



3rd Steering Committee Meeting of Asia- Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology (APCoAB)

June 28, 2005

CABI Committee Room, NASC Complex, Pusa Campus, New Delhi

Introduction and Welcome

The Third Steering Committee meeting of APCoAB was held on 28 June 2005 at NASC Complex, Pusa Campus, New Delhi, under the Chairmanship of Dr. H.P.M. Gunasena, Chairman APAARI. The list of participants is given in Annex I.

Dr. Gunasena delivered the Chairman's address and welcomed all the participants. He referred to the earlier two meetings held on 8 April and 30 November 2004 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mutsuo Iwamoto (former Chairman APAARI) at Bangkok and appreciated the progress of activities taken up by APCoAB during 2004-2005. He expressed concern on use of biotechnology to meet the needs of small farmers, and in addressing overall concern on food security and biosafety aspects. He also stressed the need for capacity building in the Asia-Pacific region. On behalf of APAARI, Dr. Gunasena specially thanked Dr. William Dar, Director General, ICRISAT for hosting the APCoAB Secretariat at its Delhi Office and providing logistic support. The meeting agenda was then put up for approval. Dr. R.S. Paroda, Executive Secretary, APAARI suggested to include an item concerning 'Status of APCoAB Coordinator appointment', which was agreed to. The agenda was unanimously adopted (Annex II).

Dr. Paroda while welcoming the Steering Committee members expressed that APCoAB looks forward to their advice for the implementation of its work plan. He informed that due to some previous commitments Dr. Ola Smith (GFAR) and Dr. Malcom Hazelman (FAO-RAP) could not attend the meeting. He also conveyed his thanks to the Director General, DOA, Thailand for deputing Mr. Natavudh Bhasayavan, Director of Biotech Division, Department of Agriculture, to Dr. Jerry Flint for nominating Ranjana Smetacek, Director-Corporate Affairs, MONSANTO and to Dr. Randy A Hautea, Centre Director and Global Coordinator, ISAAA, for deputing Mr. Bhagirath Choudhary, National Coordinator, ISAAA.

APCoAB Achievements: An Update on Activities

Dr. Paroda made a power point presentation entitled 'APCoAB: An Update' (Annex III is attached as a separate file) highlighting APCoAB's activities undertaken during 2004-2005 and those being planned. He mentioned that presently APCoAB programme is functioning under the umbrella of APAARI. He highlighted APCoAB's mission, objectives and functions and work planned in strategic areas covering research, policy, capacity building and public awareness. He appraised the Steering Committee on the achievements made, highlighting the following:

- i. Jointly organized the AVRDC/ APAARI/ ACPCoAB/ CIMBAA workshop on 'Public-Private Partnership in the Use of Agribiotechnology for Sustainable Solutions to Brassicas Pest Problems' held on 10 February 2005 at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. Emphasis was on control of Diamond Black Moth (DBM), biosafety, resistance management and public acceptance of GM vegetables. The workshop recommended the formation of a Consortium between Nunhems Seed Company and IARI, New Delhi and greater emphasis on technology that supports small farmers

and addresses biosafety needs.

ii. Brainstorming Session on Public-Private Partnership in Agricultural Biotechnology was held on 14 March, 2005 at NARS Complex, New Delhi. The meeting recommended developing models for Public-Private Partnership based on case studies in some selected countries, addressing specific policy issues, build-up of trust and cooperation as well as capacity building and public awareness.

iii. Capacity building: participation of three scientists (2 from Thailand and 1 from India) in training on Molecular Assisted Selection organized by JIRCAS, Japan.

iv. Collaboration with INCANA in promoting research on hybrid cotton and Bt cotton, and initiated to bring out successful case study on Bt cotton in India.

v. Participation in meeting addressing Research Gap Analysis/ Research Need Assessment and Prioritization of Agricultural Research for Development in South and West Asia held at ICRISAT, 7-9 October 2004, and in the Expert Consultation on Post Harvest Technologies for Enhancing Food Security and Value Addition for Enhancing Income, 1-3 December 2004 at Bangkok; both the meetings recommended greater focus on application of biotechnology including conventional approaches. The PHT meeting emphasized on development of cost-effective technologies for value addition, keeping in view the needs of small farmers.

