

**REPORT OF
THE 2ND STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING OF
THE ASEAN-AVRDC REGIONAL NETWORK
FOR VEGETABLE RESEARCH
& DEVELOPMENT (AARNET)**



**Singapore
8-9 May 2007**

Organized by

Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore

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INTRODUCTION

- 1 The 2nd Steering Committee Meeting of AARNET was held on 8-9 May 2007 at Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA), Singapore.
- 2 At the 1st Steering Committee Meeting, it was agreed to draft proposals for four AARNET projects on (i) indigenous vegetables, (ii) variety selection, (iii) pre-harvest handling and (iv) storage life of vegetables, and to submit these proposals to seek for funding through ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC).
- 3 This AARNET Steering Committee Meeting was organized to update members on the status and progress made with seeking funding for each project, as well as to discuss the actions to be taken to move them forward.
- 4 The Meeting was attended by delegates from six ASEAN member countries, namely, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore, and Asian Vegetable Research and Development Center (AVRDC) - The World Vegetable Center. A representative from the ASEC was also present. The list of delegates appears as ANNEX 1.

AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING OF THE MEETING

Agenda 1.1: Opening Address by Chairman

- 5 The Chairman welcomed all delegates to this Meeting organised by Singapore. He made special mention of participation by Mr Rachman Suherman of Indonesia who was attending the AARNET meeting for the first time. He also expressed appreciation to Dr George Kuo of AVRDC for his contribution to AARNET. Dr Kuo will be retiring from AVRDC in July 2007. The Chairman's speech appears as ANNEX 2.

Agenda 1.2: Remarks by Deputy Director-General for Research, AVRDC

- 6 The delegate from AVRDC, on behalf of the Director-General of AVRDC, expressed strong commitment to AARNET, and was pleased that the members have the opportunity to work together in a cohesive way. The delegate thanked Singapore for organizing the meeting, and looked forward to a successful and coordinated meeting to move forward in a dynamic way.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ADOPTION OF AGENDA

7 The Meeting adopted the revised Agenda which appears as ANNEX 3.

AGENDA ITEM 3: DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED AARNET VISION AND MISSION AND AVRDC'S ROLE

- 8 The Chairman and the Project Leader for the Indigenous Vegetables (IV) project, Brunei Darussalam, attended upon the invitation of the Director-General of AVRDC, the AVRDC Annual Board Meeting in Bangkok, March 2007. The Chairman presented the proposed AARNET Vision and Mission to let the Board have a clear idea on the scope of AARNET and how AVRDC can play a role in AARNET.
- 9 The Meeting deliberated on the proposed AARNET Vision and Mission and agreed to the revised statements, which appears as ANNEX 4.
- 10 The Meeting discussed and agreed on AVRDC's role, which appear as ANNEX 5. Its roles include being a partner, counselor and training provider for AARNET. The Asian Regional Center (ARC) being AVRDC's regional office in Bangkok best serves the ASEAN region. The Meeting agreed to confirm ARC's role in AARNET at the coming 14th Meeting of ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Crops (ASWGC).

AGENDA ITEM 4: REPORT ON PROGRESS/STATUS OF PROJECT

Agenda 4.1: Update by AARNET Chairman

11 AARNET Chairman reported that the 13th Meeting of ASWGC and Special Senior Officials Meeting of 27th ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (SOM-AMAF) had agreed to AARNET's recommendation to seek external funding through ASEC for the four AARNET projects. The update by the Chairman appears as ANNEX 6.

Agenda 4.2: Update by ASEAN Secretariat

- 12 The representative from ASEC reported that, during the meeting of the ASEAN-India Working Group on Agriculture in 2005, India had expressed interest in germplasm exchange. For the project on indigenous vegetables, a concept paper prepared by Brunei Darussalam was submitted by ASEC to India in September 2006 for funding consideration. India was keen to expand the cooperation and would submit a counter proposal, which ASEC will then forward to AARNET.
- 13 As agreed in the 13th ASWGC, components of the project on "Development of Pre-harvest Treatments and Practices to Produce Quality and Safe Vegetables" had been incorporated into the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Programme-Regional Partnership Scheme (AADCP-RPS)

ASEAN Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) project. The Meeting was informed that contract negotiations of the AADCP-RPS project will be finalized by 11 May 2007.

