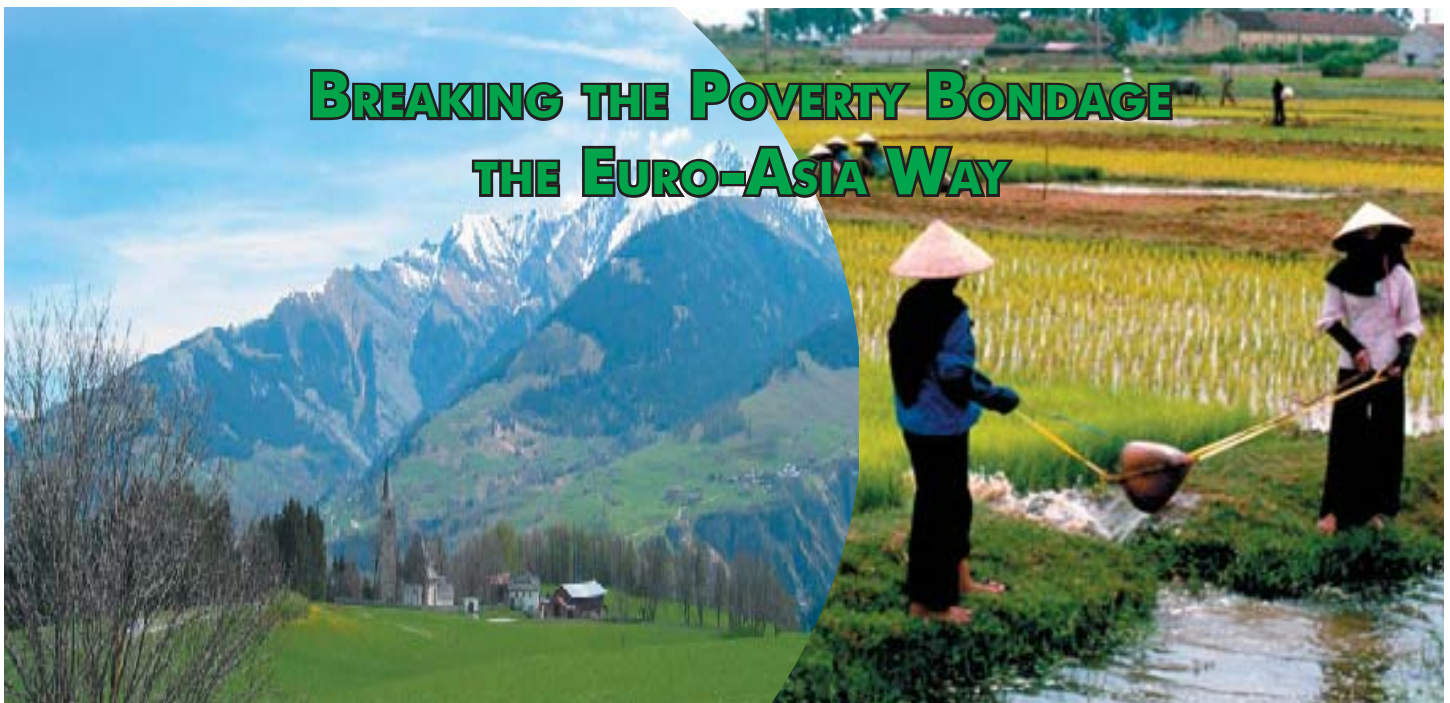




BREAKING THE POVERTY BONDAGE THE EURO-ASIA WAY



“Think of it in human terms, more than two billion human beings exist on under \$2 a day, while the European cow draws a subsidy of \$2 a day,” said Ian Johnson, Vice President for Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development (ESSD) of the World Bank and Chairman of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

Europe sees this as one of the indicators of poverty and Johnson points to the fact that one of the key solutions to breaking the poverty bondage is to focus on science- and technology-based agriculture. It “is the key because research has demonstrated that increased productivity of sustainable agriculture creates increased income, improves health and nutrition, and protects natural resources such as land, water, and biodiversity...trade imbalances will also have to be eliminated.”

