

# **Rice-Wheat Information Sheet**

**No.15**

## **Regional Steering Committee Meeting**

We are pleased to report that we had a very productive meeting of the Regional Steering Committee at Islamabad during 22-23 Jan. All the partners were represented; the NARS by their respective heads, with the exception of Nepal where the Executive Director position was vacant. M S U Chowdhury represented Bangladesh, R S Paroda, India, and C M Anwar Khan, Pakistan, IARCs were represented by T G Reeves, Director General, CIMMYT, and the donors by M J Petit, World Bank. In addition, we had an enthusiastic panel of resource persons including M A Razzaque, R P Sapkota, M Akbar, P Hobbs, Uma Lele, A S Khehra, and Y L Nene. The meeting was held in the Holiday Inn, Islamabad and we are extremely thankful to our hosts, the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, for making all the arrangements for the successful event. C M Anwar Khan took over as Chairman of the Consortium from M S U Chowdhury.

The Committee made the following decisions

- The RTCC's recommendation to synthesize the four project proposals, developed in the workshops held during 1995, into a unified research proposal were endorsed, together with a revision of the budget.
- NARS should develop national-level research plans on the same lines to solicit funds from bilateral sources. They should also and use their existing resources.
- The Facilitation Unit (FU) should provide the assistance needed to develop these programs.
- The Rice-Wheat Information Sheet should report technical information based on inputs from different sites.
- A working paper/review papers series on selected topics should be initiated. Such papers should present the latest findings on important issues affecting R/w productivity.
- R/WC sites should be linked by a computer network to facilitate sharing a common database and research information.
- Germplasm development issues need greater attention and should be integrated with the already identified research themes. IRRI and CIMMYT should initiate a dialog in this topic that could be followed up.
- China should continue to be an Associate Member.
- Activities suggested for FU during 1996 were approved, as was an additional staff member for the FU.
- The next meeting of the RSC will be held in Bangladesh in Jan 1997.

## **Newcomers**

We welcome Dr J C Gautam who has succeeded Dr S B Nepali as Executive Director of the Nepal Agricultural Research Council, Kathmandu, Dr Gautam was formerly the Joint Secretary of the Planning Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, His Majesty's Government of Nepal.

## Visitors

Following the meetings in Islamabad, a group including M J Petit, Mrs Petit, Uma Lele, T G Reeves, Shiva Makki, and I P Abrol visited areas in India where R/W is the dominant cropping system- these locations included Karnal (Haryana), Ludhiana (Punjab), and Faizabad (Uttar Pradesh). During the visit the group interacted with scientists of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) the Central Soil Salinity Research Institute (CSSRI), Directorate of Wheat Research (DWR), and National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), all in Karnal, and the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana, and the N D University of Agriculture and Technology (NDUAT), in Faizabad. They held discussions with agricultural administrators and field development officials, and interacted with farmers. The tour was stimulating and provided a good opportunity to observe a range of production scenarios, linkages between research and development organizations, and current efforts to enhance productivity.

## Forthcoming Events

### *Traveling Workshops on Tillage and Crop Establishment*

Two traveling workshops on tillage and crop establishment are proposed for March. An eastern regional workshop during 6-13 Mar at Pusa, Bihar, India and Bhairawaha, Nepal, and another during 23-28 Mar covering northwestern areas of South Asia include northwest India and Pakistan. The objective of these workshops is to help site-level scientists to prepare a detailed, collaborative research program on tillage and crop establishment for the next 4-5 years for each Consortium site. Participants are expected to develop their own program but to include regional linkages between sites. Taking into consideration the comparative advantages of some sites in certain research areas; scientists from these locations will be asked to volunteer and to take the lead on issues where they have the advantage. The research will be diagnostic, adaptive, and strategic. This will ensure that we build on existing information, ensure that new technology is tested with strong farmer participation, and hopefully ensure good farmer adoption. The programs will have an integrated approach that will include such factors as nutrients, variety, IPM, machinery development, water, policy, social science, and other related disciplines.

Emphasis will be on zero-tillage reduced tillage with 4-wheeled tractors, and bed-planting systems. Issues of rice establishment including; the development of a transplanter, direct seeding rice on puddled soils, and dry seeding rice where puddling is not done will be included. A systems approach will be used to examine the interactions of these different technologies on total system productivity, and the longer-term implications for biological and edaphic resources.

The workshops will be facilitated by P Hobbs of CIMMYT who has been extremely active and has interacted with NARS scientists in identifying issues and developing research strategies in this important area.

### *Social Sciences/Policy Workshop*

Considering that social science and policy-related issues were not adequately discussed and covered in the four thematic workshops, the RTCC recommended that the FU should organize a regional workshop to discuss these issues, so that relevant research can be strengthened within each theme. During the RSC Meeting, Uma Lele raised

questions on bridging the yield gap in low production areas, and the role of social sciences in the Consortium's thrust areas.

It was proposed that a Social Science/Policy Workshop should be held in Kathmandu at the end of April. The RSC endorsed the Workshop, and suggested that the resulting report should be a basis for deciding whether socio-economic issues should be developed as a separate theme, or could be incorporated into the four already identified themes as suggested by the RTCC. National Coordinators will be contacted with Workshop details.

### ***Collaborative Ventures***

The RSC was informed of several collaborative initiatives that the Consortium is trying to promote with such other Advanced Research Institutions (ARIs) as the Soil Management-Cooperative Research Program (SM-CRSP) led by Cornell University, ODA Holdback Funds on Tillage led by CIMMYT, and Land Quality Indicators (LQI)

## **Reports**

Dr D Jha, Director, National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research (NCAEPR), New Delhi has informed the FU that a meeting was held at the Centre in early Jan to initiate a preliminary discussion and set the agenda for socio-economic research on problems and prospects related to R/W systems in the Indo-Gangetic Plains. Among others, Prabhu Pingali, IRRI and Ramesh Bhatia, IIMI participated in the meeting. Seven major themes have been identified as researchable issues

1. Understanding R/W economy-profitability, demand-supply scenario, and projects for rice, wheat, and alternate crops.
2. Data for rice-wheat system-area, crop intensity, sustainability indicators, etc.
3. Analysis of productivity trends by cropping intensity, rainfed vs. irrigated ecologies including total-factor productivity.
4. Explanation of productivity stagnation/decline in terms of bio-physical and socio-economic factors.
5. Options for reversing declining productivity-technological and policy options e.g., diversification, labor management, economic evaluation.
6. Equity issues-farm size differentiation, employment-related issues.
7. Environmental/ecological consequences.

The group decided to follow up these discussions during the proposed Social Sciences/Policy Workshop to be held in Kathmandu during April.

## **Publications**

The following publications were recently published by our partners

Salient Research Findings of Practical Utility-Singh B, Chhibba, I M, and Brar, J S, 1995, Department of Soils, Punjab Agricultural University.

Contact: Dr Bhajan Singh, Head, Department of Soil Sciences, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab, India

Sustainability of the Rice-Wheat System in Bangladesh-Proceedings of a Workshop held in 1995-Razzaque M A, Badaruddin M, and Meisner C A (eds).

Contact: Dr C A Meisner at CIMMYT, Bangladesh at:cm@Bawip.bdmail.net