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Information note

Summary of recommendations of the Regional Technical Commissions (RTCs)

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I. Introduction

The regional office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Bangkok serves as the secretariat of five Asia-Pacific Regional Technical Commissions (RTCs).

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These statutory bodies of the Organization deal with agricultural statistics, forestry, fisheries, plant protection and animal production and health and are recognized by the APRC as regional priority-setting bodies of the subsectors for which they are competent. This information paper summarizes the key work of the RTCs since the last APRC and the specific recommendations of these regular sessions of the Commissions:

- The twenty-fourth Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS) 8-12 October 2012, Da Lat, Viet Nam.
- The thirty-seventh Session of the Animal Production and Health Commission for Asia and the Pacific (APHCA) 22-26 September 2013, Thimphu, Bhutan.
- The thirty-second Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC), 20–22 September 2012, DaNang, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.
- The twenty-fifth Session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC), 5-8 November 2013, Rotorua, New Zealand.
- The twenty-eighth Session of the FAO Asia and Pacific Plant Protection Commission (APPPC), 23-27 September 2013, Jeju, Republic of Korea.

II. Key outcomes and recommendations

A. Regional assessments, subsectoral reviews, status and trends reporting

APCAS: Recommended that FAO provide some guidance on linking the agricultural census with other censuses, keeping in view country practices. The Commission also recommended that FAO undertake technical work to develop the 2020 World Census of Agriculture (WCA 2020) guidelines and to provide technical support to member countries.

APCAS: Recommended the further development of the assessment of country statistical capacity. The Commission noted the progress being made on the preparation of methodological guidelines to assess country capacity to produce agricultural and rural statistics under the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics initiative. It recommended that FAO share these guidelines with member countries to avoid any subjectivity of response to the assessment questionnaire.

APCAS: Recommended that countries maximize the use of gender-disaggregated data in surveys and analysis in order to bring to light important issues (e.g. the role of gender in food security) which help better guide social policies.

APHCA: Carried out a regional review of the prevalence of antimicrobial resistance in selected micro-organisms associated with livestock and livestock-derived food.

APHCA: APHCA countries conducted national feed assessments and estimated feed balances as an initial step towards more rational management of national feed resources.

APFIC: Recommended that more work be done to increase the awareness of member governments about the significance of aquatic products to nutritional security.

APFIC: Recognized that for a number of member countries, inland fisheries are critically important because they have the potential to increase the contribution of these sectors to food security and nutritional well-being. The Commission recommended that member countries place more emphasis on increasing the capacity for information and management in inland fisheries. The Commission further recommended that routine fishery assessments are required to enable adequate tracking of resources for management decision-making. The Commission also suggested that fish stock assessment models should incorporate climate change considerations.

APFC: Recommended that FAO conduct additional analyses about the impact on forests of drivers of change (e.g. growing populations, expanding economic development and changing societal

expectations, land concessions for agro-industrial development). The Commission further requested that FAO explore mechanisms to support special diagnostic missions to interested countries, with a view towards fostering an enabling environment for rational and competitive wood processing.

APFC: Noted the particular vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to natural disasters. The Commission acknowledged the need for individualized approaches to provision of support to SIDS. Several countries appreciated FAO's assistance in utilization of senile coconut resources. The Commission highlighted the need for support to some countries to obtain access to appropriate forest tree seed supplies.

APFC: Recommended that member countries participate fully in the 2015 Global Forest Assessment and submit their reports in a timely manner.

APPPC: Reviewed regional development and progress of pesticide regulatory management and published "Advancement of pesticide regulatory management in Asia".

B. Developing training courses and capacity building

APHCA: In close collaboration with the World Organization for Animal Health's (OIE's) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, is enhancing the capacity of its member countries, including those in the Southwest Pacific, in brucellosis diagnosis and control through proficiency testing of diagnostic laboratories in the Asia-Pacific Region.

APFIC: Has developed a regional training course for port inspection of fishing vessels. This training course will support member countries to meet obligations under the 2009 FAO Port States Agreement or to implement more effective national port controls for fishing vessels. The training course is tailored to the Asia-Pacific context and is freely available. Pilot trainings have been undertaken in Thailand, and further training with member countries is foreseen upon request. APFIC has also contributed to the development of a regional training course on the Ecosystem Approach to Fishery Management (EAFM). This training course is designed to develop the capacity of government and non-government staff working in the areas of fisheries and the environment and economic development and planning. These training courses are of particular relevance to PICS in their efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and improve the management of coastal fishery resources.

