

Draft Recommendations from the Roundtable Forum on Vegetable Farming Technology in Tropical Asia

With the view to further discuss and develop action plans to support the growth of the vegetable industry in Tropical Asia over the next 10 years, APSA and the Global Horticultural Initiative (GlobalHort) organized a **Roundtable Forum on Vegetable Farming Technology in Tropical Asia on Thursday, February 7th, 2008 in Bangkok, Thailand**. This forum gathered Government policymakers for food horticulture or high-value crops, regional donor organizations with farmer's and rural income development strategic objectives, and major players of vegetable seed industry.

As this Forum followed up the international Symposium on socio-economic impacts of modern techniques in vegetable production in Tropical Asia (on 4-6 February in Chiang Mai, www.muresk.curtin.edu.au/conference/ishsvtc), the main outcomes and conclusions from research area and experiences were presented as think tank for discussing and elaborating a series of recommendations.

Proposed areas for recommendations and improvements on Public-Private Partnership

1. Information management (statistics, access to)
2. Capacity building, training and networking: for public and private sector at any level
3. Encouraging good practices and simple techniques
4. Food safety: carrot and stick (promotion campaign and awards, control and certification tools)
5. Developing risk management strategies (credit, GMO, organics...) through new type of extension?
6. Seed industry: more defined roles for each part (GMO, organics, IPR, genetic resources)

After discussion during the Forum amongst all participating partners in Tropical Asia, the final recommendations were as following:

Recommendations for improvements on Public-Private Partnership in the Vegetable Sector in Tropical Asia

1. Information management
 - 1.1 statistics: making data collection standard; data on vegetables (definitions and list of vegetables, taking indigenous vegetables into account) and on vegetable seeds (local production, imports and exports, hybrids, OPs ...). APSA will be coordinating the expected revisions together with FAO statistic services.
 - 1.2. Sharing data: making information from partner's data bases accessible through search engines. GlobalHort will be coordinating this information sharing platform through its webportal (www.globalhort.org).
2. Capacity building, training and networking
 - 2.1. Capacity building should focus on human resources development such as education, in country rather than abroad. Basic education is needed in every country for long-term capacity in breeding, genetics, plant protection etc. APSA will develop his policy in this area for short and medium term training with public institutions, valorizing his expertise. In partnership with some universities

APSA would be ready to build up a curriculum in vegetable sciences (breeding, plant protection, seed technology).

2.2. Private industry is concerned with training of extensionists and technical staff, to reach as much small scale farmers as possible. If one assumes a 200 \$ cost per farmer's training, an objective of 100,000 farmers trained in the next 3 years would require 20 M\$ only. APSA as coordinator together with AVRDC-the World Vegetable Center and FAO, would help at both regional and local levels.

2.3. Networking: GlobalHort agrees in familiarizing APSA to open fora and symposia, to bring all the actors concerned with vegetables on a common event like EUCARPIA or Fruit Logistica. The role of APSA in the variety testing network proposed by AVRDC shall be defined and discussed amongst its members. This is an interesting initiative that needs more detailed information and more integrated practices (testing conditions in parallel like low-high input, field-shelter cropping, coated-non coated seeds etc.).

3. Encouraging good practices and simple techniques

3.1. All practices related to higher productivity, quality, food safety, like plastic mulching, bamboo staking, drip irrigation, safe and reasonable use of chemicals, seed coating as primary example.

3.2. All practices related to post-harvest practices, to keep high quality till the consumer.

APSA will develop a strategy to enlist other private entities involved in those activities above mentioned, and associate them for improving the practices of vegetable farmers as a technical package.

4. Food safety: carrot and stick (promotion campaign and awards, control and certification tools)

4.1. Food safety standards and Good Agricultural Practices: often exist but difficulties appear in implementation. Promotion and awards should encourage actors to fulfill these requirements. Labeling shall use local language for instance.

4.2. An independent quality control service should be established in each country, on the basis of a private servicing activity. APSA is ready to help with its experience of seed quality control.

4.3. Safe practices: APSA and GlobalHort promote any practice resulting in no negative impact on food and environment. This includes pesticide application, insect proof facilities, net and seed coating, etc.

4.4. As an example, seed coating has a great potential in significantly reducing insecticide and fungicide residues in produces and environment. Research and studies have to be encouraged; governments will then encourage private firms to promote this technology to make it available and affordable for small scale farmers.

5. Towards a new type of extension: see 7.

6. Seed industry: more defined roles for each part (Biotechnology, organics, IPR, genetic resources)

Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) is the biggest barrier to seed moving now. APSA shall continue to push for free seed moving from country to country, and even above continents (agreements and harmonization with African countries).

Biotechnology: research studies shall not be prevented in order to provide objective information on risks and benefits of using vegetables produced by biotechnology, case by case.

Organics: a market already exists for organic vegetables, organic seeds, and there is a demand and strong interest in breeding under low or natural input conditions. APSA will continue to support studies on market characterization and breeding activities.

Intellectual Property Rights: APSA supports international agreements on IPR and PVP, and already implements national training programs and networks. More countries in the Tropical Asia region should be encouraged to join international organizations like UPOV.

Genetic Resources: APSA encourages free access to gene banks of any non profit institution, through the use of standard material transfer agreement and compatible data bases (see 1.2.).

7. Empowering farmers to share higher benefits from vegetable farming

7.1. Organizing and grouping farmers is the only way to get the issues of credit, quality and finally higher incomes. Appropriate models shall be studied (Taiwan, Japan) and then freely adopted according to the conditions and willingness of small scale farmers.

7.2. Extension: this is an area where public-private partnership can be more active and efficient. APSA can innovate some experience associating professional expertise and public general information and support. Training extensionists is referring to 2.

Most of these recommendations reflect the minutes of the meeting. Additional recommendations concerning APSA and GlobalHort have been elaborated during a post-meeting session (8 Feb.). Participants in the Forum are invited to revise and comment this draft, deadline: 8 March 2008. No comment means approval, and the revised draft will be forwarded to the Executive Committees of APSA and GlobalHort for validation, with copy to each participant. After validation, these recommendations will be transferred to national authorities of six countries (India, Indonesia, Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam) to invite them for an action plan, and to donor agencies. A proposal according to these recommendations will be presented to these donors and national authorities during a dedicated event (Asian Seed Congress, in Nov. 2008) to receive supports and start implementation early in 2009.