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APAARI Progress Report



**ASIA-PACIFIC ASSOCIATION OF
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS
(APAARI)**

Broadening Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific Region: An Overview*

by

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***A report presented during the GFAR NARS Sub -Committee Meeting
1st December, 2005, Marrakech, Morocco**

Broadening Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific Region: An Overview*

1. Introduction

The Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) was established in 1990 at the initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations as a political, non-profit and neutral forum of National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) in the region. Its mission is to promote agricultural research for development (ARD) in the Asia-Pacific region through inter-institutional partnership.

The objectives of APAARI are as follows:

1. Promote the exchange of scientific and technical know-how and information in agriculture;
2. Facilitate the establishment of appropriate research and training programs based on regional, bilateral, or national needs, and priorities;
3. Assist in strengthening research organization and management capability of member institutions; and
4. Strengthen cross-linkage among national, regional and international research centers and organizations including universities through jointly planned research and training programs.

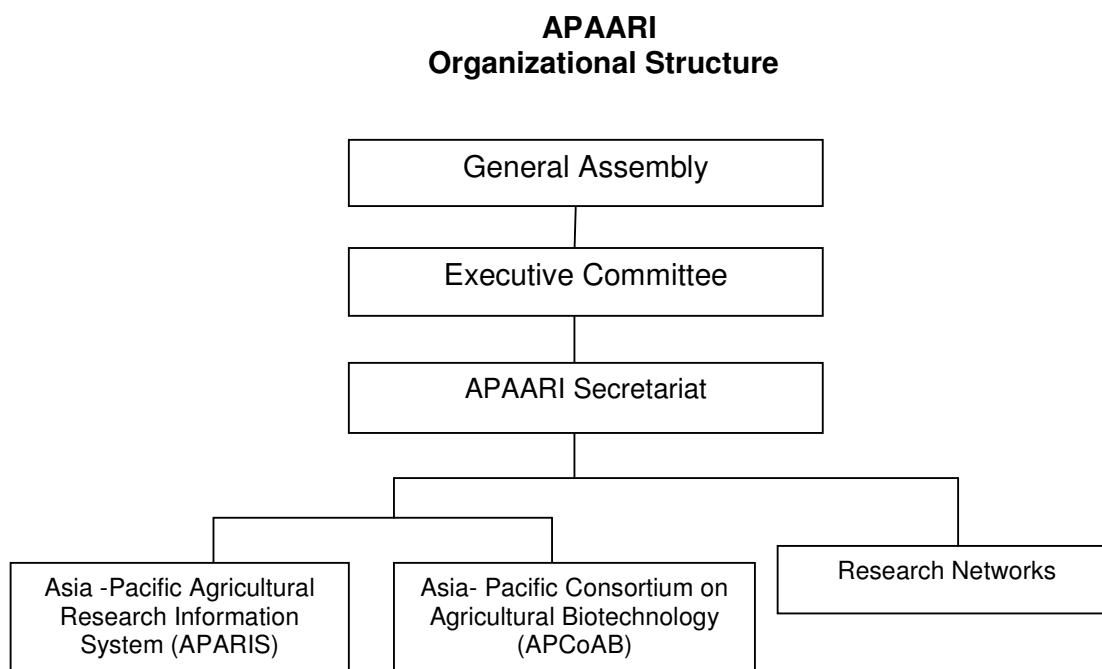
APAARI, in consultation with its stakeholders developed a long-term perspective plan and strategies (Vision 2025) to address relevant issues in ARD in the Asia-Pacific region. These strategies include regional research networking, building research partnerships, human resource development, and policy advocacy for ARD, resource generation, publication enhancement and technology transfer.

APAARI convenes General Assembly every two years to develop policies, priorities and programs. It organizes working groups, meetings, seminars, and expert consultations on regional issues as needed. It collects, collates and disseminates research information as well as maintains links with agencies/institutions/organizations engaged in similar activities within and outside the region. Moreover, APAARI promotes collaborative research among member institutions, and partnership with CGIAR/IARCs, ARIs, GFAR, Regional, Sub-Regional Fora and the Private Sector.

APAARI is a self-sustaining organization since the beginning. Its activities are conducted from the resources generated through membership fee, which is being paid regularly by its current 38 members listed in Annex 1 (Regular member NARS/NARES=20; Associate members=13; Reciprocal Members=5). In addition, some activities are conducted in partnership with and support from CG Centers, FAO, GFAR, ACIAR, etc.