Focusing on science- and technology-based agriculture is one of the keys to breaking the poverty bondage; increased agriculture productivity increases income, promotes health, and protects natural resources.

Poverty has become a serious, multifaceted threat to billions of people in the world. It comes vividly painted in the face and flesh of malnourished children who extend their hands daily to ask for food or quietly die in street corners. It comes in the stinking odor of sick, untreated victims in highly polluted areas. It comes in dark and dingy classrooms deserted by learners. It comes in the setting of many anemic farms whose lands cannot be tilled for lack of capital and support from governments. It also comes most vividly in heavily logged forests, flash floods, soil erosion, and so on.

The bondage of poverty that is so prevalent in Africa and Asia brings

many disturbing thorns that pierce the conscience of policymakers and funding institutions in Europe and in other rich countries of the world.

Johnson, one of the speakers of the three-day European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD) recently held at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) in Zurich, Switzerland, noted that of the 35 trillion dollar global economy, 80% of the population gets hold of only 20% economy.

Other speakers of the EFARD conference — Gautschi (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), Debois (Directorate General,

European Commission), Leihner (FAO), Kapiriri (GFAR), Arigbede (Union of Small-and Medium-Scale Farmers of Nigeria), Bennett (Sygenta Foundation), Cooke (IFAD), Anderson (CIP), Waters-Bayer (ETC Ecoculture), Engel (ECDPM), Patermann (EU), and Smith (FAO) pointed toward several roadmaps to unshackle the poverty bondage:

Increase agriculture research for development on poverty reduction, food security, and sustainable management by using three strategies, namely: a.) support agricultural research systems and various stakeholders at the national level; b) support agriculture research and development at the regional level; and c) support R&D at the international/global level;

Increase income of poor people so that they can buy food in the market;

Increase farm productivity without sacrificing environmental integrity;

Tap partnership and participatory strategies for development; and

Strengthen human resources and institutions.

For Asia to reduce its poverty level, its countries need to:

Increase their agriculture research intensity ratio vis-a-vis their agricultural gross domestic product (GDP);

Increase R&D investments in promising agricultural products;

Provide R&D institutions with greater operational and financial flexibility; and

Make agricultural R&D investments more effective through joint venture arrangements with private and government sectors.

Patermann, during the EFARD conference, presented the 7th Agricultural Research Framework Program of the European Commission. The Framework Program is hinged on the four major objectives of European research policy, namely: **Cooperation**



(foster collaboration between universities, industry, research centers, and public authorities across the EU and the rest of the world); **Ideas** (support and stimulate creativity and excellence through the funding of ground-breaking research); **People** (strengthen training, career prospects, and mobility between university and industry of researchers); and **Capacities** (develop and fully exploit research capacities through large-scale research infrastructure, regional cooperation, and innovation).

Cooperation will be focused around 9 thematic priorities. Priority 2, **Food, Agriculture, and Biotechnology** will include a strong international component. Under the vision of the “knowledge-based bio-economy” it will include three main topical areas:

Sustainable production and management of biological resources (land, forest, marine area) including research on sustainable, competitive, and multifunctional agriculture, on the European and international levels;

“From the farm to the fork,” or the various aspects of food safety along the food chain; and

Life sciences and biotechnology for sustainable products and processes, including crop improvement, feed studies, marine products and biomass.

EFARD, since 1983, has been offering scientific cooperation program to developing countries. Focused on agriculture, health, and environment, calls for research and development proposals have been dedicated to needs of developing countries. This year’s theme centered on “European Response to Changing Global Needs.”

EFARD provides a platform for strategic dialogue among European stakeholder groups in order to promote research partnerships between research communities in Europe and in developing countries. It encompasses all stakeholders in agriculture research for development, including universities, research institutes, the private sector, NGOs, farmers organizations, and policymakers.

EFARD’s primary objective is to strengthen European agriculture research for development contribution to address the global challenges of eradicating poverty and hunger, food security and food safety, and sustainable management of natural resources. EFARD plays an important advocacy role in maintaining agriculture research for development as a top priority in the political agendas at European and international levels.

More than 300 participants from Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America attended this year’s conference. (Lorna C. Malicsi, SEARCA)