APFC: Requested FAO to provide training and capacity building on the use of the sustainable forest management (SFM) toolbox and on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade action planning, with a focus on the needs of small-scale producers and increased engagement with the private sector. The Commission noted the need for capacity building in forest monitoring and assessment and the related need for harmonization of data collection and reporting.

APFC: Requested FAO to provide technical support to build capacities in member countries to address climate change adaptation at policy levels and to strengthen resilience and implementation of climate change adaptation measures at community levels.

APPPC: Has developed a training programme and produced training reference materials for protecting against South American leaf blight (SALB) of rubber plants in the region. The Commission decided that the working group on SALB will continue. It was recommended to follow the diagnostic training visit in Brazil with actions such as in-country training programmes and manual development (with translation), including a diagnostic protocol for SALB.

APPPC: Has organized a regional training workshop on pest risk management for capacity development of its member countries in line with the International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) No. 14: The use of integrated measures in a systems approach for pest risk management. The Commission decided to develop more specific training materials to meet the needs of member countries.

APPPC: Recommended promoting pesticide risk reduction through enhancement of integrated pest management (IPM) and pesticide regulatory management. The Commission further agreed to convene a workshop on awareness of the revised Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management as well as on the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention.

C. Advocacy and representation of regional issues in global dialogues

APCAS: Welcomed and endorsed the efforts by FAO towards development of databases focusing on greenhouse gases, environmental indicators and investment in agriculture. These databases were recognized as critical information and capacity-building tools on environmental, climate change and investment issues for more efficient rural development planning. The Commission recommended that FAO continue this work.

APHCA: Is contributing to the *Agenda of Action for Sustainable Livestock Sector Development*. This global initiative involving a multistakeholder process is tasked to formulate a response regarding how the global livestock sector can play a sustainable role in food security and equitable economic development in an increasingly resource-constrained, urbanizing and more affluent world. APHCA is exploring mechanisms and activities to deepen the regional engagement with the *Agenda* and promote a regional platform to inform and support national and regional policy-making in pursuit of the broader goal of sustainable livestock sector development.

APFIC: Endorsed the action plans and recommendations of the APFIC regional consultative workshop “*Implications of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture: challenges for adaptation and mitigation in the Asia-Pacific Region*” convened in Kathmandu, Nepal, 24–26 May 2011. The Commission emphasized the importance of raising awareness of climate change, particularly for policy-makers in this region. The Commission also recommended that APFIC should work with FAO and other international and regional organizations to prepare guidance and organize training on practical ways to mitigate and adapt to climate change and climate variability in the fishery and aquaculture subsectors.

APFIC: Emphasized that the development of aquaculture faces many challenges and should take into account the need for sustainable intensification of aquaculture, especially as this links to the demand for feeds and the need for better management

APFC: Recommended the development of a stand-alone sustainable development goal (SDG) on forests and emphasized the need to raise the profile of forests in the SDGs. The Commission urged FAO and member countries in the Asia-Pacific region to actively engage in the discussions on a forest-related SDG, particularly the development of relevant targets and indicators, through the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

APFC: Recommended seizing the opportunity to promote the importance of the forestry sector that is presented by the growing recognition of the links between forests and climate change, and working closely with partner organizations within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to support REDD+ initiatives.

APPPC: Organized a global symposium on pest surveillance in line with International Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) No. 6, with participants from Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, North America, the Near East, Africa and Europe. The Commission also recommended a number of frameworks for operational manuals of pest surveillance.

D. Raising awareness and advice for policy on regional issues

APHCA: Organized the *Regional Livestock Policy Forum* in Bangkok (16-17 August 2012) together with other partners including the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). The forum was attended by about 70 participants from over 11 countries. It provided a platform to share experiences on livestock development in the

region, which has generated more than half the gains in global livestock production since the early 1990s. This growth has imposed considerable social, health and ecological costs, raising new challenges for food and nutrition security for poor people. There is also a growing concern regarding marginalization of small-scale producers. The Commission intends to support further initiatives towards strengthening livestock sector policy-making capacity in the region.