*A report presented during the GFAR NARS Sub -Committee Meeting, 1st December, 2005, Marrakech, Morocco
GFAR Secretariat

Currently, APAARI operates through following organizational structure:



In line with the above organizational structure, the General Assembly develops policies, priorities and programs every two years. The Executive Committee is responsible for managing the affairs of the APAARI in accordance with policies and directives adopted by the biennial General Assembly. The Secretariat of APAARI is headed by the Executive Secretary who is responsible for carrying out the program of work and budget, convening of Executive Committee and General Assembly Meetings. Currently, the Secretariat, located at FAO Regional Office, Bangkok is manned by the Assistant Executive Secretary (Dr. Betty del Rosario), a Liaison Officer (Mr. P.K. Saha) and an Office Secretary (Ms. Urairat Rujirek).

2. Programs and Activities

There are two major programs of APAARI which address new and emerging developments in science and communications technology critical in ensuring that the agricultural research for development benefits the poor people in the Asia-Pacific region.

2.1 Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS)

(i) APARIS development- a joint initiative, a shared responsibility

As mentioned earlier, enhanced information exchange among the NARS and institutions in the Asia-Pacific region is one of the primary objectives of APAARI. During the last four years, APAARI, in close cooperation with its stakeholders, including NARS, FAO, and CG Centers, has been developing APARIS. The APARIS development is in response to the continuous needs analysis of ARD stakeholders in the region. The system is primarily driven by the National Information Nodal Points (NINPs) from member institutions, while APAARI provides a facilitator's role and an apolitical platform to share experience and knowledge. The NINPs have provided country status data which were synthesized and analyzed to identify critical issues and gaps in ICT/ICM that need to be addressed (Information and Communication Technologies in Agricultural Research for Development:

A Status Report, 2004). The APARIS shall serve a variety of agricultural information users including ARD professionals, institutions, learning community and farmers. At the global level, APARIS is being linked to other regional systems and the Global – RAIS, a GFAR initiative. Efforts shall be made to involve other ICT players, including e-learning deliverers, NGO initiatives, and the private sector.

In its early years, APAARI's primary medium of information dissemination had been through various publications. In 1995, APAARI prepared its Perspective Plan that emphasized the use of newly emerging technologies to further improve information management in NARS. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) were identified as tools that can play a significant role in facilitating information networking among member NARS and other stakeholders. Consequently, APAARI established its website www.apaari.org in 1999 and several APAARI publications are now being disseminated through it. To date, an APAARI compact disk (CD) covering all APAARI Proceedings and the 24 Success Stories has been distributed widely to serve those who lacked fast internet access. Efforts to establish research databases were initiated with significant contributions from NINPs in the Asia-Pacific region. In November 2000 and October 2002, APAARI organized expert consultations on development of APARIS. These consultations, attended by NINPs, representatives of APAARI members and stakeholder organizations, enabled APARIS to evolve from a simple concept into a basic framework of information resources for ARD, made available through APAARI web site. In 2003, APAARI organized an expert consultation on further strengthening the regional agricultural information system which recommended information flow models for APARIS and its role in ARD.

In brief, there are two phases of APARIS development: Phase I (1999-2002) and Phase II (2002 -onwards). The main components of Phase I were Management Information System (MIS) Tools; Information on Regional Events; Access to Scientific Publications; Electronic Forum; Gateway/Portal Service; Knowledge Networks on ARD; and Information Dissemination through APAARI Web Site. APARIS Phase II (2002-onwards) includes: Regional Agricultural Expert Locator (RAEL) on APAARI Web Site; Gateway for ARD Information Resources; Brochure of Useful ARD Information Resources; ICT Need Assessment of Asia-Pacific NARS; Redesign, Link Validation and Update of APAARI Web Site; and Integration of APARIS with other regional and global Agricultural Information Systems.

Therefore, APAARI has been developing an information and communication network known as APARIS since 1999. While a basic APARIS framework is in place, significant efforts are needed to promote ICT/ICM in ARD through advocacy, capacity development and information integration in the Asia-Pacific region. These three themes are priorities in the APARIS Business Plan (2004-2007) approved by the APARIS Steering Committee on August 8, 2004. Major support for this initiative was received from ACIAR since beginning, which is duly acknowledged.

Since 2004, the following major activities were conducted along the three themes in collaboration with ACIAR, GFAR, FAO, AIT and CG Centers.

