

# Dryland regions unite to combat food security

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[DOHA, QATAR] A global alliance to boost **food security** in the arid regions, through common research and adoption of **new technologies** is soon to be launched, a conference has heard.

The Global Dry Land Alliance, a Qatar government initiative, would enable member states to pool their research efforts to strengthen food security in arid countries.

Drylands make up about 45 per cent of the world's land area where around two billion people live. But these countries do not share equal financial resources for combating food insecurity. The Alliance would provide technical or financial support to struggling member states through food security programmes, agricultural development investment partnerships and new regional centres of excellence.

"[It] is envisioned to be a collaborative undertaking by the countries that are most severely affected by dryland challenges to combat the threat of food insecurity and to create new (science-based) solutions to their common problems by working together," Fahad Al-Attiya, chair of the Qatar National Food Security Programme, said at his keynote speech yesterday (29 June) at the World Conference of Science Journalists in Qatar.

Mahmoud Solh, director-general of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), told *SciDev.Net* that 30 countries have pledged to be part of this alliance and that the secretariat would possibly be based in Qatar. "We are now at the stage of resource mobilisation and project development," he said.

"ICARDA is going to be a research arm of the alliance whereas the Qatar National Food Security Programme shall be development arm of the Alliance," he told *SciDev.Net*.

The concept was first announced at a high-level UN meeting held on the side of the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2010.

UN deputy secretary-general Asha-Rose Migiro said then: "The world's drylands are a central part of the food security picture. More than two billion people live there, and poverty is disproportionately concentrated there.

"Newly adapted techniques and technologies offer some solutions. I urge countries with similar climatic conditions to develop these jointly. Partnerships with research centres and private companies will be of utmost importance."

30/06/11

A.A. Khan



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