

### **Bangkok, Thailand 18-19 October 2004**

#### **Chairman's Summary**

1. On the occasion of the World Food Day 2004, representatives of the regional technical commissions, bodies and networks from the Asia-Pacific region sponsored by or collaborating with FAO were invited by FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP) to the second round table discussion on a Regional Alliance Against Hunger (RAAH), specially on the theme of networking of networks. The participants comprising chairperson, vice-chairperson, executive officers or representatives of their respective organizations are listed in the Annex. The Round Table was chaired by Mr. M.A. Abdul Razak. Messrs. Marangattli M. Nampoothiry and Pedro Bueno were elected Vice-Chair.

2. The Meeting noted with concern that despite significant economic development and growth in food and agricultural production, poverty and food insecurity still remained a problem in the region. Successes of the Green Revolution also brought the challenges of environmental sustainability. Loss of biodiversity is a major problem along with land degradation, depletion of rangeland, growing scarcity of water, declining forest cover, over-exploitation of fishery resources, overuse of pesticides and deterioration of the ecosystem. Country experiences showed that increased food production was not adequate in addressing widespread hunger. Economic access to available supply is equally, if not more, important factor in ensuring food security. It was also recognized that gender issues in agriculture have not yet received full attention. The issues related to choice of technologies—GMO/non-GMO biotechnology, organic farming etc.—as well as food safety, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, patents and other property rights issues over genetic materials, level of support to the agriculture sector have emerged as complex issues no more confined to national decisions but as matters of international negotiations and agreements with profound implications for the agriculture sector and the overall economy. Addressing these issues in totality requires a holistic view integrating inter-disciplinary contributions focusing on different dimensions within a broader framework emphasizing growth, equity and sustainability as the core components of a strategy for agricultural development.

3. Participants noted that although the problems are inter-related, they were being addressed in a fragmented manner both nationally and regionally. There is considerable synergy in activities being carried out by different parties which remains largely unexploited under the piece-meal approach generally. Lessons from this experience point to the possibility that networking of networks can help address this issue at the regional level and contribute to the promotion of this

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approach at the country level. However, the networking should be based on clear identification of the value added from such efforts and focus on a common theme. Hunger reduction is uniquely qualified as the common theme for the regional technical networks active in the disciplines of agriculture.

4. In light of the above, the participants complimented the FAO-RAP for taking the initiative to organize the Round Table Meeting towards promoting inter-disciplinary dialogue and collaboration among the regional commissions, bodies and networks to address the food security issues confronting the region. The Meeting strongly supported the idea of building a regional alliance of networks through networking of networks and committed to active participate in the related follow up activities.

5. Several possible areas of inter-disciplinary collaboration were cited as the minimum common programme (CMP) for the activities of the network:

- Conservation of critical fishery habitats, such as wetlands, coral reefs, mangroves and alien species, for biodiversity;
- Methodology for assessing risks of biodiversity depletion;
- Policies for biodiversity conservation based on assessment of the incidence of costs and benefits on different participants;
- Empowerment of women and consideration of gender issues in natural resource management;
- Trade facilitation, specifically capacity building in WTO compliance, harmonization and upgrading of quality standards and safety of products;
- Information sharing;
- Statistical database.

6. The Round Table participants presented various ideas with respect to the objectives and functions of the network of networks:

- Sharing of information on activities of different networks and experiences from the network's activities;
- Sharing of results of studies/assessment on thematic issues such as globalization, emerging trends and traditional knowledge
- Mechanism for information clearing-house;
- Provide a forum for a regular meeting and reporting system;
- Promotion of dialogue among the networks to identify interdisciplinary activities;
- Enhancement of inter-disciplinary approaches in general and joint visioning and

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programming of activities;

- Coordination, monitoring and assessment of joint activities; and
- Resource mobilization, training and capacity building and advocacy for critical but inadequately supported activities.

7. A number of suggestions were received from the floor on how to promote networking of networks. These included:

- Preparation of inventory of the existing regional networks working in the relevant field;
- Install an appropriate coordination system among specific sub-networks and the interdisciplinary umbrella network with well-defined objectives, activities, resources and accountability for results;
- The umbrella network should organize itself also in terms of coordination, planning, reporting, communication and regular assessment of progress;
- Resources must be drawn into the collective activities of the network;
- Sources of funding should be identified and appropriate cost-sharing arrangements developed;
- Use modern ICT for sharing information through creation of a Home Page of the umbrella network with URL links to the constituent networks and relevant organizations;

8. The Meeting considered several key words regarding the naming of the network. These included:

- It should have Asia-Pacific to denote the regional nature;
- It should have alliance or network for food security or hunger eradication to indicate its focus;
- It should also convey important ideas such as sustainability.

9. The Round Table recommended the following actions to promote networking of networks.

- FAO-RAP should initially designate a senior officer as the focal point for the establishment of network of networks with provision of initial funding for the Secretariat to facilitate development of the umbrella network.
- The Secretariat of the network of networks should prepare a proposal for the umbrella organization, its objectives, functions and funding.
- The preparatory activities should be completed and a webpage launched by the World Food Day 2005.

**Short Professional Training Course:  
Land Degradation and Desertification Sustainable Rural  
Livelihoods in a field setting.  
19 April - 2 May 2005.**

Directed by Professor Michael Stocking in the United Kingdom and co-directed by Dr Juan Albaladejo Montoro in Spain.

Language of instruction: English

Objective: to update your professional knowledge and field skills in these two important areas of global concern. As of October 2002, land degradation is a new focal area of the Global Environment Facility.

The first week of this two-week short course will be held at the University of East Anglia, covering current theory and perspectives on land degradation assessment in the context of projects to protect the environment and promote human welfare and livelihoods. The course continues for the second week in Spain at CEBAS (Centro de Edafología y Biología Aplicada del Segura -Centre for Soils and Applied Biology) in a drylands and partly degraded environment with field instruction and exercises. Simple visual and semi-quantitative techniques for land degradation assessment will be used, with all course participants gaining hands-on experience. The assessments will be placed within the context of sustainable rural livelihoods and participants will examine how far technologies and approaches to control land degradation can be applied to the real-life circumstances of land users. £900 per person (including accommodation and return flights UK/Spain).

All details of the course are below plus an on-line application form can also be viewed at

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[http://www.uea.ac.uk/dev/odg/pages/course\\_landdeg2005.html](http://www.uea.ac.uk/dev/odg/pages/course_landdeg2005.html)