(ii) Capacity Building

The capacities of the NARS of many countries in the Asia-Pacific region to effectively use new technologies such as ICT vary considerably. In order to address the concern for "digital divide", the following training workshops were conducted for various stakeholders:

1. Training workshop of NINPs from NARS which are not members of APAARI yet, August 2004 – Bhutan, Cambodia, East Timor, Myanmar, Mongolia, Laos, and Vietnam;
2. National workshop on “Linking Farmers with Researchers through ICT” in India, 2004. This workshop clearly highlighted the need for access to value added information through a well coordinated national system so that farmers gain through ICT networking and are linked to national, regional and global markets for better value of their products in order to get higher income and come above poverty scenario in most of the developing countries of the region;
3. Training workshop on Integrating National Agricultural Information Systems (NAIS) was held at AIT from 1-5 November, 2005, Thailand – 15 participants attended (11 female): South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Iran, Nepal, Sri Lanka); Southeast Asia (Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam); and the Pacific (Fiji and Papua New Guinea). This workshop was supported by GFAR and proved to be highly useful for the NINPs to accelerate the APARIS initiative in the region.

In many NARS, user skills in the use of computers and the Internet are improving. However, more advanced skills in content building and management, network and information systems management within ARD Institutions need to be strengthened. This will be the top priority in capacity building in 2006 and beyond. GFAR support has been requested to conduct three sub-regional Training of Trainers (2 per country) in 2006 , as follows: South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) in collaboration with SAIC; Southeast Asia (ASEAN countries) in collaboration with SEARCA; and the Pacific APAARI member institutions, in collaboration with SPC and member NARS. In 2007, national workshops shall be conducted and facilitated by NINPs and trained NAIS trainers, with the participants coming from major national research institutions.

(iii) Advocacy

A publication on “Information and Communication Technologies in Agricultural Research for Development in the Asia-Pacific Region: A Status Report” was brought out based on the country status data reflecting the critical issues and gaps that need to be filled. This publication was used to sensitize policy makers and ARD managers during the APAARI General Assembly in December 2004. Both the sensitization and the training workshops have had favorable outcome in terms of achieving functional web-based NAIS as reported by most NARS (except Fiji) during the November 1-5, 2005 training workshop.

APAARI associates itself and networks with other initiatives and forums to promote awareness about ICT/ICM in ARD and publicize APARIS through professional meetings/conferences such as AFITA, APAN regional meetings and FAO workshops.

Many NARS and ARD institutions in Asia-Pacific have made rapid progress in using ICT for knowledge access at all levels. Sharing of knowledge and success stories will be critical for NARS to benefit fully from technological advances made elsewhere. Hence, APAARI, with support from GFAR and ACIAR, is preparing three case studies on ICT/ICM (South Asia-India; East Asia- South Korea; and the Pacific- Papua New Guinea) which will be available during the first quarter of 2006. These case studies could be used to raise awareness, gain and sustain support of policy/ decision- makers and donors regarding ICT/ICM activities. It is also proposed to sensitize NARS leaders regarding their continued support to build strong national agricultural research information system (ARIS) in the next General Assembly of APAARI in November, 2006.

(iv) Integration of Information Resources

One of the challenges to APARIS is the integration of information resources to satisfy the needs of various agricultural information users. In 2004, APARIS produced APAARI on CD, an off-line version of APAARI web site which contains digitized reports, Newsletter, proceedings, success stories and data bases, catering to the needs of APAARI partners without internet access. An updated version APAARI on CD 2005 has recently been disseminated. APARIS has also developed a separate (but also linked) web site for the Asia-Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology (APCoAB). The Asia-Pacific NARS on CD, with inputs from the NINPs, is currently being developed, and will be available in 2006.

The development of integration tools, services and linkages have been initiated since 2004. These are the Regional Agricultural Expert Locator (RAEL) and Regional Agricultural Information Gateway (RAIG) functions. The RAEL function will maintain a database of agricultural experts in the region. The RAIG function will perform keyword – based search on the ARD information resources available in the region. In 2006, further development of these tools will be undertaken to enhance inter-institutional knowledge and information sharing. Moreover, the use of common data standards for information content development and networking will be fully explored to make integration of information resources easier for the benefit of all stakeholders. With expected support from GFAR, ACIAR and FAO, an inter-regional workshop is planned in 2006 to share experiences and jointly develop integration tools.