- 14 Under the AADCP-RPS project, ARC and Horticulture Research Institute (HRI) of Thailand, also a member of AARNET, will conduct a workshop to identify R&D needs and training on GAP in fruits and vegetables. The training is scheduled for December 2007.

Agenda 4.3: Report by AVRDC on Project “Selection of Superior Vegetable Varieties for the ASEAN Member States”

- 15 The delegate from AVRDC-ARC gave a presentation, which appears as ANNEX 7, and reported that variety trials were conducted in six ASEAN countries namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.
- 16 The delegate from Singapore informed that two open pollinated tomato lines were evaluated. Results were not comparable to normal yield possibly due to hot weather.
- 17 The delegate from Philippines asked about the accessibility of seeds to farmers. AVRDC informed that their germplasm is available for everybody through a material transfer agreement hence Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) is not an issue with AVRDC. Private seed companies belonging to the Asia Pacific Seed Association (APSA) have been working with AVRDC and many of these companies have used AVRDC germplasm for developing commercial varieties. AVRDC could seek collaboration with APSA to support variety trials with AARNET members.
- 18 The delegate from Brunei Darussalam raised the concern of any single private seed company making use of the AARNET channel to conduct multi-regional variety trials. AVRDC assured that this would not occur.

Agenda 4.4: Report by Brunei Darussalam on Project “Enhancing, Utilization and Conservation of Indigenous Vegetables by Rural Farmers in ASEAN Countries”

- 19 The delegate from Brunei Darussalam presented the revised proposal, which appears as ANNEX 8.
- 20 Brunei Darussalam reported that they also have a similar national project on indigenous vegetables (IV) that will be implemented regardless of the funding status of the AARNET project. The national project is important to Brunei Darussalam as the country has a diverse range of indigenous vegetables that can fetch high value in the niche market.
- 21 The delegate from Philippines shared on the IV project being carried out in the Philippines, which appears as ANNEX 9.

22 To collate the information on IV present in each ASEAN country, Chairman suggested to develop a database on IV in ASEAN. The database should include common and scientific names, photographs, utilizations and short descriptions. This could be hosted on AVRDC's or AARNET's website. Members are requested to send the information to AARNET Secretariat for compilation. AVRDC will provide a template for compiling the information. Philippines offered to provide AARNET Secretariat with a brochure for reference. AVRDC-ARC informed the possibility of AVRDC publishing a book on IV with the assistance from Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS).

Agenda 4.5: Report by Malaysia on "Extension of storage life and maintenance of quality of selected vegetables in ASEAN"

23 The delegate from Malaysia submitted the revised full project proposal, which appears as ANNEX 10. The Meeting discussed and agreed to update on the targeted list of vegetables (namely leafy brassicas, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, lettuce, tomato, chilli, cucurbits and shallots), and the agencies responsible for implementation.

24 ASEC suggested that the training on postharvest handling and storage could be funded by Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry as it has expressed interest to support CLMV countries under the "South-South Cooperation Project"

AGENDA ITEM 5: DISCUSSION ON ACTION PLANS

Agenda 5.1: Project on "Selection of Promising Vegetable Varieties through Coordinated Introduction and Collaborative Testing in ASEAN"

25 The Meeting requested for the full project proposal to be submitted to AARNET Secretariat.

Agenda 5.2: Project on "Enhancing utilization and conservation of indigenous vegetables by rural farmers in ASEAN countries"

26 In preparation for the 14th ASWGC Meeting to be held in June 2007 in Malaysia, ASEC was requested to verify with India on their counter proposal, which is required by end May 2007.