APFIC: Convened its fourth APFIC Regional Consultative Forum Meeting, “Improving management and governance of fisheries and aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific region” in Da Nang, Viet Nam (17–19 September 2012). The meeting was attended by 73 participants from 16 countries and representatives from 12 regional partner organizations and projects. Participants identified regional challenges based on reviews of regional fisheries and aquaculture, presentations by member countries and regional organizations and reports of action plans from APFIC regional consultative workshops. The Commission developed concrete recommendations on what needs to be done to address the challenges in the Asian region.

APFC: Organized the sixth Executive Forest Policy Short Course, 27 May – 6 June 2013, in Thimphu, Bhutan. Under the theme of “*Forest policies for the twenty-first century*”, the course addressed regional, subregional and national forestry and natural resources issues and provided a coherent framework for improving analysis skills. The short course was attended by 22 participants from 12 countries and built upon the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Second Asia-Pacific Forestry Sector Outlook Study, conducted under the auspices of APFC. Building on the success of the Forest Policy Short Course in Bhutan, the next course will be held in the Pacific in 2014 focusing on forest restoration and natural disasters.

APFC: Emphasized that efforts to ensure food security and nutrition should be balanced with needs for sustainable forest management and that agricultural production could be increased without further loss or degradation of forests. In this context, World Food Day celebrations offer excellent opportunities to highlight the contributions that forests make to food security in each country.

E. Establishing regional networks, regional technical cooperation and exchange

APCAS: Recognized the ongoing cooperation between the Republic of Korea and China on remote-sensing techniques and recommended that countries emulate similar south-south cooperation to transfer technology. FAO expressed its willingness to facilitate this type of collaboration. The Commission recommended that FAO further collaborate with the UN Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) to provide training on issues relating to analytical software, sampling design and sampling errors, under the regional action plan of the *Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics*.

APHCA: Is establishing an ‘*Asia-Pacific Animal Feed (APAF) Network*’ to support continuous updating and improvement of national feed assessments and balances and to help assess and forecast feed demand and supply. An ‘*Asia Smallholder Dairy Development Network*’ was launched under the auspices of the 15th Asia Australasia Association of Animal Production Societies (AAAP) Congress held in Bangkok in November 2012. A Web site – www.dairyasia.org – has also been launched and a distribution list has been created. Through these platforms, members receive regular updates on dairy-related developments in the region.

APHCA: Is contributing to information exchange on animal diseases through participation in the regional meetings of the Global Framework for Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs), while information on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is shared with working groups of the OIE and the World Health Organization (WHO). APHCA also maintains a Web site which serves as a regional point of reference for news and information about animal health and production.

APFIC: Emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation in fisheries management in the region (e.g. by improving trawl fishery management and by developing or cooperating in a Global Environment

Facility (GEF) programme for the South China Sea programme and the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) implementation phase of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem project).

APFIC: Noted the importance of meeting the challenges of aquaculture intensification with better management of aquaculture. This includes the need to address the challenges of transboundary aquatic animal health and the use of marine-based fish feeds. Importantly, there is a need for a strengthened regional mechanism in this regard.

APFC: Requested FAO to continue working closely with partner organizations to support regional networks and technical cooperation and exchange related to: (i) forest landscape restoration, including natural regeneration of forests; (ii) trade in illegally logged timber; (iii) information, forest data and experiences on the roles of forests in climate change adaptation; (iv) fire management; (v) forests and natural disasters; and (vi) mainstreaming gender considerations into forest policies.

APPPC: Recommended the enhancement of information exchange among member countries through the APPPC Web site and inputs from the APPPC Working Group on Information Exchange. The Commission recommended expanding the scope of the Working Group to cover Pest Risk Analysis (PRA), surveillance, SALB and other pests and capacity-development projects for sharing with countries. The Commission agreed that data from the region would be collected and exchanged and that a specific database would be developed by the SALB Working Group. It was suggested to continue cooperation with Brazil and relevant international organizations on the issue of SALB on rubber plants.

F. Developing regional guidelines and best practices

APCAS: Recommended that FAO work towards developing proper guidelines and methodologies to integrate fisheries and aquaculture into agricultural and rural censuses and surveys. The Commission supported the work being done by FAO to update the Food Balance Sheet (FBS) methodology to improve its efficiency and comprehensiveness and ensure that the FBS remains relevant to user needs. APCAS supported the work being done on the cost of production statistics and recommended further development of a handbook on that topic.