(v) Challenges

The commitment of member NARS and the continuous involvement of NINPs will be critical in further developing, maintaining and updating APARIS. Capacity development for those which are still in the initial stage of ICT/ICM development will have to be sustained, with funding support co-shared by all support institutions and donors. The current user base will have to be expanded to include other stakeholders who are also generators of knowledge and agricultural information, such as the students, farmers, private sector and NGO's

2.2. The Asia-Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology (APCoAB)

The Asia-Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology (APCoAB) was established in 2003 under the umbrella of APAARI, being a joint initiative of APAARI and FAO, in order to promote appropriate use of emerging agri-technologies and tools in the region. ICRISAT, being an active partner, has provided support to APCoAB Secretariat in its office in New Delhi. APAARI, Rockefeller Foundation, Monsanto, Mahyco and ACIAR have provided initial funding support, since its establishment. Further support from GFAR is also envisaged.

APCoAB's mission is "To harness the benefits of agricultural biotechnology for human and animal welfare through the application of latest scientific technologies while safeguarding the environment for the advancement of society in the Asia-Pacific Region".

APCoAB's main thrust is:

- To serve as a neutral forum for the key partners engaged in research, development, commercialization and education/ learning of agricultural biotechnology as well as environmental safety in the Asia-Pacific region.
- To facilitate and promote the process of greater public awareness and understanding relating to important issues of IPR's *sui generis* systems, biosafety,

- risk assessment harmonization of regulatory procedures, and benefit sharing in order to address various concerns relating to adoption of agricultural biotechnology.
- To facilitate human resources development for meaningful application of agricultural biotechnologies to enhance sustainable agricultural productivity, as well as product quality, for the welfare of both farmers and consumers.

APCoAB has carried out the following activities in the recent past:

(i) Meetings Organized

1. A Workshop on “Public Private Partnership on the Use of Agribiotechnology for Sustainable Solutions to Brassica Pest Problems” was organized in New Delhi on 10 February; 2005. The meeting was co-sponsored by AVRDC, APAARI/APCoAB and CIMBAA (Collaboration for Insect Management in Brassica in Asia and Africa). It was attended by professionals from various ministries, representatives from Indian and overseas universities; farmers representatives; international organizations and private sector. The issues discussed were related to Public Private Partnership (PPP) for Sustainable Control of Insect Pests of Brassicas, particularly Diamond Black Moth (DBM); biosafety; resistance management; economics and public acceptability of GM vegetable crops. The meeting supported formation of a Consortium (Nunhems Seed Company from private sector and Indian Agricultural Research Institute from public sector) and voiced that international organization such as FAO, GFAR etc. should support such initiatives. The partners must ensure acceptability of the technology (also socially and ethically), biosafety issues (in terms of long term impact on environment and management of insect resistance). The technology as far as possible should be scale neutral and thus should benefit both small and marginal farmers.
2. APCoAB also organized a Brainstorming Session on “Public-Private Partnership in Agricultural Biotechnology on March 14, 2005 in New Delhi. A clear message that emerged was the need of a mutual trust between the public and private partners. The meeting recommended the following: developing countries should come out with a national strategy on public-private partnership identifying the specific priority areas of cooperation between the public and private partners; need for a macro-level policy change and a well-defined mechanism for IPR and benefit sharing, using existing models of partnership; required attitudinal change and corporate culture in public institutions necessary with decentralized decision-making; capacity building in the field of scientific policy and legal matters; private sector must invest in basic research and must have a balance between profits and meeting their social obligations; set up incubation facilities specially for nurturing start-up companies thereby encouraging early stage innovations through appropriate partnership mechanisms.

It is proposed to continue with dialogue on PPP in the region to understand existing models of partnership and generate confidence building between public and private institutions for enhanced partnership in future.

(ii) APCoAB website

Initially, APCoAB website was established as a link to APAARI website. This website has now been updated and is directly operated by APCoAB office in New Delhi, which keeps on up-dating information on APCoAB and other activities related to agricultural biotechnology. The website can be visited at www.apcoab.org.

(iii) High Level Policy Dialogue Organized

APCoAB facilitated APAARI in developing a concept note for High Level Policy Dialogue on Biotechnology and approached FAO and GFAR for support. As an outcome, a “High Level Policy Dialogue on Biotechnology for Food Security and Poverty Alleviation: Opportunities and Challenges” was organized jointly by FAO, APAARI and GFAR on 7-9 November, 2005 in Bangkok, Thailand, which was a great success. The Proceedings of the Dialogue are currently in drafting stage.

