

REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

Objectives, Rationale and Mechanics of the Workshop

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In order to draw from this multi-sectoral group specific recommendations related to the overall objectives of the conference, we will now move into a small workshop. Participants will be divided into two discussion groups and will be re-convened later to present their report and recommendation in a plenary session.

First, to set things in proper perspective, let us review the things we set out to do at the start of the conference. We have set the following objectives:

1. To assemble base information or knowledge on the global and regional developments in biotech R&D.
2. To gain a general understanding of what biotechnology is for developing countries in Southeast Asia. What is biotechnology from the perspective of the different countries in the region? How it can help sustainable development efforts?
3. To provide a situationer on biotechnology in national programs and policies of governments in the region. More importantly, we want a basic understanding of the issues, problems, and constraints in the development and use of agricultural biotechnology.
4. To set some general directions for a multisectoral regional cooperation in the effective use of agricultural biotechnology.

The papers that have been presented since yesterday are of two categories. The first group of papers showed general trends and developments and issues on agricultural biotechnology in the region. Subsequently, this morning, we went into papers focused on country-specific experiences in biotechnology. This provides a backdrop for the small-group discussions that we will be having shortly. The workshop is for the purpose of distilling and identifying regional needs and priorities in biotechnology. To facilitate the discussions, two important guide questions need to be addressed:

Question 1 – What is agricultural biotechnology in Southeast Asia? Is biotechnology compatible with sustainable agriculture?

Question 2 – What is required for the effective development and use of agricultural biotechnology in the region? This refers more to the enabling environment by which biotechnology could prosper in the region.

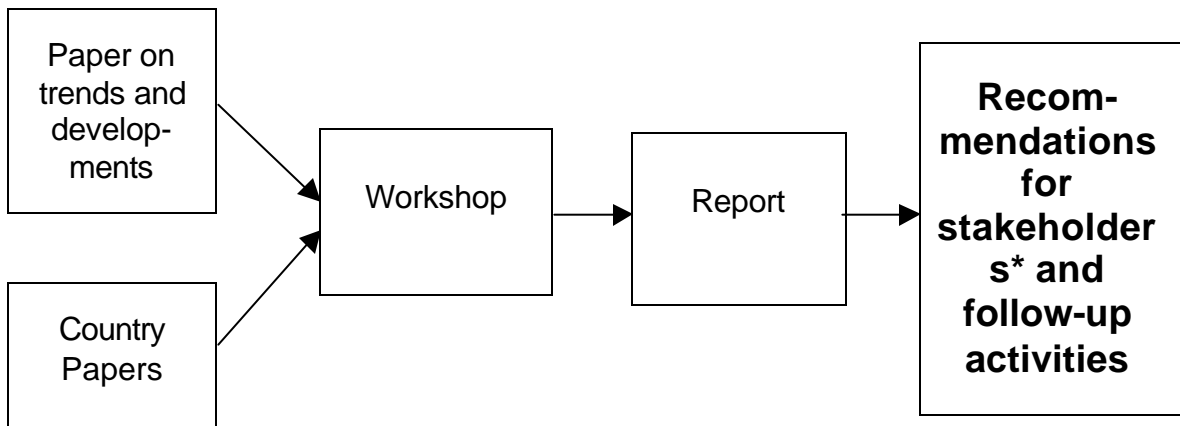
In the plenary session that follows our workshop, we will ask the two groups to report the outcome of their discussions. This then becomes the basis for further discussions later in the afternoon focusing on the specific recommendations for stakeholders. By this, we mean the possible role the institutions represented in this

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conference can play in the development and use of agricultural biotechnology in Southeast Asia as well as in addressing its attendant problems and constraints. I have listed those who we consider as stakeholders, more or less, particularly in the context of this workshop.

I should mention that SEARCA considers itself as a stakeholder given that biotechnology is included in our new 5-Year Development Plan. The recommendations of this group therefore could provide us with the necessary and appropriate guidance in focusing on certain issues and concerns related to biotechnology that we must address.

The other stakeholders we identified are the IARCs, the private sector, the NGOs, the academic community, governments, and the general public. These constitute the list of stakeholders who we would like to cover. Included in this set of recommendations, as I have said, is what we would like to see after this conference. In terms of how we will move forward, what directions will we want to take? Can we talk about some possible cooperation from institutions represented in this conference? Hopefully, all these will contribute to the realization of this conference's objectives.



The Process

*SEARCA, IARCS, PRIVATE SECTORS, NGOs, Academic Community, Governments, General Public