APHCA: Has developed draft guidelines for national feed assessments, in close collaboration with FAO's Animal Production and Health Division in Rome. The draft guidelines are being revised through a consultative process involving national feed experts from the Asia-Pacific region.

APFIC: Has developed, together with FAO and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia and the Pacific (NACA) regional guidance on aquaculture assessments tools. The Commission also recommended the adoption of aquaculture assessment tools for better planning and management of the aquaculture sector. These planning tools are focused on the needs of the Asia region, but are broadly applicable to the Pacific subregion and would be valuable in planning aquaculture developments there.

APFIC: Recognized the need to improve the management of trawl fisheries, the development of fishery improvement plans and support to other regional capacity-building initiatives. The APFIC Secretariat is currently developing regional guidelines for the management of tropical trawl fisheries.

APFC: Recommended giving increased attention to forest landscape restoration and developing natural forest regeneration strategies to complement intensive planted forest programmes. The Commission also requested that FAO produce a knowledge product on forests and droughts in Asia and the Pacific.

APPPC: Has developed five regional guidelines on pesticide management and reviewed progress of the implementation of the action plan for promotion of regulatory management at regional and country levels. The Commission also recommended harmonization of regulatory management.

APPPC: Recommended the development of guidelines to create case studies in selected countries about success stories or best practices for IPM-based management of pest concerns.

G. Developing and harmonizing regional norms and standards

APCAS: Recommended that FAO provide additional guidance for coordinating and linking the agricultural census with other censuses including the economic census, utilizing best practices from the region. The Commission further recommended that the following points be considered in preparation for the World Programme for Census of Agriculture (WCA) 2020: (1) greater emphasis on environment-related statistics; (2) data needed for estimation of GHG emissions; (3) processing of data from agricultural censuses and surveys; (4) a more pronounced role for technologies such as remote sensing; (5) use of administrative data; (6) organic agriculture; (7) the integration of a greater variety of surveys including those related to fisheries and aquaculture; and (8) greater support for adopting new methods for countries which are at an early stage in the development of agriculture statistics.

APHCA: Convened an expert working group on Veterinary Antimicrobial Resistance Risk Management to foster a process of harmonization and standardization for the management of AMR. The working group is tasked to: (1) develop context-specific guidelines for the responsible and prudent use of antimicrobials in food animal production tailored to the situation prevailing in APHCA member countries; and (2) propose harmonized science-based guidelines for AMR monitoring programme development and advice to support risk assessments.

APFC: Requested FAO to continue the effort to harmonize forest data collection and reporting, building on the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests' Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting and on the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire. Noting the lack of comprehensive data and information on the contributions of trees and forests to food security and nutrition, the Commission requested FAO to develop methodologies, standard definitions and terminology to support the collection, analysis and reporting of such data, and to provide guidance and assistance to member countries in implementing such activities.

APPPC: Adopted two new regional standards on phytosanitary measures (i.e. "Approval of Irradiation Facilities" and "Approval of Fumigation Facilities"). The Commission decided that the work relating to implementation of the ISPMs would be the main context for the work programme of the Standing Committee on Plant Quarantine. It was recommended that four ISPMs – ISPM15, ISPM31, ISPM6 and ISPM14 – would be the main focus of the APPPC working group for implementation of ISPMs. The Commission suggested that the National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) should promote active member country participation in the development of ISPMs, especially for the regional consultation on review of draft ISPMs and implementation of reporting obligations.

H. Procedural matters of the Commissions

APHCA: Because APHCA's work has generated much interest among countries in the region, the countries in the Pacific gave the mandate to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to represent them in the APHCA General Session and pushed for membership of SPC to APHCA. Consequently, the APHCA Secretariat is exploring the possibility of amending its Agreement to open membership to intergovernmental organizations within the APHCA region.

APPPC: Adopted the recommendation on the scale and level of assessed contributions by contracting countries and called on member countries to accept the revised Plant Protection Agreement(s) as soon as possible and make financial contributions to support the activities of the Commission.

III. Conclusion

The APRC is invited to consider the work and recommendations of the RTCs with respect to their contribution to the priorities and work of the FAO Regional Office. Delegates are invited to comment on this information paper under 'Any other matters'.

