

Rice-Wheat Information Sheet

No.5

Hello

This three week period has mainly involved preparing for the Regional Technical Coordination Committee (RTCC) Meeting, and participating in the Nepal National Rice-Wheat Systems Workshops.

National Workshops

Nepal

The National Rice-Wheat Systems Workshop in Nepal was called to: review and quantify existing farmers' practices, land resources, research activities, and the system's productivity and sustainability, review current and past research activities, and prepare the National Strategy Plan to increase the productivity and sustainability of the System.

About 50 participants met 31 Oct-2 Nov in Kathmandu to do this. There was participation by senior scientists and administrators from many disciplines and departments including members from the Planning Commission and Extension. Participating in the inaugural Session were the Hon'ble Member of the Nepal Planning Commission, the Director General of Agriculture, NARC's Farmer Representative, the Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture, the General Secretary of SAARC, and the representatives from CIMMYT, USAID, and NGOs. The Executive Director of NARC, Mr S B Nepali, took an active role throughout the meeting.

The Technical Session on the first day consisted of well-prepared reports from each Rice-Wheat Lead Center and discussions on "Highlights of previous research results, key problems, priority of research areas, and current research thrusts and proposals". The topic of the first Technical Session on the second day was "Increasing productivity and sustainability of rice-wheat systems and their problems in the various regions of Nepal." As well as reports from the Regional Directors there were reports from two NGOs. The NGOs stressed the importance of market forces in encouraging farmers to move from subsistence into commercial production. The remainder of the second day was spent in four groups, two discussing the system in the Terai, and two the systems in the Mid-hills. These groups reviewed research results, problems, and proposals to develop a research strategy and a National Strategy Plan. Areas of concern included soil fertility and health, water management, declining profitability, insect, diseases and weed buildup, delayed plant establishment, varietal incompatibility, seed distribution and storage, mechanization, reforestation and alternative fuel sources, labor scarcity and cost, and other policy considerations. The document prepared as a result of this meeting will be used in its final form by the National R-W Convener as a basis for his input at the RTCC Meeting.

There was a final session on future prospects for research and development coordination, and funding support in Nepal. The amount of commitment and understanding by the Executive Director bodies well for the future of research in Nepal on rice-wheat based cropping systems.

Bangladesh

The National Rice-Wheat Workshop in Bangladesh is presently set for 5-16 Nov. There has been considerable difficulty in finding a date when the Agriculture Secretary can be present to inaugurate the meeting. Plans for the Workshop look very detailed.

Pakistan

The Facilitator has been informed that the National Program in Pakistan has held the necessary meetings to prepare the document for the National Convener to take to the RTCC Meeting in Nepal.

Regional Technical Coordination Committee (RTCC) Meeting

This Meeting is in the final stages of planning. It is to be held at Hotel de l'Annapurna in Kathmandu, Nepal 22-24 Nov 1994. A Committee member and a resource person are coming from each of the four countries. In addition there will be an observer from China and the Coordinator of the Grain Legumes Program in Nepal. There will be representatives from CIMMYT, IRRI, ICRISAT, IMMI, IBSRAM, and Cornell University. After the Opening Ceremony the international participants will make short statements indicating how they feel their organizations can contribute to the Initiative, and the National Conveners will then make their presentations.

As indicated in RWIS No.3 the Discussion Session will center around the six projects; productivity trends, crop establishment, soil fertility maintenance, water management, ecological consequences, and policy options. It is expected that the output will indicate what has been done, and where we are going. Although there will be consideration of national strategic plans the main focus is expected to be on the collaborative activities of the Initiative.

Regional Steering Committee (RSC) Meeting

In discussions with the Chairman of the RSC, Dr R S Paroda, it was felt that the RSC should meet next in Bangladesh in early January 1995. The suggested dates were 9-10 Jan, but this is a problem for one Committee member, so a general survey of members is being made to determine the most suitable time for the Meeting.

Facilitator's Visits The Facilitator travelled to Nepal on the 28 Oct to make preparations for the RTCC Meeting, and to participate in the National R-W Workshop. He was also able to visit the World Bank Representative in Nepal, who expressed considerable interest in the Initiative. The World Bank Agricultural Representative in Nepal participated in the Workshop. The Facilitator also travelled to Karnal, Haryana, India to attend the laying of the cornerstone of the new Directorate of Wheat Research building by the Union Minister of Agriculture. The next issue of the R-W Information Sheet and will contain a report of the RTCC Meeting.