

CAPABILITY STATEMENTS / 1



ECART and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

The member states of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration in 2000 as a renewed commitment to promote human development as the key to sustaining social and economic progress in all countries, and to recognize the importance of creating a global partnership for development to end global poverty and suffering.

The Declaration established eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved mainly by 2015:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger | 5. Improve maternal health |
| 2. Achieve universal primary education | 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases |
| 3. Promote gender equality and empower women | 7. Ensure environmental sustainability |
| 4. Reduce child mortality | 8. Develop a global partnership for development |

The goals establish yardsticks for measuring results, not just for developing countries but for rich countries that help to fund development programmes and for the multilateral institutions that help countries implement them. The first seven goals are mutually reinforcing and are directed at reducing poverty in all its forms. The last goal-global partnership for development- is about the means to achieve the first seven.

Moreover, the final report of the UN Millennium Project "Investing in Development" (released on January 17, 2005) highlighted the importance of science and technology in achieving the MDGs.



EUROPE, ARD AND ECART

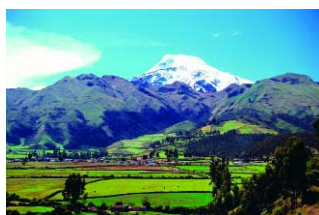
The countries of the European Union (EU) have committed themselves to accelerate sustainable development in the world's poorest countries and thereby contribute to achieving the MDGs.

For historical, economic, and cultural reasons, many European Member States (MS) support Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) directly or indirectly through their bilateral and multilateral programmes, and have developed a unique field-based scientific expertise in ARD. Certain European countries have scientific institutions devoted to ARD with long years of experience and a major focus on sustainable development in the developing countries. All these institutions have teams with complementary disciplinary and interdisciplinary research expertise as well as ample experience in institutional development and capacity strengthening.

¹ The MDGs have 18 associated targets and are being measured using 48 performance indicators using 1990 as a base year.

² ARD is research which addresses the agricultural challenges and issues faced by developing countries, emerging countries and countries in transition. Agriculture is used in its broad sense and

includes crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries, environment and natural resources management. ARD includes capacity-building and research into agricultural production, productivity, storage, processing and marketing; dissemination, up-scaling, uptake and distribution of the research products; as well as policy, institutional and societal issues.



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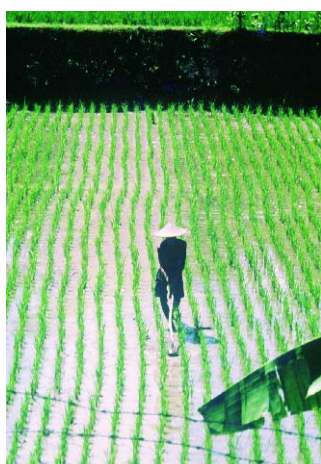
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ECART and the MDGs



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In November 2004, six European research institutions, located in five member states³, created an European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG), called "European Consortium for Agricultural Research in the Tropics (ECART)" to serve the EC, the EU member states, the international donor agencies, the private sector and the civil societies in both the North and the South.

This initiative has three strategic objectives:

- > play a proactive policy advocacy role for ARD in Europe and worldwide,
- > develop and strengthen strategic alliances and partnerships with the different ARD stakeholders, both in the North and the South,
- > organise, facilitate and implement joint participation in European and international programmes and projects,

to fight poverty and hunger and to support a more rapid and sustainable development in the poorest countries in the world, and, by improved cooperation and coordination, strengthen Europe's contribution to, and impact on, regional and global ARD systems.

ECART is:

> a pool of over 1,600 research scientists and technical officers:

- covering the full range of themes related to agriculture : productivity and production systems, land use planning and management, natural resources management, and the evaluation of economic, environmental and social impacts,
- providing expertise and academic or professional training,
- competent in capacity building,
- responding jointly to calls for tenders,

> a partner:

- working with research and development institutions in countries of the South and the emerging countries,

- sharing its skills in research, expertise, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), impact assessment, implementation and capacity development,
- offering access to its extensive network of social, economic and technical resources,

> a multi-asset contributor to agricultural research:

- seeking to make European research better coordinated,
 - facilitating access to European skills and expertise,
- in the aim to help rural populations to be better able to adapt and to respond to dynamic global and local changes, today and in the future.

AGRICULTURE, ARD AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: THE ECART'S CONTRIBUTION

Although agriculture is not mentioned in the 8 MDGs, there is now widespread consensus that in the shorter term, poor households' welfare in many parts of the world can be improved through agriculture and a key component in meeting the MDGs is a more productive and profitable agricultural sector. The relationship between agriculture and the MDGs varies with each goal, may be direct or indirect, one-way or two-way and in each case there are complementary requirements that determine actual outcomes.

