

Rice-Wheat Information Sheet

No.4

Welcome again

Once more it is three weeks since the last RWIS was sent out. This time I must confess I was just too busy trying to cope with shifting targets to put it together. The reasons may become clearer as you read on.

National Workshops - India

The Indian National Rice-Wheat Workshop was held at the Directorate of Wheat Research in Karnal on the 18-19 Oct 1994. There were about thirty rice-wheat scientists from most of the R-W Sites in north India. Dr Bhumbra, retired Vice Chancellor of Hisar Agricultural University (HAU) with his wide knowledge of Indian agriculture, Dr S M Virmani from ICRISAT Asia Center who came to discuss a GIS workshop, and the Interim Facilitator also participated. The Workshop was chaired by Dr. I P Abrol, Deputy Director General (Soils), ICAR with support from Dr S Nagarajan, Project Director (Wheat) and Interim R-W Convener, who organized the Workshop. The Workshop developed a document outlining the major sustainability research thrusts in rice-wheat based cropping systems that are perceived for the next 5-10 years. It is intended that this document should be used to help identify for future research funding proposals. Also identified were issues where there could be collaboration with IARCs and other NARS. The Workshop broke into groups to consider the following five general areas for research: · Cropping systems · Water management and tillage · Nutrient management · Pesticide, herbicide use and the environment · Policies For each topic short statements were prepared describing the sustainability issue involved, the present state of knowledge, and what research needs to be done. The report from this Workshop will be available as a printed document, hopefully in time for the RTCC Meeting in Kathmandu. A list of possible collaborative activities in India under the Rice-Wheat Initiative was provided by the Facilitation Unit (FU). Nepal and Bangladesh The dates for the Nepal Rice-Wheat Workshop have been set for 31 Oct-2 Nov and those for the Bangladesh Workshop 5-6 Nov, but there still might be some changes in these dates. The US\$ 1000 from IFAD has issued to help in holding these three Workshops has been issued. The dates of the National Workshop in Pakistan have yet to indicated to the FU. Regional Technical Coordination Committee (RTCC) Meeting The plans for this Meeting, reported in the last RWIS, have been changed. Changes started when it was learned that there were difficulties in participants coming to India because of the health situation. The meeting was to be moved to Kathmandu, Nepal 8-10 Nov with the agreement of all NARS. Notices were sent out, but subsequently word was received that these dates would be at the same time as the national election in Nepal when the situation might be a bit unsettled. It was therefore agreed to hold the meeting 22-24 Nov in Kathmandu. Notices have gone out to this effect. I know that this frequent shifting of dates has caused problems for many of the participants. For this the FU apologizes. Replies indicate that most participating groups will be able to attend, and that it should be a good meeting. Incidentally, an invitation has been sent to China requesting their participation. In addition, the Nepalese have been requested the involvement of a legumes scientist at the meeting to help broaden the cropping base. In conjunction with the RTCC Meeting the IARC representatives will be holding meetings on 21 and 25 Nov to plan how they can coordinate their activities to be of most help to the Rice-Wheat Initiative.

Facilitation Unit

The FU is now definitely established in the ICRISAT Delhi Office, but there have been hitches in completing its staffing. A car and a temporary driver are now in place, but the Interim Facilitator is still managing the secretarial work. In addition there have been communication difficulties with the fax and e-mail being frequently unreliable.

Facilitator's Visits

During this period the Interim Facilitator was able to visit, accompanied by Dr P R Hobbs and Dr R P Singh, all of the three R-W sites in India originally associated with the Initiative. These are at Pantnagar, Faizabad/Kumarganj, and Karnal/Kaul. The level of research-plot management at all three locations is very high. There must be a wealth of information in the many long-term R-W trials at these stations. Each one seems to have its own unique

information to contribute to the question of how sustainable the R-W cropping system is. The Initiative would do well to support an activity to bring the information from all these trials together to try to interpret what is happening. A first step is to get the agreement of all those involved to share their information, and work with the Initiative. Then all trials would need to be examined critically, possibly by an independent consultant, to ensure proper analysis of the data before all the results are drawn together. This drawing together might best be done through one or more workshops. This would be a good topic for the RTCC Meeting to consider. Likewise, there is a lot of information about the use of green manure, minimum tillage, rapid seeding practices, equipment development, use of fertilizers and various pesticides, and water management. Any one of these topics could form the basis for a workshop or travelling seminar. There is also a wealth of information from the farmer monitoring that has been going on at these sites for a number of years; again, ready materials for a collaborative activity. The close association that existed between the three Site Coordinators and the National Convener in India needs to be renewed. The job is not made easier with the establishment of seven more R-W Sites in India. The Interim Facilitator was not able to travel to attend the Wheat Research Meeting in Pakistan 10-11 Oct as all flights from India to Pakistan were canceled at that time, but Dr P Hobbs from Nepal was able to participate.

Progress Report

The FU prepared an Initiative Progress Report to be presented on 26 Oct to the Initiative's Donor Support Group at International Centers Week in Washington. The Donors have been pleased to note that the Initiative has been activated so quickly. Hopefully this will be translated into a good level of financial support. In meetings with World Bank staff both from Washington and locally the Interim Facilitator has felt strong support for the Initiative. The next R-W Information Sheet is planned for 11 Nov as the Interim Facilitator will be away in Nepal and Bangladesh until that time.