



## **PROJECT DURAS**

*Promotion du Développement Durable dans les systèmes de Recherche Agricole du Sud  
Promoting Sustainable Development in Agricultural Research Systems in the South*

# **DURAS Progress Report 2007<sup>1</sup>**

## **I. Background**

The main objective of the DURAS Project is to contribute to strengthening the involvement of southern stakeholders' particularly non-traditional research actors in the agricultural research and innovation process. It also endeavors to support them in ensuring that their voices are heard at the international and (sub) regional levels.

The DURAS Project's Competitive Grants Scheme (CGS) aims to encourage and promote innovation as well as to scale up innovative practices in ARD developed in the south; and to enhance scientific capacity southern partners. This component accounts for 50% (i.e., 2 million euros) of the total DURAS project funds. Two Calls for Proposals on four priority themes<sup>2</sup> identified by GFAR stakeholders were launched in 2004.

Of the 302 submissions received, 12 were selected for funding on the basis of criteria that favors a balance among project feasibility, innovation, socio-economic consideration; sustainability considerations and partnership quality.

DURAS accords premium to multi-stakeholder partnership. DURAS is built around the essence of GFAR which privileges the development of research partnership among various actors, with particular attention to the involvement of non-traditional players in the research process, i.e. the NGOs and farmers organizations. As such, all the 12 projects involve a minimum of two (2) countries from the South and a European collaborator.

## **II. Report of activities carried out from January 2007 to November 2007**

### ***Mid-term external review***

A mid-term external review of the DURAS Project which focused mostly on the overall project implementation as well as on CGS component was commissioned by the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MAEE). Aimed at reviewing the strategic relevance and the coherence of the project's objective and analyzing the

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<sup>1</sup> This section covers only activities under Component 3: Competitive Grants.

<sup>2</sup> These themes include (1) Agro biodiversity and genetic resources management for food security; (2) Local knowledge in natural resources management; (3) Agro ecology and other sustainable farming practices; and (4) Linking farmers to market and support to agri-SMEs.

collaboration that is taking place amongst the stakeholders involved and at examining the sustainability of the project itself, the review affirmed the relevance and novel approach adopted by DURAS and is seen as a potent means to promote multi-stakeholder partnership and to encourage innovation. It was recommended that the emerging results of and methodological approaches adopted by the 12 projects should be immediately valorized in order to support future participatory research programmes.

### ***2<sup>nd</sup> DURAS Project Leader's workshop***

On 28 February – 02 March 2007, the 2<sup>nd</sup> DURAS Project Leader's workshop was organized in Montpellier in order to take stock of the progress made and lessons learned so far. During this event, it was announced that the duration of the 12 projects will be extended, without additional funding, until 30 March 2008. Key issues discussed include the following: enhancing communication and exchange across projects (e.g., use of videos, co-publication, etc.); involving small and medium agro-enterprises particularly in research projects that involves the whole “filiere”; mainstreaming innovative approaches being adopted in each of the 12 initiatives particularly in the regular activities of organizations involved in the project; using local knowledge as a take off point in doing research, including how can these traditional knowledge feed into research; enabling farmers to be better involved in research; ensuring project results accessible; research ownership and Intellectual Property (IP) management; and promoting synergy with other projects/initiatives and promoting research-development-education linkage.

### ***Project Monitoring***

The over-all progress of project implementation is being monitored quarterly on the basis of four Critical Success Factors (CSF). These CSFs are as follows: (1) Meeting stated project objectives which basically measures project relevance and effectiveness; (2) Project implementation progressing as scheduled which looks at timeliness which is an important element of project efficiency; (3) Functional involvement of stakeholders in project implementation which is the proxy largely being used to estimate partnership quality; and (4) Scientific outputs which includes number of publications and seminars organized or attended by the project implementers. The DURAS M&E framework follows a “traffic light system” wherein a project is marked

- Green if it is meeting ALL Critical Success Factors
- Orange if it is meeting MOST Critical Success Factors
- Red if it is NOT meeting ANY Critical Success Factors, OR is significantly NOT meeting ONE Critical Success Factor

Project site visits were carried out in order to see the projects “in action” as well as to look at the over-all project management and implementation. Some members of the Scientific Partnership Committee have been involved in this undertaking thus providing them an opportunity to witness first hand DURAS-funded projects which they have reviewed and selected.

The table below presents the over-all status of the 12 projects based on the above described M&E system.

*Table 1: Over-all status of 12 DURAS-funded projects*

OVERALL STATUS	2006				2007			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project VOLAILLES	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Project BANANE	=	+	+	+	+	+	+	
ISF Project	=	=	=	+	+	+	+	
Project FORET	+	+	+	=	=	=	=	
CROP-LIVESTOCK Project	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Project AGRI-ELEVAGE	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Project NEMATUS	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	
Project INOCULATION	+	+	=	=	=	=	=	
IPR Project	+	=	+	+	+	+	+	
PIG Project	=	+	+	+	+	+	+	
POPS Project	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Project MALT/SORGHO	+	=	+	+	+	+	+	

*N.B.: As this document is not color printed, the traffic lights are replaced with the following symbols to facilitate reading of the over-all project status: “+” for Green meaning the project is meeting ALL Critical Success Factors; “=” for Orange which signals that the project is meeting MOST Critical Success Factors; and “x” to signify Red implying that the project is NOT meeting ANY Critical Success Factors, OR is significantly NOT meeting ONE Critical Success Factor*

Monitoring of project implementation is accompanied by annual administrative and financial reporting. While there are a number of financial issues being faced by some of the 12 projects (e.g., proof of expense, exchange rates issues, etc.) efforts are being made in order to make sure that the such issues will be taken care of so that each of the entire project can be properly bring into closure come June 2008<sup>3</sup>.