Work Plan for 2005

Dr. Paroda presented the workplan for 2005. It was emphasized that APCoAB will focus on (i) the follow-up of the recommendations of the above PPP workshops/ meetings including public awareness activities; (ii) capacity building in biosafety and GM seed detection with FAO and JIRCAS; (iii) publications of status report on Bt corn in the Philippines (the draft of which was provided to all participants) and on Bt cotton in India; (iv) bring out important case studies on use of conventional biotechnologies such as on date palm in Iran with focus on South Asia (India, Pakistan) and West Asia; micro-propagation in sugarcane and potato in India; orchid tissue culture in Thailand, and (v) undertake/ promote public awareness activities in India, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. He pointed out that though MoU is not formalized with ISAAA, but cooperation in joint activities in core areas such as database development, joint publications/ translations, can be taken up considering the common interests. Dr. Paroda stressed that APCoAB could be an inter-regional initiative, gradually expanding its collaboration/partnership to become a Global Partnership Program (GPP) under GFAR umbrella. .

Proposed High Level Policy Dialogue

Dr. Paroda elaborately dealt with the proposed 'High Level Policy Dialogue' to be organized jointly by APAARI, FAO and GFAR, with APCoAB as a facilitator. He drew attention to his correspondence with Dr. He Changchui, ADG FAO RAP in developing the 'Concept Note' (Annex IV) on the need for holding such a regional dialogue, to be held in Thailand, from 7-9 November, 2005 involving diverse stakeholders such as: NARS, FAO, GFAR, CG Centres, concerned Ministers/ Ministerial level Officials, Policy makers, NGO's, etc.

Discussion/Suggestions

The members deliberated in greater details upon APCoAB activities, its progress, achievements, workplan for 2005, and on the proposed High Level Policy Dialogue.

Dr. Raghunath Ghodake pointed out that while largely the Steering Committee be 'Neutral Good', the possibilities of having NGO's and Farmers organization represented in its membership be looked into. As regard activities, he expressed that use of conventional biotechnology be broadened to include underutilized, semi-domesticated/ domesticated crops and their wild relatives, and also promoting commercialization of potential crops like the macademia nut, pili nut and others.

Dr. William Dar while congratulating Dr. Paroda on his presentation and the progress of APCoAB and its workplan, suggested that more emphasis be given on capacity building of scientists and offered ICRISAT help to enhance such needs at regional, sub-regional level for countries such as India, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. He also emphasized on building good practices.

Mr. Natavudh Bhasayavan suggested that while 'Neutral Role' of the Steering Committee be maintained, possibilities of involving policy makers be also considered. He felt that the proposed High Level Policy Dialogue was much required, and possibly NGO's such as Green Peace may also be invited to this meeting.

Dr. Ranjana Smetacek felt that other stakeholders – consumers or farmers groups be represented in the High Level Policy Dialogue meeting, and also expressed her concern as to whether Green Peace will be a good partner, in view of their strong position on the subject.

Dr. William Dar reacting on the kind of participation required in the High Level Policy Dialogue commented that there is a wide range of community/ NGO organizations etc. It would be necessary to invite a neutral open minded knowledge group(s) to this meeting.

Dr. Mangala Rai, DG, ICAR emphasized on harnessing the 'Good'. He pointed out that the conflict of interest of community/ society is sometimes not based on science. Referring to cotton, he opined that 240 varieties have been recommended for testing in India this year. There is need to rationalize action and role to counteract non-justified stand. He stressed on confidence building and that public awareness needs to be given priority. Further, he emphasized that the image of the organization and its transparency matters much in its overall functioning and in impact through collaborative activities. Dr. Paroda thanked Dr. Rai for sparing time to attend the meeting despite being on leave and also for his useful suggestions. He also acknowledged the suggestion given by the committee members/ participants and further sought guidance for priority activities vis-a-vis APCoAB work plan.

