

The African Coffee Research Network: Prospects and Challenges into the Next Millennium

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ABSTRACT

The African Coffee Research Network (ACRN) was founded in June 1992 in Portugal out of the need to save further decline in quality and quantity of African coffee. The meeting was facilitated by CTA and attended by seventeen African Coffee growing countries. ACRN was mandated to support regional research on key constraints of coffee production, processing, marketing and consumption; and also facilitate sharing of information, exchange of germplasm and other research materials. Following its inauguration in March 1993, ACRN held several workshops in conjunction with the Inter African Coffee Organisation (IACO), and is fully participating in the current coffee rehabilitation programme in Africa. ACRN has found strength in collaboration among countries to promote mutual understanding and interdependence in solving common problems. Notable achievements have been registered. However, much still remains to be done, to consolidate and enhance the gains already made. As ACRN forges ahead, one of its goals will continue to be pooling the scientific skills and other resources of member countries which will improve productivity and increase output and farm income. With the approach of the millennium, ACRN should be more focused and design strategies to effectively combat challenging regional research issues. These include *Fusarium* wilt (Tracheomycosis) in East and Central Africa, development of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) packages, facilitating exchange of planting materials, promoting cost effective coffee production methods and breeding for productivity and quality to meet new market niches. ACRN is further challenged to strengthen the coordinating office to efficiently prepare regional research projects acceptable to donors. Member countries of ACRN and other stakeholders in African coffee should strengthen ACRN through prompt payment of subscriptions, active participation in ACRN through prompt payment of subscriptions, active participation in ACRN programmes and sharing research information and materials.