For a long time, the ECART's members have been committed to reducing poverty, increasing food security and protecting the natural resource base. The six institutions undertake research that generates the science and technologies to underpin advances towards each of the MDGs, especially those related to hunger and rural poverty (Goal 1), health (Goal 6), environmental sustainability (Goal 7) and partnership for development (Goal 8).

³ CIRAD (France), IAO (Italy), IICT (Portugal), IRD (France), NRI (United Kingdom) and WUR (The Netherlands)



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The increasing attention being paid by the ECART's members to market-oriented agriculture, recognizing and supporting the role of smallholders in global trade opportunities, greater competitiveness and post-harvest improvement, directly supports efforts to cut poverty by 2015.

MDG 1: ERADICATE EXTREME HUNGER AND POVERTY

Here, the linkage with agriculture is particularly strong: agriculture contributes to achieving this goal through directly improving incomes, agriculture-led economic growth, improving food production and improved nutrition. By increasing food availability and incomes and contributing to economic growth, higher agricultural productivity and supportive pro-poor policies can directly and indirectly allow people to move out of income poverty and food insecurity. There is now a broad consensus based on empirical evidence that agricultural growth is key for poverty reduction both in an absolute as well as a relative sense. This is largely because poverty has a very significant rural dimension. MDG 1 is considered most often as the guiding MDG for the policy development for ARD because agricultural and rural development is often seen as the motor/engine for economic development. In the ARD policy setting this is mostly linked with agendas on food safety and horizontal and vertical chain management.

ECART's contribution is provided through its members' capacities in:

- > Reduction of malnutrition and « hidden hunger »
- > Production of more and better food at lower cost through genetic improvements
- > Creation of sustainable increases in the

supply and availability of food and other products from the crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry sectors offer

> Reduction of the rural poverty through agricultural diversification and emerging opportunities for high-value commodities and products

MDG 6: COMBAT HIV / AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES

Agriculture can also directly help to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases through higher-quality diets, and indirectly by providing additional incomes that can be devoted to health services.

ARD can indirectly contribute to the achievements of the MDG 6, through its actions for the other MDGs.

ECART's specific contribution is made through the upstream and downstream capacities of its members in:

- > Mitigation of emerging diseases through their environmental drivers,

> Improvement of prediction mechanisms and systems

> Investigation about the impacts of emerging diseases on rural populations

MDG 7: ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Agricultural practices can be both direct causes of and important solutions to environmental degradation. For example, more productive agricultural technologies can allow the withdrawal of agriculture from marginal, sensitive environments.

The importance of MDG 7 reflects concern about environmental degradation as a result of development, including agricultural and rural development.



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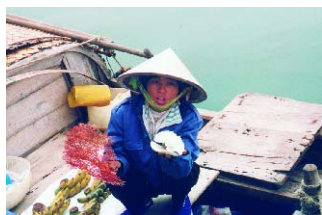
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In the ARD programme, where there can be a conflict between increasing agricultural output and improving/maintaining environmental quality, MDG 1 is more influential than MDG 7. Although Environmental issues are often dealt with in other programmes – e.g. biodiversity programmes, the case for greater integration should be explored.

ECART's contribution is provided through its members' capacities in:

- > Adaptation to the effects of climate changes
- > Management of land, water, fisheries, forestry in an integrated way
- > Management of natural resources and enhancement of agro-ecology
- > Enhancement of modern renewable energy sources
- > Sustainability of biodiversity

MDG 8: DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

Developing a global partnership for development can help to increase agricultural trade and increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the sector, which can help sustain the benefits from agriculture in the longer term.

The importance of MDG 8 for the ARD policy setting mainly concerns the access of developing countries to the world market for the sale of agricultural and other products.

ECART's contribution is made through its members' capacities in:

- > Promotion, development and reinforcement of policy and regulatory frameworks for food, agriculture, fisheries and forestry
- > Improvement of decision-making through the provision of information and assessments and fostering of knowledge management for food and agriculture
- > Contribution to the foundations of a global ARD system

Strengthening capacity of individuals, organizations and systems at local level is key. This must be supported by global partnerships as called for in MDG 8 e.g. moving towards a more level playing field for agricultural trade and an increase in the volume of ODA spent on agriculture.

Other MDGs

They clearly benefit from the direct or indirect contributions of agriculture and ARD through agricultural productivity improvement to income generation and household food security.

ECART's contribution to the other MDGs is also direct or indirect, through all its previous actions: for example, research on human nutrition carried out by some ECART's members will help identifying and promoting a number of nutritional interventions to reduce child mortality (MDG 4) and improve maternal health (MDG 5).

CONCLUSION

> For agriculture, ARD and ECART, the most effective strategy for making steady, sustainable progress toward the MDGs is to serve all the goals in an integrated way⁴.



⁴ The author used many sources, among them the "MDG Report, vol.1" for DFID and ERA-ARD, by NRI and WUR, 2006.

* All pictures are coming from the IRD Indigo Base : www.ird.fr/indigo/



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