



Pakistan committed to promote knowledge-based agribusiness development

Competitiveness Support Fund, December 15, 2006

URL: <http://www.pr9.net/science/agriculture/4905december.html>

To boost knowledge-based agribusiness development in Pakistan, the Competitiveness Support Fund (CSF) and the Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) signed a partnership agreement through an MOU.

PR9.NET December 15, 2006 - Pakistan: Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) signed here today a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Competitiveness Support Fund (CSF) -- a joint initiative of the Ministry of Finance and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) -- to work together for promoting knowledge-based agribusiness development and long-term growth in Pakistan's agriculture sector.

Speaking on the occasion, State Minister for Finance and Chairman of CSF, Omar Ayub Khan said the main purpose of this initiative was to build linkages between business and research in the country. "Such linkages will spark the kind of information sharing that makes business more dynamic and supports the commercialization of innovations developed at our research institutions," he added.

According to the MoU, PARC and CSF will undertake joint review of various research projects of PARC with a view to identify research areas for commercial benefits, in consultation with the government, private sector, researchers and academia in the agriculture sector. These programs will complement PARC's existing projects. An action plan for co-financing of the technical assistance for selected agriculture projects will also be developed.

"Our partnership with the Competitiveness Support Fund will bring a new dimension to the agriculture research in Pakistan," said Dr. M. E. Tusneem, Chairman, PARC. "This should help our researchers attract better financing and shape their work to more directly meet the needs of society and the economy."

To ensure successful and timely completion of the projects and programs, a monitoring and evaluation system will be developed jointly by PARC and CSF that will include the setting up of a monitoring and evaluation committee (MEC). The MEC will comprise of 8-10 members, including PARC, CSF and members from the private sector and academia. As one of the principal donors of CSF, the USAID will be an observer on the MEC.

"This partnership will ensure that Pakistan is better poised to not only understand the needs of the global market, but also meet those needs head-on with a highly skilled, well-trained workforce," said Acting Mission Director of USAID, Patricia Rader, who witnessed the signing of the agreement.

CSF will also support PARC in creating linkages with relevant industries and lead the research in areas of livestock sector and dairy development, development of agriculture technologies with emphasis on post harvest technologies and value addition. The development of improved quality fruits, vegetables and cut flowers with a focus on value chain will also be considered under this initiative.

To further generate innovative ideas and cooperation in the agriculture sector, CSF and PARC will provide technical assistance by engaging foreign experts to support and initiate programs that promote the creation of knowledge-based enterprises in Pakistan. They will also jointly establish and fund a forum for the identification of research-based projects that will further the development of a knowledge-based economy.

"This will definitely bring a new dimension for research and development institutions and businesses," said Arthur Bayhan, CEO of the CSF. "They will benefit from each others' expertise and will complement for developing solutions on knowledge based economy."

CSF is working closely with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) on similar lines to commercialize research at Pakistan's universities and research institutions. A joint program of HEC and CSF to provide matching grants to the academia for commercialization of research and involve industry in this co-operation will be launched in February 2007.

"Cooperation of this type between business and research institutions has generated tremendous innovation and competitiveness in countries that have developed it, not just in the United States and Europe, but also in places like India, Thailand and Turkey," said Minister Khan. "Pakistan cannot afford to ignore these successes."

Funded by the USAID and the MoF, CSF has been tailored to the current Pakistani economic environment to strengthen and make the private sector competitive, and to improve the policy framework needed for innovation-based competitiveness. Support for CSF is part of the \$1.5 billion in aid that the U.S. Government is providing to Pakistan over five years to improve economic growth, education, health, and governance.

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About Pakistan Agriculture research Council (PARC)

Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) is the apex agricultural research organization at the national level. Its main objective is to strengthen Pakistan's agricultural research system, comprising the federal and provincial components.

About Competitiveness Support Fund

The Competitiveness Support Fund (CSF) is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to upgrade the Competitiveness of the Pakistan's Economy to respond to the new challenges and opportunities in the Knowledge-based Economy.

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