




Launch of
The African Agricultural Technology
Foundation (AATF)

Nairobi, Kenya –16 June 2004

Speech by Dr. Carlos Seré

Director General
International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)

This is a special day for AATF, and very special for ILRI as well in terms of our overall view of how agricultural research is evolving and needs to evolve in the future. I think we are at a historical moment, at peak in terms of the awareness of the world and the decision makers about the importance of agriculture and also the importance of agricultural research for Africa's development. If you read the headlines from the G8 meeting a few days ago, it is very encouraging to hear the importance of research, agricultural research, and particularly the horn of Africa, mentioned loud and clear.



The context is changing very rapidly. We realize that some national agricultural research institutes are growing in strength, getting together and establishing regional priorities. It is clear that partnerships are absolutely essential across the board; regional organizations are therefore being established, and the private sector is getting active in a number of areas. Within this whole context, we at ILRI decided to revisit our strategy two years ago and put real effort into looking at livestock research through the lens of poverty. As remarked by Gordon Conway, addressing those issues requires directly involving the farmers, who are the clients, in ensuring that the research we conduct is really needed and will positively impact our beneficiaries.

Livestock is a really huge area, and at ILRI, we recognize that there is very good livestock research being undertaken around the world. We strive specifically to tackle that intersection of livestock research which addresses poverty. We have recognized that research on specific technologies by itself will rarely produce the desired impact on poverty: there is no silver bullet in addressing these complex systems. Research can only work through partnerships, aligning all the different pieces from the policy to the technology, and to the right institutions. We need to get our act together, and that is the big challenge of the hour. We are therefore trying to do our small portion here at ILRI, ensuring that these linkages do happen, finally leading to change on the ground, which I think is what all of us around here are about. In that context, we have opened this campus to other organizations; we are seeking strategic partnerships with all those stakeholders in the innovation system.

I should add that you saw the complexities involved in these systems yesterday on the farm you visited, where you saw bananas as well as livestock and the multiple links between them. The reality is that if you want to deal with poverty in the rural sector you need to understand these complexities and deal with all parts of the systems involved.



AATF is a welcome partner to join us on this campus. We see strategic linkages between us: we are all working on private-public partnerships to mobilize technology for rural development. AATF is in itself an institutional innovation with an important role in allowing Africa to tap into technology developed by the private sector worldwide. We are experimenting with a few others that include: the first partnership in which we are sharing staff with an NGO; the establishment of a joint research program on livestock markets with the International Food Policy Research Institute; and the hosting of the Biosciences Eastern and Central Africa facility, an effort through which we shall open up the unique research laboratories of this campus for African partners to conduct their research in this setting. This will enable all of us to share expensive equipment as well as know-how. This should particularly help smaller countries or less equipped institutions to have access to top level facilities and mentoring, thus enabling them to partake in the opportunities being created by the biosciences revolution.

AATF came at the right point in time, when we were developing these strategic partnerships. We therefore actively encouraged them to look at this campus as a base. We are proactively supporting the development of a cluster of institutions around technology generation, dissemination and use, bringing in all these actors and facilitating those linkages. We appreciate the openness with which AATF has come on the campus as well as our interaction so far, and look forward to interesting collaborations and a productive relationship. You are all most welcome to this campus, which is your campus.

Thank you.