### ***Exploratory Meeting DURAS - Research Into Use (RIU) Programme***

In July 2007, a meeting between the DURAS Project Office and staff from the Research Into Use (RIU) Programme was held in Montpellier in order to explore areas for possible collaboration between the two initiatives. Among the agenda discussed include possible involvement and support of the RIU Programme to the planned DURAS Documentation Workshop to be held in early 2008 as well as the DURAS Project Closing Workshop in April 2008; DURAS Phase 2, RIU Innovation Challenge Competitive Grants as well as possible establishment of Learning Alliances on innovation systems. Follow-up needs to be made in order to identify more concretely possible RIU-DURAS collaboration.

### ***Preparations for the DURAS Documentation Workshops***

<sup>3</sup> Each of the 12 projects will end by 31 March 2008.

The summer months of 2007 was spent mainly in concretizing ideas for the DURAS Documentation Workshops. Some 20 months after the launching of the 12 DURAS-funded initiatives, the implementation of the DURAS CGS has been a very insightful experience. It has afforded both the Project Office and the various stakeholders involved in the 12 projects a rich experience and handful of lessons learnt along the way. However, it is deemed that much still has to be done to increase the opportunities for learning from these experiences, as well as sharing the learning and building a wider body of knowledge on and further understanding and appreciation of involving various actors in the agricultural research and innovation process. We need to capture the dynamics involved in these multi-actor, inter-country/regional effort by further reflecting, examining and documenting what has happened involving the various stakeholders themselves involved in each of the projects.

As such, two documentation workshops (one for the Anglophone projects and another one for the Francophone projects) are being organized. The objectives of this activity are to discuss and analyze project experience in detail to understand what has happened and to draw conclusions which will help generate new knowledge. The results will later be developed in a format chosen by the participants (e.g., article, video, etc.) and will be presented at the DURAS Project Closing Workshop in April 2008<sup>4</sup>. A special publication will also be prepared containing all the articles about the lessons learned on each of the projects. This activity is to be carried out with additional funding support from MAEE-France and with technical and financial support from the Centre for Information on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture (ILEIA), a Netherlands-based NGO promoting sustainable agriculture.

### **III. Prospective and conclusion**

Two years after the launching of the 12 DURAS-funded initiatives, the implementation of the DURAS CGS has been a very insightful experience. It has afforded both the Project Office and the various stakeholders involved in the 12 projects a rich experience and handful of lessons learnt along the way. However, it is deemed that much still has to be done to increase the opportunities for learning from these experiences, as well as sharing the learning and building a wider body of knowledge on and further understanding and appreciation of involving various actors in the agricultural research and innovation process. We need to capture the dynamics involved in these multi-actor, inter-country/regional effort by further reflecting, examining and documenting what has happened involving the various stakeholders themselves involved in each of the projects.

As such, the Documentation Workshops described above are to be carried out in order not to lose sight of the richness of the experience and use these in taking further each of the individual projects on one hand, and the entire DURAS Project on the other hand. Toward this end, other activities are in the pipeline such as organization of an open-

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<sup>4</sup> This will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop involving all the 12 DURAS-funded projects. Aside from serving as venue where each project will present their research outputs, the event will also serve as an opportunity to promote exchange of experiences and lessons learned on the dynamics of partnership, local innovation and ARD as this will be an event open to other stakeholders. It will be held in April 2008 in one of the project sites.

ended DURAS Project Closure Workshop in April briefly described below, an end of project review, and development of Concept Note for a possible DURAS Phase 2.

The DURAS Project Closing Workshop will be held in April 2008. Unlike in most project closure activities, the DURAS one is an open-ended event in the sense that it will serve not only as a venue where each project will present their research outputs. It will also serve as an opportunity to promote exchange of experiences and lessons learned on the dynamics of partnership, local innovation and ARD as this will be an event open to other stakeholders. The workshop is open to other similar initiatives for facilitate networking and coalition building which may pave the way for the birth of some sort of a community of practice/learning alliance/network on promoting innovation in ARD.

An end-of-project review will also be carried out in order to evaluate the over-all implementation of the DURAS Project and assess if it is able to achieve its objective of contributing to strengthening the involvement of southern stakeholders' particularly non-traditional research actors in the agricultural research and innovation process as well as in ensuring that their voices are heard at the international and (sub) regional levels. This will build on the mid-term DURAS Project review which strongly endorsed a second phase of the project. DURAS draws its strength from its innovative nature.

A pilot project, it is generating active and quality partnerships among southern countries and a type of partnership that involves the scientific community and the civil society. It is, however, constrained by the relative small size and short duration of the project given its over-all objective of making an impact that contributes to sustainable development. The two-year duration of each of the 12 projects is also deemed insufficient to fully realize their research objectives and to more meaningfully contribute towards sustainable development in their respective target areas.

The second phase will consolidate experience and lessons learned from Phase 1; will either have an expanded geographic coverage or will have strong regional components; with a set of accompanying measures such as support to implementing regional research priorities; support to CSOs; capacity building on key research and partnership challenges (e.g., benefits-sharing and handling intellectual property rights (IPR) issues, use of ICM tools; facilitating South-South and North-South exchange among young professionals; and support to unforeseen micro-valorisations of several ideas or outcome emanating from the projects that are not foreseen at the time of planning the second phase.