

ASFARNET Links

The official newsletter of the Asian Farmers Regional Network

We are happy to share with you this maiden issue of ASFARNET Links. Through this newsletter, ASFARNET hopes to provide information on relevant developments in agriculture and economy affecting farmers in the region.

We welcome your comments and suggestions to further improve our newsletter. Please contact:

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"...that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow on a spot of ground where one grew before, would deserve better of mankind and do more essential service to his country..."

-Jonathan Swift

ASIAN FARMERS FORM REGIONAL NETWORK

Farmers from India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam have grouped themselves into the Asian Farmers Regional Network or ASFARNET to promote the active exchange of experiences and knowledge on alternative modern farming technologies. This was a major highlight of a capacity building workshop on "Farmer to Farmer: Sharing Experiences Related to Agricultural Biotechnology" held in Manila and Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines from December 3-6, 2003.

The workshop aimed to, among others: increase Southeast Asian farmers' awareness of the challenges facing agricultural biotechnology; enhance farmers' knowledge of policy issues, based on stakeholders' experiences with agricultural biotechnology in the Philippines; and discuss farmer-level experiences with biotechnology crops. Farmers from the United States, India and the



Philippines shared their experiences in planting genetically modified crops and how they have benefited from the technology.

In the interim, ASFARNET will be assisted by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) after which it will be coordinated by a Secretariat headed by Mr. Edwin Paraluman, a farmer-leader from the Philippines.

ASFARNET holds first meeting in Thailand

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The newly organized Asian Farmers Regional Network held its first meeting in Bangkok, Thailand on 1 February 2004. Its plan of activities for the year was discussed including strategies for its operations and sustainability. ASFARNET shall initially focus on confidence and capacity building among members by promoting the sharing and exchange of knowledge, information and experiences in modern farming (pls. see next page)

ASIAN FARMERS FORM REGIONAL NETWORK *(cont)*

The farmers' network will also engage in activities that will ensure responsible farming, accelerate transfer of appropriate modern technology, and ensure community participation in these activities.

A total of 31 farmers were joined by representatives from media from the Philippines and Thailand, researchers, and representatives from research agencies and related institutions. They attended a series of lectures on biotechnology from experts in the field, visited field trials and actual farmers' fields planted to Bt corn, and engaged in active discussion of research activities in the International Rice Research

Institute and the Institute of Plant Breeding at the University of the Philippines Los Baños. Farmers were unanimous in saying that they should be given the right to choose what crop to plant and having alternative crop varieties is important to allow them to make the right decisions.

The workshop was co-organized by ISAAA, UP Los Baños, SEAMEO Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, Cornell University, and the United States Government under the auspices of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

(Source: Crop Biotech Update, 8 December 2003)

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ASFARNET members discussed future activities of the network during its meeting in Bangkok, Thailand

ASFARNET holds first meeting.... *(cont)*

technologies that can enhance present farm productivity.

As a regional network, ASFARNET shall work towards the upliftment of farmers' lives by promoting safe environment and enhancing traditional farming through the adoption of appropriate modern agricultural technologies. It shall adhere to the principles of mutual respect and equitable sharing of resources

Twelve (12) participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand attended the meeting.

The SEARCA BIC shall serve as its interim secretariat.

(with photo release)

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