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18 January 2001

ENGLISH ONLY

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

**REPORT OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC SYMPOSIUM TO ESTABLISH
A NETWORK ON GREEN FOOD AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

Kunming, China, 8-11 November 2000

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I. MAJOR CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Symposium reviewed the status of green food and organic farming and prospects for establishing an international information network for Asia and the Pacific. After detailed deliberations on the documents presented, the Asia-Pacific Symposium reached the following conclusions and recommendations:

A. Conclusions and recommendations

1. There was a need in each country to implement and promote the development of organic farming and green food as a tool for sustainable agricultural development.
2. At the national levels, training and extension services on green/organic farming, certification/labelling and cooperation within and among governmental, non-governmental and academic institutions should be strengthened.
3. Training courses should be organized to facilitate the exchange of information on technical and policy aspects of green food and organic farming among countries in Asia and the Pacific.
4. It was strongly recommended that a network be established as soon as possible to promote and practice organic farming and green food to facilitate cooperation among Asian and Pacific countries.
5. Recognizing the need to institutionalise cooperation, the participating countries to the Symposium decided to establish the Asia-Pacific Organic Farming and Green Food Information Network as a non-profit international association and adopted its draft charter (see Annex I).
6. The Symposium recognized the facilitating role played by ESCAP to establish the Network.
7. The Symposium accepted the offer made by the China Green Food Association to host the Secretariat of the Network and meet all the obligations as set out in the draft Charter.
8. Government nominated participants to the Symposium would act as contact point for their respective government for follow-up communication on, and activities of the network until other arrangements could be made.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING

A. Review of national experiences with networking on green food and sustainable agriculture in countries in Asia and the Pacific

1. Introduction

2. The ESCAP secretariat provided a brief summary of its past, current and planned activities on integrated pest management (IPM), green farming and sustainable agriculture. Of particular interest were the Asia-Pacific Symposium on Sustainable Food Production, Income Generation and Consumer Protection, held in Beijing in 1998 and the Regional Workshop on IPM and Green Farming in Rural Poverty Alleviation, held in Suwon (Republic of Korea) from 11 to 14 October 2000. These meetings had stressed the importance of building a complete infrastructure for green produce; standardization of appropriate certification and labelling systems; identification of suitable markets to absorb higher priced green produce; and the prevention adequate training and extension. Both meetings had recommended that regional networking on green food be established with financial commitment and ownership of the

member countries. The secretariat also briefed the meeting on activities scheduled for the near future, information on which could be retrieved from the ESCAP web site at www.unescap.org.

2. Cambodia

3. Agriculture presented a priority area in the national development policy of Cambodia and focused on food security, economic growth, development of agricultural industries and increase in rural incomes. Agricultural research and development was mainly carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) through its technical departments located throughout the country. Priority areas in research and development included rice, cash crops, fruit trees, rubber, forests, fisheries and livestock.

4. The overall objectives of agricultural research and development were to (1) increase agricultural production, human and physical development and scientific research collaboration; and (2) improve and strengthen the capacity network within MAFF and with other stakeholders. A framework for horizontal and vertical linkages between departments had been set up as well as a coordination, planning and information policy.

5. Cambodia faced problems in implementing its agricultural development goals because of an absence of a policy framework, an undeveloped market for rice and other food crops, barriers to export growth, low crop productivity, institutional and financial constraints, inadequate extension services, and limited access of farmers to production resources.

3. China

6. By year end 1999, China had developed 1,353 green food products with an annual output of over 11 million tons. The number of green food corporations totalled 742, with an annual turnover of 4.940 billion yuan renminbi. Annual sales equalled US\$3.2 billion, and exports totalled approximately US\$200 million. At the same time, green food development had shown ecological advantages.

7. Over the past ten years, China had transferred information on technology, management, policies and marketing to corporations and farmers engaged in green food development through meetings, dissemination shows, field demonstrations, symposia, networks and selected publications.

