

Rice-Wheat Information Sheet

No. 29

News

Facilitation Unit to be shifted

The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) in its fourth meeting held at ICRISAT Patancheru has requested CIMMYT to take over the responsibility of hosting the Facilitation Unit (FU) from ICRISAT and to act as the Convening Center for the Consortium (see details of the meeting below). The FU will now be housed at the CIMMYT's Country Office to be opened shortly in New Delhi and the details of transition are being worked out.

Changes

Hamiz Uddin Ahmed, Director (Research) at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute is the new Rice-Wheat Co-ordinator for Bangladesh. He replaces ANMR Karim who has retired as Director (Research) at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute after a distinguished service and we wish him a peaceful retired life!

India signs Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Cornell University

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has signed a MoU with Cornell University for facilitating the implementation of the SM-CRSP Projects in the country. It is proposed to hold a "start-up" workshop to plan the activities and to develop work plan during late May 98 in India.

Views

Plant Parasitic Nematodes in Rice-Wheat Systems of Nepal.

Excerpts from an article by R R Pokhare, Institute of Agriculture and Animal Sciences, Rampur Campus, Chitwan, Nepal.

Happenings

Traveling Seminar on Tillage and Crop Establishment

As planned earlier, a 10 days travelling seminar was organised by the FU during 26 Mar – 3 Apr 98 in north-west India and Pakistan. 13 scientists from the four countries participated in the seminar along with Peter Hobbs of CIMMYT Nepal (Co-ordinator) and Frans Neuman of International Agricultural Center, Wageningen. It is proposed to bring out a publication / monograph on the seminar based on individual reports from the participants, shortly. The FU and Cornell University jointly sponsored the Seminar.

Fourth meeting of the RSC

The meeting was held at the ICRISAT Campus in Patancheru, India (which was to be held in Nepal during Jan 98 but was postponed due to logistical reasons). Z Karim, Executive Chairman of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council handed over the Chair of the Consortium to D Joshi, Executive Director of the Nepal Agricultural Research Council - who will continue to hold the position until the next meeting of the RSC (to be held in 1999).

The National Rice-Wheat Coordinators of Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan presented a brief report on the research and related activities conducted during 97 and also brought to the fore their expectations from the partners and the FU *per-se*. The presentations brought out the benefits of the multi-faceted systems' approach and the NARS expressed that there have been some difficulties in bringing together multi disciplinary teams at the sites though the situation is changing. The presentations also brought to the fore the need for integration of scientific activities at the site level and the need to strengthen the capacity of the site team. The NARS strongly expressed the need for incremental support by the FU for site level activities and the need for some catalytic input from the IARCs - for both strategic and applied research efforts. Abrol presented the funding status and the need to ensure sustained funding of the Consortium activities so as to take care the requirements of the NARS viz. capacity building, technology generation and dissemination, and to ensure quality of research at the sites.

Facilitator gave a detailed account of the FU's efforts and activities (of 97) as recommended and endorsed by RSC in the previous meetings. Considering the lack of resources, the activities of the FU have been limited to the extent of available funds and the partners were advised to raise resources for specific activities from bilateral/multilateral donors.

Summary of Decisions

1. Centers should include rice-wheat research as part of core activity in their annual budget plans to CGIAR.
2. More interactions should be encouraged between the NARS scientists and Chinese scientists to facilitate information exchange and knowledge sharing.
3. IRRI was advised to play a catalytic role in INM research and strengthen site level activities in consultation with the FU and the National Coordinators.
4. IWMI would be requested to communicate their plan of action vis-à-vis Consortium and to participate in the activities in a more effective manner.
5. FU should give priority to improve information generation and its dissemination (a CD-ROM and a Publication on the details of site including programs, partners, etc. to be developed by FU in consultation with the NARS).
6. FU should provide limited and fixed operational funds to the National Coordinators. However, the Committee felt that this should be sustained with national resources.
7. FU should establish a Competitive Grant Fund with the modalities suggested by the RTCC and to compliment existing programs or to initiate new pilot level projects.
8. FU will now be housed in the CIMMYT Country Office in India (to be opened shortly) pending the decision of the RSC on the "Options Paper" (to be prepared by CIMMYT) and ICAR would provide free office space to the CIMMYT Office in New Delhi.
9. It was decided that henceforth "open house discussions" should be conducted during the Meetings of RSC prior to the Executive Committee meetings. Accordingly, senior representatives of IRRI, ICRISAT, IWMI, Cornell University, and donor/development agencies such as DFID, ACIAR, ADB, etc. would be invited to participate in the discussions of the RSC.
10. RSC requests the TAC to conduct a review of the Consortium's activities and future needs.
11. The permanent executive of RSC would now comprise of Chief Executives of the four NARS, Director General of CIMMYT and, the Donor Group Chairman. The Facilitator would continue to act as the Member-Secretary of the RSC.
12. Next meeting of RSC would be held in Nepal during Feb 99 (dates to be worked out by FU in consultation with the members).

Planning ahead

RTCC Meeting

The Seventh meeting of the RTCC is proposed to be held in Faisalabad, Pakistan during 10-13 Sep 98 (tentative) and the meeting (2 days) would be followed by a field trip (1 day).

Publication

Khepar, S.D., Sondhi, SK, Kumar, S., and Singh, K. 1997. Modelling effects of cultural practices on water use in paddy fields – A case study. Research Bulletin NP/SWE-1. Department of Soil and Water Engineering, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana – 141004, India.

A recent publication by the scientists of Punjab Agricultural University (Khepar and others) has emphasised that by adopting proper transplanting time the declining water table in intensive rice-wheat areas can be checked. According to the authors currently nearly 60 percent of the rice area in the state is planted before 15th of June and the remaining between 16th June and 15th July. The study shows that if most rice transplanting can be adjusted between 16th to 30th of June water losses from the system will be minimised and as a result the declining water tables can be checked without any yield reductions. Authors further suggest that the height of field bunts could be such (15 to 17.5 cm) as to allow maximum storage with improved water application schedules. The study deals with modelling effects of cultural practices on use in rice fields.

Over exploitation of ground water resources is posing a serious problem of declining water table in the rice-wheat areas of Punjab. Over the past 15 years water table has been declining at an average rate of 0.23 m yr⁻¹ almost all over the sweet groundwater covering about 80 percent of the State area.

Please write to Dr Khepar for a copy of the publication at the Department of Soil and Water Engineering.

Food for thought

The future is like heaven - everyone exalts it, but no one wants to go there now. - *James Baldwin*