(iv) APCoAB Publications

- Revised brochure on APCoAB has been published and circulated widely.
- Proceedings of Brainstorming Session on Public-Private-Partnership in Agricultural Biotechnology: Highlights and Recommendations.
- “Commercialization of Bt Corn in the Philippines: A Status Report” authored by Philippine experts (Dr. Reynaldo Eborá *et al.*). This publication is an updated account on transgenic maize in the Philippines based on R&D initiative of the national program.
- “Bt Cotton in India” publication is forthcoming.

(v) Participation in Meetings/Workshop

APCoAB Coordinator has participated in a number of meetings relating to issues concerning APCoAB objectives.

(vi) APCoAB Steering Committee

APCoAB Steering Committee, consisting of diverse stakeholder groups such as NARS of three sub-regions, FAO, CGIAR, GFAR, Private Sector, NGOs, ISAAA etc. has been meeting regularly twice a year. The fourth meeting was held on 6 November, 2005 in Bangkok. The Steering Committee provides guidance on program structure/workplan of APCoAB activities and overall directions on policy related matters.

3. Expert Consultations and Meetings

APAARI has been regularly organizing expert consultations and meetings on issues of importance and relevance to ARD in the region. Since 1996, efforts have been made to address important subjects/themes critical for promoting ARD in the Asia-Pacific region, and has strived to include all stakeholders in these consultations/meetings. Annexure I provides a list of such meetings organized since 1996.

4. Partnership with CSOs

APAARI strives to involve all stakeholders, including CSOs, in its programs and activities. As can be seen from the details provided in Annexure II, a number of NGOs and farmers representatives have taken active part in APAARI meetings. Efforts are on to have continued partnership of representative organizations from the region, having established legitimacy of the constituencies involved in agricultural research for development.

Since 2004, ANGOC agreed to serve on the Steering Committee of APCoAB. Negotiations are currently on for their continued participation in APAARI/APCoAB/APARIS related activities. Other modes of partnership with IFAP and ASFARNET are being considered.

5. Partnership with GFAR

APAARI and its members appreciate very much the support received from GFAR during 2005 for the following activities:

1. Research gap analysis in two sub-regions: the Pacific (1-7 October 2005, New Caledonia); and Southeast Asia (27-28 October 2005, IRRI, Philippines);
2. High Level Policy Dialogue on Biotechnology, 7-9 November 2005, Bangkok, Thailand (in collaboration with FAO –RAP);
3. APARIS Activities such as (a) Training workshop on Integrating National Agricultural Information System (NAIS), 1-5 November 2005, AIT, Thailand; (b) Success story on ICT/ICM (3 case studies in progress); and Asia-Pacific NARS on CD (in progress).

We are also planning to have a joint follow up on PHT Expert Consultation that was organized last year and see if a GPP in this important area could be developed with active partnership of other Regional Fora, under GFAR umbrella.

An Inter-regional Network on Cotton (INCANA) has already been established in which APAARI is actively participating with AARINENA and GFAR. It has recently facilitated a traveling workshop on Hybrid and Bt Cotton in India which took place from 21-28 November, 2005, with active support of Indian NARS (ICAR) and MAHYCO – a leading Private Seed Company.

6. APAARI Work plan for 2006

The APAARI Work Plan for 2006 is given in Annex III. In 2006, APAARI shall further strengthen collaboration with GFAR, FAO, ACIAR, CG Centers, Foundations and other Regional Fora to ensure effective implementation of its programs.

Major emphasis will be to continue strengthening its two programs (APARIS and APCoAB) and the research networks in active partnership with CG Centres and other international organizations. Also efforts would continue towards building stronger partnership with CSOs in the region. Also special efforts will be made to ensure membership of other developing country NARS in the region. Efforts will specially be made to establish functional linkages with other regional organizations such as ASEAN, SAARC, SPC, APEC etc. and to have active participation in the FAO Regional Conference as well as Global Forum 2006.

