

Speech by Gérard Matheron during his visit in Vietnam
Conclusions Seminar Mard / Cirad (29th May 2008)

Excellency, distinguished guests, dear friends, chers amis,

First of all, I want to thank each of you for the great job you did in preparing this important meeting: important with regards to the results, important with regards to the French-Vietnamese cooperation in our field of competences, important for Cirad because of its future joined programme with MARD in particular and, more generally, because of the fruitful research and development of each one of you.

I have appreciated today's presentations although they probably only represent a small part of your work as my stay here is too short to allow for a longer debate. I apologize for this, but I would say that the highlights we discussed were a good illustration and useful to convince, if necessary, the Cirad's DG of the interest of our partnership in Vietnam. In addition, I would also like to indicate that the French forces focussed on agricultural research for development are working together in a very close relationship: firstly, IRD with whom we are collaborating in full complicity and I want to thank in particular the regional representative, Dr. Boulègue, present here today and also Inra, who is involved from time to time as a national partner according to the treated subjects.

A few words concerning the programme:

Firstly, you have to decide on short term programmes, whatever the PCP's specificities and objectives, and see how each of them can contribute to the implementation of these programmes.

Secondly, such programmes have to define precisely the practical research questions which need to be answered. Conducting research finally is a succession of continuous simple questions and the accomplishment of a programme depends on responses obtained.

Thirdly, such programmes have to have a reality as regards their feasibility: feasibility in terms of available means, human resources and funding. For human resources, it is fundamental to have a realistic view of what can be done in the short term and how to be sure that we are able to accomplish the programmed work packages. At this point, I want to underline the importance of capacity building and post graduate training. In short, we have to organize sustainable research programmes.

In the fourth place, in order to realize programmes in the best possible conditions, you have to make choices. It is impossible, at our level, to follow up on the development of each of the numerous fields and subjects we are faced with at this moment.

I receive your crossed proposals as so many relevant opportunities. We now have to see how to ensure the implementation of these proposals seen through the double filter of the joined means we can mobilize and of the different phases of the agenda of each programme.

As your work is producing a lot of information, you have to organize such information and make it consistent. We need coherence in our work and our results. Data basis is part of scientific “natural resources” and as for other natural resources, they have to be preserved, managed and improved.

I also share the interest of exchanges between different countries. My opinion is that we need to have such attitude in the “hard disk”. I emphasize the importance of such comparisons and sharing knowledge. You have to avoid to present “old wine in a new bottle”!!

Don’t forget the necessary link with development. But by saying so, I want to indicate that you have to place your work in the overall picture of development programmes, programmes conducted by structures in charge at national, regional or local level. We have to organize the bottom up circuit of the demand and focus our intervention only on the topics where our intervention is relevant. For this reason it is fundamental to associate as soon as possible the end users and stake holders with our programming.

Just a word regarding the PCP as a model of collaboration: the PCP through the pooling of scientific expertise which it represents, by its capacity to confront different ways of thinking of its partners on a wide range of topics, is a powerful tool for producing knowledge and innovation. As such, its applications are numerous and this means that it must establish, develop and maintain relationships with these partners. I will just give three applications:

- At a very simple level, the knowledge which is being produced must be injected within training programmes in Universities. PCP scientists must contribute to transfer this knowledge to younger generations in order for them to upgrade their capacities.
- At the highest level in Vietnam, it can and must provide elements to support policy makers in their decisions. And the fact that the MARD is involved, through some of its research institutes in the PCPs, gives them a great opportunity to play this role in the country.

- On another scale, results which have been presented, even though they are mainly related to Vietnamese conditions, must be considered as potentially useful for other outside scientific communities or training institutions. The networks of partners in which Cirad is involved worldwide, make it possible to establish exchange and funnel our Cirad – MARD competences to other countries in the Asian area and also on other continents.

These few examples are significant for the possibilities which are offered to the PCP and I am strongly encouraging our teams to explore ways of developing the links which will widen the fields of its applications. The stake is to increase the fame of our joined forces. And, as you know so well, reputation is the basis for attracting resources, human as well as economic. I have understood from many presentations that our teams are eager to see new resources coming in to complete the PCP partners' investment.

Finally, I would like to thank the MARD for our long lasting cooperation and for the fruits it has beard and will continue to bear. Anchored on a scientific ground, on a professional basis, I see through the numerous attendances at this meeting as well as through the complicity that presentations and exchanges unveiled that friendship has also firmly sealed this partnership.

When I began my opening speech this morning, I said that I was quite at home here in Vietnam. I am sure that in the future, many of Cirad's scientists who will have spent years working closely together with their Vietnamese friends, will be only too happy to say the same. And this is also another result of our collaboration of which we can be proud and for which I am very grateful to the Vietnamese government.

Thank you again, Excellency, colleagues and friends.