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The Global Horticulture Initiative as a Common Innovation Platform for Horticultural Research, Development Actors and the Private Sector

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Abstract

Food insecurity, low income and malnourishment remain key issues in developing countries in the 21st Century. Much of the research and development focus over the past decades has been placed on staple crops to achieve improvements. Despite its tremendous potential to combat poverty and malnourishment, the horticultural sector has been largely neglected. Horticultural development and marketing are very knowledge-intensive and require human capital and technical inputs. Therefore, small producers and processors are often eliminated from markets for failure to understand market dynamics or due to their inability to meet production, sanitary and quality standards. Hence, opportunities of the sector are only marginally utilised. Up to now, interventions in the horticultural sector are rather fragmented and actors and stakeholders act independently or in competition with each other.

To address these issues, the Global Horticulture Initiative was established in 2006 as a consortium of prominent stakeholders in the horticultural sector. It understands itself as a common innovation platform for research, development actors and the private sector. It acts as a catalyst by linking diverse partners with each other. Core principles are multi-stakeholder partnerships and participatory approaches. Its four key activities are **(1)** Advocacy and Lobbying, **(2)** Coordinating training and capacity building, **(3)** Networking, and **(4)** Facilitating Research-for-Development programs.

By the end of 2008 and in line with its key activity (4), GlobalHort launched an international call for concept notes on global horticultural issues. Project ideas could be submitted to one of the following themes: **(a)** Nutrition and Human Health, **(b)** Protected Horticulture, **(c)** Fruit Fly Management, and **(d)** Linking Farmers to Markets. The overall response to this call was overwhelming: A total number of 187 concept notes were submitted up to the deadline on 27 February 2009. Due to limited funds for this call only one project per theme can be financed. The large number of concept notes submitted clearly demonstrates the need for further support of this rather neglected sector. GlobalHort maintains a database of the project concepts and is looking for additional financial support for granting the most innovative and outstanding proposals it has received.

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