8. China is of the opinion that there is an urgent need to establish an information network on green food and sustainable agriculture for Asia and the Pacific. The China Green Food Association has offered its full support for the development and establishment of this network: (1) by facilitating searches and inquiries on food policies and regulatory information in various countries in the Asia and Pacific area, (2) by publishing information on food corporations, farmers and products, so as to foster the green food market further, and (3) by publishing trends in the green food industry, technological advancements and outcomes of international meetings. Through international communication and cooperation the productive capacity and technological level of every country in Asia and the Pacific could be further improved.

9. The China Green Food Association considered the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Organic Farming and Green Food Information Network to be meaningful and challenging. The Association expressed its intention to contribute to the financial and human resources development of the information network.

4. Germany

10. Organic farming had a history of more than 70 years in Europe. Its introduction in developing countries was recent and had been driven by a growing demand for organic food in Western countries. The development of organic farming in China in the early 1990s had been fuelled by world market demand for exotic and affordable organic foods.

A balanced system of organic farming required qualified institutions in production, processing trading, technical support services (extension) and certification. The Sino-German Project “Development of Organic Farming in Poverty Areas” aimed to support the development of balanced organic farming systems by building-up institutions which directly assisted farmers during the conversion process to organic farming. The project had been implemented since 1997 in cooperation with the Organic Food Development Centre (OFDC) under the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) in Nanjing. Implementation strategies included service provision especially on extension, marketing information, inspection and certification and farmer participation and mobilization. The project had an important function in disseminating experiences and information between actors involved in the development of organic farming in China.

5. India

11. The Government of India, had recently brought out a National Policy on Agriculture which sought to promote technically sound, environmentally non-degrading and socially acceptable use of the country’s natural resources to promote sustainable development of agriculture. Balanced fertilization through integrated nutrient management and integrated pest management would be promoted. A nationwide programme for the utilization of rural and urban garbage, farm residues and organic waste for organic matter repletion and pollution control would be worked out. Organic farming would not only provide hygienic horticultural produce but its impact on the sustainability of agriculture would be rewarding.

12. India had a rich traditional knowledge of organic farming. The north-eastern region of the country, with very low use of fertilizers and pesticides, would be especially suitable for growing organic produce.

13. In conformity with the National Policy on Agriculture, the Government of India had introduced a National Programme for Organic Production which included standards for organic production as well as institutional arrangements. An organic farming cell had been created in the Horticulture Division of the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture to coordinate with concerned departments/ministries in the government and to provide inputs on organic farming aspects. A national level steering committee comprising representatives from concerned departments/ministries was already in place as the apex advisory body to assist the Government of India in shaping the growth and development of organic production.

6. Indonesia

14. Sustainable agriculture in Indonesia was approached by the environmentally sound farming system (ESFS). ESFS did not split agriculture into modern and traditional but rather focused on a farming system which provided economic returns, was socially acceptable and environmentally sound. Elements of ESFS included: (1) balanced/supplemental use of inorganic fertilizer to reach optimal

production levels; (2) selective application of environmentally safe pesticides with preference for parasites, predators, antagonist as well as variety resistance; (3) integrated crop management to optimize plant growth and production and increase plant resistance to pest and diseases; (4) application of effective indigenous knowledge; and (5) execution of hygienic farming.

15. The representative from Indonesia highlighted several ESFS models developed in Indonesia. The conservation farming system combined mechanical and vegetative conservation technologies in integrated farming. Low external input sustainable agriculture focussed on increasing input efficiency, natural resources availability, nitrogen fixation mechanisms of plants, recycling of plant residue as nutrient source and the use of indigenous enemies for pests and disease. Agro-forestry, such as the rice-rubber production system, was a further example of a farming system that had successfully integrated indigenous technology.

