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INTRODUCTION*

The 2000 Berlin Conference continued the long tradition of having organized discussion groups as part of the programme, in fact for the 15th occasion. Typically each group had an organizer and rapporteur, while in some cases consultants served as catalysts for the discussion or made short formal presentations. Following the precedent set in Tokyo in 1991, mini-symposia also appeared. In that increasingly popular format, short papers are presented around which discussion can be structured. Symposia have become increasingly prominent in comparison with groups in recent conferences and were dominant in Berlin.

Meetings were for three sessions for a total of four hours. Conference participants were encouraged to stay with the same topic for all of the sessions to facilitate depth and continuity in the proceedings. Interest was widespread, many of the papers were of high quality and discussion was often spirited. A conservative estimate put the number of participants at 530. The final list includes 28 sessions for which short summaries are presented. A report of the meetings to honour the work of Professor Carl Eicher, originally intended as a mini-symposium, is included even though they occupied a rather longer time span. Titles used for each group are listed first, according to subject matter, under the four themes defining the Conference plenary sessions. The detailed reports then follow.

MOVING TOWARDS A GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

Discussion group

GMOs and NTBs: trade and biosafety policy after the Cartagena protocol.

Mini-symposia

Food and agricultural sectors in developing countries: what do they have to gain or lose in trade negotiations?

The MERCOSUR, agribusiness and the new millennium.

Structural adjustments in the European Union and United States dairy industries: farm management implications.

*Herbert H. Stoevener (USA) was programme organizer for the discussion groups and mini-symposia and collated the reports. Judith Peters contributed to the editorial work.

Cotton and textile production in the global trading system: where does Africa stand?

IMPROVED MARKET INCENTIVES AND INSTITUTIONS

Discussion group

Analysing policy delivery systems.

Mini-symposia

Impact of policy reform on the well-being of vulnerable groups: evidence from the USA, Zimbabwe and Kenya.

New investment theory in agricultural economics: its implications for farm management, environmental policy and development.

Institution sequencing and timing in transition economies.

Building financial markets in developing countries for tomorrow's agriculture: status, reforms and innovations.

Reform and future of national agricultural statistics systems.

Improving land access and asset ownership by the poor through land reform: empirical evidence and policy implications.

Strengthening human and institutional capital to support rural development in Africa: what have we learned and what are the challenges? A symposium in honour of Professor Carl K. Eicher.

Performance of the non-viable farm sector in rural economies of agro-based developing countries.

Risk and agricultural input use: analysis and mitigation.

New and innovative instruments to manage rural risks.

How do farmers find their way in the new food system in transition economies?

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Discussion group

Genetically modified crops: the food industry, producers, consumers and environmentalists.

Mini-symposia

Biotechnology innovation and the private sector.

Crop genetic diversity in modern production systems: efficiency and policy implications.

Current and emerging issues in agricultural and rural development.

Agricultural research policy in an era of privatization.

MAKING AGRICULTURE ENVIRONMENTALLY SAFE

Mini-symposia

Dynamism of agricultural systems and rural communities in South Asia: from vulnerability to sustainability.

Integrating approaches for natural resource management and policy analysis: bioeconomic models, multi-agent systems and cellular automata.

Agriculture's provision of positive amenities: supply, demand and the role for government.

The economics and policy of organic farming: what can be learned from the European experience?

Economics of food safety.

Effects of health information on the demand for food: EU and US experiences.