27 The Meeting agreed to concurrently submit the project proposal to other donor agencies. ASEC will submit the proposal to dialogue partners while AARNET Chairman will submit the proposal to funding agencies like Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).

Agenda 5.3: Project on “Extension of storage life and maintenance of quality of selected vegetables in ASEAN”

28 Malaysia will revise and complete the project proposal according to what was agreed at the Meeting by end May 2007. A proposal for the short-term training module under the “South-South Cooperation Project” will be forwarded to ASEC through AARNET Chairman.

Agenda 5.4: Project on “Development of Pre-harvest Treatments and Practices to Produce Quality and Safe Vegetables”

29 The Meeting noted that ASEC would forward the final AADCP-RPS ASEAN GAP project proposal to AARNET Chairman once available.

30 The Meeting agreed that Thailand could formulate the full project proposal after the R&D needs on fruits and vegetables have been identified in the workshop proposed under AADCP-RPS ASEAN GAP project.

AGENDA ITEM 6: OTHER MATTERS

Agenda 6.1: Briefing by AVRDC on projects in the region and elsewhere and possible linkage to AARNET

31 The delegate from AVRDC presented on the activities of AVRDC in the region, which appears as ANNEX 11. AVRDC has a wide range of vegetable production-related activities in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

32 The Meeting encouraged all ASEAN member countries to participate in AVRDC projects, where appropriate, to improve synergy in AARNET.

Agenda 6.2: New initiatives proposed by AVRDC-ARC

33 The delegate from AVRDC-ARC presented two new proposals on “ASEAN Native Vegetable Garden” and “Organizational Development of National Vegetable Research and Extension Institutions through Integrated Impact Assessment” which appear as ANNEX 12 and ANNEX 13, respectively. The Meeting concurred with the proposals and AVRDC-ARC will work with ASEAN Member Countries to provide more details and work out funding opportunities.

Agenda 6.3: Linkage to ASEAN Technical Working Group on Agricultural Research and Development (ATWGARD)

34 The delegate from Singapore sought clarification from ASEC on whether there is an overlap between ATWGARD and AARNET. The Meeting noted that the ATWGARD was established as a platform to track information on

agriculture R&D. AARNET is unlikely to replicate the work of ATWGARD as it is the implementer of R&D projects. AARNET will share information on its R&D activities with ATWGARD.

Agenda 6.4: Mechanism for Reporting AARNET Projects

- 35 ASEC informed that AARNET Chairman can submit the AARNET project proposals directly to Special SOM-AMAF as there is no need for formal endorsement from ASWGC but ASWGC should be kept informed of the projects.

Agenda 6.5: Next Meeting

- 36 At the 1st Steering Committee Meeting, it was decided that meetings should be held, by rotation, in each ASEAN country and AVRDC. Brunei Darussalam was unanimously nominated to host the 3rd Steering Committee Meeting, tentatively to be held in May 2008. The delegate from Brunei Darussalam agreed to the nomination, subject to approval from higher authority. Other member countries are encouraged to consider hosting the next Meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 7: RECOMMENDATION

- 37 The Meeting agreed to submit to SOM-AMAF and inform ASWGC the following recommendation:
- a. Seek SOM-AMAF's approval for the project on "Extension of storage life and maintenance of quality of selected vegetables in ASEAN"

AGENDA ITEM 8: ADOPTION OF REPORT

- 38 The Meeting agreed that AARNET Secretariat will circulate the draft Report to all members and their comments would be incorporated into the Report before it is adopted by *ad referral*. The final Report will be submitted to ASWGC and SOM-AMAF in their next meetings.

AGENDA ITEM 9: CLOSING OF THE MEETING

- 39 The delegates from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, ASEC and AVRDC expressed their sincere thanks and appreciation to Singapore for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting and for the warm hospitality accorded to them.
- 40 The Meeting was held in the traditional spirit of ASEAN cooperation and cordiality.

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