**Research Coordination Network (RCN):**

**Pan American Biofuel and Bioenergy Sustainability**

**1st Workshop Summary**

Additional ideas by Group 1

Group 1 led by Keith Kline, provided a detailed list of suggestions, which is presented next.

1.1 Research Collaborations

* We now have 8 broad themes. Need to focus to identify specific opportunities (e.g. build from the larger network in a manner that benefits specific research projects)
	+ Student/faculty exchange programs
	+ Define specific types of information to be shared
	+ Define and share protocols to harmonize methodologies (for example):
		- for measurement of sustainability indicators (set of indicators and units)
		- to have standard approach to measure baseline trends and current context (dimensions, classes, issues to consider)
		- proposed protocols for sampling and data collection
		- standard processes/approaches for analysis (this can be done for each thematic group)
	+ Thematic webinars: Meet every 45 days on specific RCN theme. Prior to webinar, each country needs a representative to prepare a “country report” presentation on current activities addressing the theme in that nation/region. The presentations need to be used in next workshop to identify opportunities to build inter-thematic relationships / opportunities.
		- Webinars are relatively low cost
		- Still need to have funding to organize and document results
		- The effort to establish inventory of current projects addressing each theme in each country or region might include
			* Are there government programs?
			* What data are being used
			* What data and research is needed (local priorities)
* Can we prioritize and define major topics effecting biofuels today (food security, LUC – both rely on questionable economic modeling of biofuel effects). Focus research collaborations on priority needs. Example: the effect of biofuels versus other policies on food security?
* Cross-cutting issues may represent collaboration opportunities that merit attention (Land-use change research (LUC), economics and modeling that affect most or all thematic areas)
* Cost issues. Bring private industry into network as partner to help cover costs of some research collaborations
* Structure time at this workshop that allows individual researchers to discuss potential collaborations
	+ By sub-group or special topic (e.g. on Food Security, LUC?)
	+ Use Donovan web tools to facilitate this and next steps
* Main challenge: finding opportunities for mutual benefits based on current research activities (everyone is already busy working on their current projects; how to effectively integrate with network)?
* Need to have more focused and mutually shared goals for effective collaboration

1.2 Network Participation:

* How do we define “participation” – are there rules for two-way exchanges?
* Language is a barrier to expanding participation; this should be easy to remedy.
* Need funding to cover time/participation if we are going to participate effectively.
* Need to identify which groups are most important for which specific collaboration topics/projects. Until we have more focused goals (e.g. forestry sampling example for legacy data sets in Canada) we cannot define best targets to expand participation.
* Group is perhaps too large already to really get tasks done effectively – more likely to achieve results in more focused subgroups.
* Challenge is how to keep current group focused and actually collaborating between now and next workshop. Everyone has other work to do.
	+ National networks can be developed by representatives now in the CRN – e.g within current budget, ‘advocates’ share information and have others join according to needs.
	+ National networks could provide input for thematic webinars discussed above
	+ Need to examine who is doing work on each theme in each country/region represented
* Network could be seen as umbrella that supports communication among many smaller projects and proposals – Do we need definitions of who is in or not?
* Spin-offs of RCN could involve others, as each spin-off research proposal is defined.
* By time of next workshop, there should be more specific collaborations defined around themes or across themes.
* For future workshops, invite local industry partners and contacts who have mutual interests.
* Have one day of each RCN workshop designated, designed and advertised and open to the public.

1.3. Expanding RCN themes and topics?

Public policy programs need scientific support – figure out where greatest research needs lie (link research to address public policy needs)