Annexure I**Expert Consultations and Meetings Held:**

- (i) NARS-CGIAR Partnership for Agricultural Research and Development, 1996;
- (ii) Priority Setting by NARS in the Asia-Pacific Region, 1996;
- (iii) Management and Strengthening of Research Networks in the Asia-Pacific Region, 1997;
- (iv) Research Management Mechanisms of NARS, 1998
- (v) Development of APAARI Vision 2025, 1999;
- (vi) Strategies to implement APAARI Vision 2025, 2000;
- (vii) Development of Regional Agricultural Information System, 2000;
- (viii) Regional Priority Setting for Agricultural Research for Development in the Asia-Pacific Region, 2001;
- (ix) Status of Biotechnology in Agriculture in Asia and Pacific, 2002;
- (x) Development of Second Phase of APARIS, 2002;
- (xi) Strengthening of Research Partnerships through Networks and Consortia, 2002;
- (xii) Strengthening Regional Agricultural Information System and Research Networks, 2003;
- (xiii) Establishment of Asia-Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology , 2003;
- (xiv) Post harvest Technologies for Ensuring Food Security and Value Addition for Enhanced Income, 2004;
- (xv) Brainstorming Session on Public-Private Partnership in Agricultural Biotechnology, 2005;
- (xvi) Research Needs Assessment for South Asia, 2004; Southeast Asia, 2005; and the Pacific, 2005;
- (xvii) High Level Policy Dialogue on Biotechnology for Food Security and Poverty Alleviation: Opportunities and Challenges, 2005; and
- (xviii) Roundtable meeting on Implementation of International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, 2005

Annexure II**CSOs Participation in APAARI Expert Consultations**

Topic	Date/Venue	Participating Organization
Expert Consultation on the Status of Biotechnology	21-23 March 2002, Bangkok, Thailand	ANGOC(Philippines), Gene Campaign (India), Forum on Biotechnology and Food Security (India)
Expert Consultation on Strengthening Regional Information Systems and Regional Networks	1-4 December 2003, Bangkok, Thailand	Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals (ISAP/AgroWatch, (India)
International Workshop on Research Needs Assessment and Prioritization of Agricultural Research	7-8 October 2004, Hyderabad, India	
Expert Consultation on Post harvest Technologies	1-3 December 2004, Bangkok, Thailand	ITDG (Bangladesh), ASFARNET (Indonesia), Federation of Free Farmers (Philippines), ANGOC (Philippines)
Research Needs Assessment in Southeast Asia	27-28 October 2005, IRRI, Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines	ANGOC (Philippines), Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines (BCP), ANGAT Farmers Association (Philippines)
High Level Policy Dialogue on Biotechnology	7-9 November 2005, Bangkok, Thailand	Farmers Forum in India , South Asia Rural Reconstruction (SARRA, India)
Roundtable meeting on the Implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)	10 November 2005, Bangkok, Thailand	South Asia Rural Reconstruction Association (SARRA, India)

Annexure III

APAARI WORK PLAN 2006

Activity	Details	Remarks
1. Publications	Success story on ICT/ICM (3 Case studies: South Asia- India; East Asia- South Korea; the Pacific- Papua New Guinea)- 1 ST Quarter *	In progress
	Asia-Pacific NARS on CD- 1 ST Quarter *	In progress
	Proceedings of two sub-regional needs assessment workshops (Southeast Asia and the Pacific)- 1 ST Quarter *	In progress
	APAARI Newsletter (December 2005 , June and December 2006)	On-going activity
	Proceedings of Expert Consultation (High Level Policy Dialogue) *	In progress
	A publication on "Achievements of APAARI: Completion of 15 years"	New activity
2. Meetings and Expert Consultations	Executive Committee Meetings (May & Oct/Nov)	Regular activity
	APCoAB Steering Committee Meeting (June & Oct/Nov)	Regular activity
	APARIS Steering Committee Meeting	
	9 th APAARI General Assembly and Expert Consultation on topic related to GFAR's theme" Current and Future Contributions of Agricultural Research to the Millennium Development Goals" (To coincide with GFAR Global Forum 2006)	For GFAR support
	Synthesis workshop on regional research needs and priorities (mid 2006)	For GFAR support
	Regional meeting of 12 country negotiators on the Implementation of ITPGRFA- before April 2006	For GFAR, IPGRI, FAO support
3. APARIS activities	Web-site development to be made more dynamic and linked to other Members' websites; networks data base to be updated	Support of ACIAR and GFAR anticipated
	Revision of APAARI poster and updating of mailing list	On-going activity
	Three sub-regional training workshops for NINPs and two ICT/ICM trainers from each country (to be conducted in collaboration with other sub-regional organizations: SAIC (South Asia), SEARCA (Southeast Asia), and SCP-the Pacific)	For GFAR support
	Integration of Information Resources (RAEL and Information Gateway) (inter-regional collaboration /joint development of integration tools for NAIS-RAIS development as recommended during the Training Workshop on Integrating NAIS, 1-5 November, 2005)	For GFAR support
4. APCoAB	As decided by APCoAB Steering Committee	For GFAR support to APCoAB as Regional Partnership Program will be appreciated (It could be a GPP in future)