Dr. William Dar expressed the need for a regulatory framework in selected countries. He felt that for public awareness on the useful role of agricultural biotechnology communication through media workshops offers an easy, more workable approach. He suggested that APCoAB could join/ collaborate in the media workshop being organized by ICRISAT in Bangladesh from 28-29 August 2005. Also, such national workshops need to be organized in other selected countries.

The members considered broadening the scope of bringing out successful case studies, success stories based on national research and development efforts of NARS in the region or by other organizations. Apart from what Dr. Paroda had already suggested, following topics came up for discussion with focus on use of conventional biotechnology:

Dr. William Dar referred to topics such as Biopesticides, Biofuel/ Bioenergy, Biofertilizers. Dr. Natavudh suggested to look into preparing success stories on tissue culture in oil palm, apart from orchids. Dr. Ghodake also suggested that plant-based pesticides could be considered. He also mentioned about the Success Story on use of conventional technology/mini-set technology in tuber crops in the Pacific sub-region and also stressed on need for capacity building.

Regarding Public-Private Partnership, Dr. William Dar suggested that instead of having country meetings, it would be better to organize such Public-Private Partnership meetings on sub-regional/regional basis. Dr. Paroda clarified that it is intended to have presentations on existing models/case studies for some selected NARS (India, Philippines, Thailand, etc.) and also presentations on sub-regional scenario during the High Level Policy Dialogue.

The members deliberated upon the High Level Policy Dialogue and suggested that important topics such as Food security; Biosafety (harmonization, regulatory mechanism); Public-Private Partnership; Public awareness, be included besides those referred to in the 'Concept Note'.

It was suggested that diverse stakeholders be invited to this dialogue including representatives of concerned ministries – Environment and Forests, Agriculture, Health, Science and Technology etc. It was also felt that IRRI will be the lead organization (in collaboration with ICRISAT) to present a key paper on CG Centres focus in the field of agricultural biotechnology.

Budget 2004 – 2005

The audited accounts for the period 1 January – 31 December, 2004, and from 1 January – 30 April, 2005 were presented by Dr. Paroda (Annex V) and were unanimously approved by APCoAB Steering Committee members. He also thanked the support organizations namely the Rockefeller Foundation, MONSANTO, MAHYCO, GFAR, and to Dr. William Dar for excellent support provided to the Secretariat by ICRISAT.

Appointment of APCoAB Coordinator

Dr. Paroda appraised the members regarding the ‘Status of APCoAB Coordinator appointment’ and informed that two candidates from abroad were short-listed, but the interview could not be held for want of their availability. The matter was discussed in greater details and various options considered. It was felt that for early recruitment of the position, Dr. Mangala Rai may be contacted for possible identification of some senior level scientist who could be taken on deputation from the Indian NARS or other organizations such as DBT etc. Dr. Paroda was asked to take suitable action and keep Steering Committee members apprised in the matter. Meanwhile, Steering Committee members requested Dr. R.K. Arora to continue extending his services as Consultant.

Concluding Remarks

Winding up the meeting, Dr. Paroda invited all participants to visit the APCoAB Office and see the demonstration of APCoAB website: <http://www.apcoab.org>. All members were pleased to see good progress made and gave some suggestions for further improvement. It was decided that the next meeting be held in November, 2005 back to back with the APAARI Executive Committee meeting.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

Annexure I

List of Participants

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Annexure II



Asia –Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology (APCoAB)
Third Steering Committee Meeting
28 June, 2005
ICRISAT office, NASC Complex, Pusa, New Delhi

Agenda

09:00 – 10:30	Welcome address by the Chairman APAARI
	Adoption of Agenda
	A Brief Update on Progress Made – Executive Secretary, APAARI
10:30 – 11:15	Coffee Break & Group Photograph
11:15 – 13.00	Work Plan 2005
	Audited Accounts for 2004
	Concluding Remarks
	Status of APCoAB Coordinator's Appointment
13:00 – 14: 30	Lunch
