficulties that member countries had had in undertaking it were noted. Given that it is intended that the research stocktake is a living document that will be updated annually, senior officials hoped that ways could be found to streamline the collection of information.

9 It was also noted that a key question for future consideration was how to ensure that improvement in farming practices and technologies were implemented by farmers. In the meantime, some senior officials commented that the Alliance was at the beginning of its work and urged that the Alliance continued to focus what was practical and doable now, while keeping in mind the issues that would need reflection and consideration into the future.

## **CROSS CUTTING ISSUES**

10 Senior officials also received a separate presentation on cross cutting research issues from Jean-Francois Soussana. This presentation covered the discussion and conclusions from the Research Group Joint Plenary session on 2 March 2011.

11 It was acknowledged that cross cutting issues caused some difficulty for the Research Groups. The Research Groups had identified and distinguished between true cross cutting issues (issues that were of interest and concern to all of the Research Groups) and “interface issues” (issues where common work was being undertaken and where good communication and interaction could smooth the work).

12 The main focus of discussion concerned the identification by all three Research Groups of life-cycle analysis as an interface issue that is a potential cross cutting issue. There was some surprise and concern expressed by senior officials to its inclusion into the action plans of the Research Groups. Senior officials noted that the concept had specific economic, philosophical and political connotations, and that was already a considerable amount of international effort and attention being directed towards lifecycle analysis and greenhouse gas footprinting. However, it was acknowledged that underpinning lifecycle analysis was a foundation of scientific knowledge and measurement particularly at emissions and product level. It was also acknowledged that the type of information contained in a life cycle assessment would be important in the future for encouraging farmers to change their farming practices. There was consensus that proposals for work on lifecycle analysis need further consideration and should be discussed at a future meeting.

## **REPORT BACK FROM THE GOVERNANCE GROUP**

13 Jamshed Merchant chair of the Governance Group gave senior officials an update of the work of the Governance Group. He noted that it was the third time that the Group had met and the meetings had allowed all participants to gain a better understanding of the what the Alliance means – that there was a common desire amongst Governance Group participants to undertake research and do things for real people to help them reduce emissions and grow more food.

14 He reported that there were still a number of areas of the Charter text where agreement had not been reached and a number of paragraphs where the Secretariat would be asked to tidy up the text without changing the intent. He also noted that it had been agreed that a communication policy would be the next product that the Governance Group would develop.

15 The subsequent discussion focused on paragraph 1 of the Charter that dealt with the *raison d'être* of the Alliance, paragraph 42 on resource contributions by members to the work of the Alliance, and paragraph 24(d) which dealt with the operation of the Research Groups and the participation of partners, whether institutions or individuals.

16 Following further discussion and exchange of views senior officials agreed on these substantive elements of the Charter and noted some additional editorial suggestions for the Secretariat to take into account.

17 The Secretariat was asked to reflect these changes and other editorial suggestions that did not change the intent of specific paragraphs into a final version of the Charter document and circulate this to participating countries.

18 Jamshed Merchant noted that it was important for each country to complete its own internal approval processes so that each Alliance member country was in a position to sign the Charter at the Ministerial Summit in June 2011.

19 The next focus of work for the Governance Group was the development of a communication policy. Australia and Argentina volunteered to lead this work. It was intended that a draft be ready for substantive discussion and approval for when the Council first meets.

## **INFORMATION ON THE MINISTERIAL SUMMIT**

20 New Zealand informed participants of the reasons for the change of location and date. The Secretariat gave a short presentation on the logistics for the Ministerial Summit and posed a set of questions for participants to guide preparations including which day was preferred and what the format of proceedings should be. A proposal to hold either a Senior Officials meeting prior to the Ministerial Summit or a Council session afterwards was also canvassed. Given the shortness of time available for participants to express views, the Secretariat undertook to send out an email seeking views.

## **CLOSING ADDRESS**

21 The closing address was given by Madame Michèle Pappalardo, Commissaire générale au Développement durable. She noted that feeding a growing world population presented a major challenge for the science community particularly in the face of declining growing capacity due to changes in climate. While this was a global problem, the solutions had to be local. Scientific research was essential in addressing the challenge and the Alliance was an example of how researchers and countries could come together to do this job. While both mitigation and adaptation were important Madame Pappalardo noted that there was not enough research that grappled with mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. The solutions had to keep pace with the changes that were occurring. It was important that Alliance remained flexible so as to be as effective and efficient as possible. If it became a complex international organisation it would lose focus and momentum.

21 Madame Pappalardo saw four elements to the Alliance's work :

- Climate change research that will form the basis of future action.
- A focus on the quality and quantity of output and the role of agriculture in the landscape;
- A greater acknowledgement of the importance of research effort; and
- The importance of partnerships to promote synergies but also so that solutions could be adapted to local situations.

# APPENDIX 1: Participants List

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