16. No special network on sustainable agriculture had been developed in Indonesia. However, research institutes and universities such as the Agency for Agricultural Research and Development (AARD) had taken steps to increase cooperation with other institutes to accelerate dissemination of research results to farmers. No inventory has yet taken on the number of NGOs active in the field of sustainable agriculture.

7. Pakistan

17. Pakistan had excellent potential for the development of green produce because of wide ecological and environmental diversity, as well as the practice of traditional organic farming, particularly in the mountainous regions. The development of effective fertilization and pest management systems was considered the most critical element of sustainable farming.

18. Nature farming and bio-fertilizers networks have existed and have helped research and development agencies in the introduction of green food and sustainable agriculture. The success of these networks, however, depended on the involvement of farmers, NGOs and the private sector.

19. The private sector was involved in the production and sale of effective microorganism (EM) cultures and biofertilizers. The rapid introduction of EM technology in Pakistan was found to be effective in increasing crop yields with farmyard/green manures. EM technology is also being used to control gangrene and necrosis in buffaloes and cattle, when added to their feed.

20. The three main relevant networks in Pakistan were: 1. Nature Farming Research and Development Foundation - Network (NFRDF); 2. Bio-Fertilizer Research and Development Programme - Network (BRDP); and 3. Water Resource Research Institute (WRI). These networks were linked through various means of communication with agricultural universities in Pakistan, NGOs, farmers, bio-fertilizer companies, EM Research Organization of Japan, and the Asia-Pacific Natural Agriculture Network Thailand. The NFRDF also maintained links with the Nuclear Institute of Agriculture and Biology; the National Institute of Bio-technology and Genetic Engineering, and Agriculture Research Institute (ARI) - Sariaf Quetta, Balochistan.

8. Philippines

21. The Philippines had multiple stakeholders in advocacy and promotion of sustainable agriculture - the government, civil society and academic institutions. The pursuit of sustainable development in general, and sustainable agriculture in particular, had been intensified in the 1990s following the adoption of Agenda 21.

22. The Government had taken the lead in mainstreaming sustainable agriculture principles and strategies in the national plans, programmes and projects. The Department of Agriculture had implemented nationwide programmes and projects on sustainable agriculture, including: (1) balanced fertilization programme; (2) integrated pest management, (3) integrated crop management and (4) sloping agricultural land technologies (SALT). These programmes involved training of farmers at field levels and establishment of techno-demo farmers nationwide. Apart from this, the Philippines Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) monitored the accomplishments of various stakeholders in pursuit of sustainable development in various eco-systems including the lowland/agriculture eco-system as identified in the Philippines Agenda 21.

23. The contribution of other stakeholders such as the academies and research institutions concentrated on the dissemination of sustainable agriculture. NGOs and people's organizations (POs) constituted the most active partners of the government in the promotion of sustainable agriculture and had been involved in projects and activities promoting sustainable productive use of resources, sustainable land use system, organic farming and chemical free farming, control resource management use; and environmental management.

24. Several general public and civil society organizations had attempted to establish networking, however, with limited scope and reach. Presently, there is no known network that focuses on sustainable agriculture at the national or local level.

25. The representative of the Philippines expressed hope that the proposed network for Asia and the Pacific would facilitate the exchange of information and experiences on policy, projects, programmes, technologies and activities on sustainable agriculture and would not be restricted to promoting just one possible approach to attain sustainable agriculture, such as green food and organic farming.

9. Republic of Korea

26. Promotion of organic agriculture was one of the many programmes adopted by the Government of the Republic of Korea since the early 1990s. Direct payment and preferential government policy loans were provided to organic and low-input agricultural farmers as incentives. An eco-labelling system for sustainable agricultural products had been implemented since 1997. The share of organic produce was about one percent of total agricultural produce with the government policy goal to increase this to three percent by 2003. The increase in organic agriculture was hampered by high risks perceived in production and marketing and the absence of a well-organized information system that would give farmers access to tested organic technologies.

27. Both governmental and non-governmental organizations actively promoted organic agriculture

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