

First APEC Experts Meeting on Agricultural Technical Cooperation

SUMMARY REPORT

1. The First APEC Experts Meeting on Agricultural Technical Cooperation was convened in Taipei, on 13 to 15 June 1995. Delegations from Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Philippines, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and the United States were present. The APEC Secretariat was also represented at the Meeting. The list of delegates appears as Annex I.

2. The Meeting was chaired by Dr. Te-yeh Ku, Director, Food and Agriculture Department, Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan, Chinese Taipei.

I Pre-Meeting

3. Dr. Ku welcomed the heads of each delegation to a pre-meeting for the purpose of previewing matters to be discussed in the Meeting. Australia and the United States presented additional comments to supplement the Agenda.

4. The Australian delegation proposed a working paper outlining a framework for Agricultural Technical Cooperation (ATC). The proposal outlined objectives, themes, principles, and strategies. Korea and Japan expressed concern that the Meeting might have become too ambitious; they believed the Meeting at this stage should focus on the seven subject areas identified in the Chinese Taipei paper. Other member economies felt that by restricting discussion to the seven subject areas, the Meeting would not be living up to its full potential, and that a policy dialogue on the social and economic challenges facing agriculture would be necessary to support technical cooperation activities over the long term. Some members expressed the view that the Meeting could include discussion on agricultural trade and investment matters, while Korea reiterated its position on this matter. The U.S. noted that its initial comments on ATC, which it had provided to Chinese Taipei, overlapped significantly with the Australian framework. A revised version of the Australian paper was distributed as Document 3-1. Taking into consideration the concerns raised by Korea and Japan, the Meeting suggested that the issues contained in the revised version of the paper be considered for discussion in a future or the next ATC meeting.

5. In the ensuing discussion, there were some general issues that member economies were concerned about:

--Duplication. Members stressed the need to avoid duplication. Economies pointed out that much work had been done in the area of ATC by other international and regional agencies and that APEC must be careful not to repeat ongoing efforts in this area. APEC was urged to ensure that any activity agreed upon complemented programs already in existence, both within and external to APEC, and should be consistent with the broad APEC goals.

--Diversity. It was noted that APEC member economies vary greatly and that when setting policy, this great diversity must be carefully considered.

--Commonality. It was noted that major social and economic changes in the region would have major impact on agricultural sectors of all APEC economies.

--Human Resource Development. More emphasis should be given to training programs.

--Technology Transfer. Due to the great diversity in the levels of technology development of member economies, the less developed economies urged other members to share technology.

--Establishment of Future APEC Mechanisms. Some members cautioned against the establishment of further APEC mechanisms until all existing forums or mechanisms have been explored.

6. The APEC Secretariat addressed some of the issues raised in the Meeting. Since there has been no Working Group on Agriculture, nor has agriculture been a topic for Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI), Special Senior Officials Meeting (SSOM) or Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), all issues proposed for discussion at this meeting are new to the APEC agenda and no duplication is anticipated with existing APEC work. The meetings on ATC can provide CTI with agriculture-related input. The APEC Secretariat urged members to focus on creating the action agenda, as delegates have a mandate to submit a report through SOM to the Ministers and Leaders Meetings in November, 1995.

II Formal Meeting

Adoption of the Agenda

7. The Meeting adopted the Provisional Agenda. The approved Agenda appears as Annex II.

Welcome Remarks

8. Dr. Te-yeh Ku welcomed the participants to the Meeting. He stressed that for APEC to be effective, member economies need to cooperate.

Opening Remarks

9. Dr. Paul M.H. Sun, Chairman, Council of Agriculture, Chinese Taipei delivered the Opening Remarks. He noted that APEC member economies have disparate agricultural resources, different levels of agricultural development and technology development; if agricultural technology and resources could be shared, however, regional agricultural development and prosperity could be sustained, securing regional welfare. He urged members to share agricultural development experiences, boost agricultural investment, and balance ecological conservation with agricultural development. He hoped that all delegates would take advantage of this opportunity to share their experiences and urged cooperation.

Agenda Items

Action Plans of ATC

A. Exchange of Plant and Animal Germplasm

10. Member economies expressed their views on germplasm exchange. Members cited the need to avoid duplication of efforts in the region and the necessity of increasing accessibility to germplasm collections through a regional network. The need to identify gaps in research work was also stressed.

11. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) guidelines on the exchange and transfer of germplasm exist; APEC members should apply this set of guidelines.

B. Research, Development and Extension of Agricultural Biotechnology

12. All member economies recognized the importance of biotechnology in agriculture and active research work conducted in publicly funded institutions or in the commercial sector. Nevertheless, member economies expressed concern on biosafety protocols and public perceptions of biotechnological applications.

13. Member economies welcomed the development of a network on biotechnology and agreed to use APEC as a forum for discussion on biotechnological issues.

14. Other related issues noted were the inter-relatedness of germplasm conservation and biotechnology, intellectual property rights (IPR) and investment incentives for biotechnological applications.

15. Australia and New Zealand agreed to prepare a resource paper addressing commercialization issues and outlining work undertaken on the harmonization of biosafety

among member economies, and on public perception for members to consider in the future.

C. Marketing and Processing of Agricultural Products

16. Some members described the status of post-harvest research, marketing and processing in their respective economies. Considering the diversity of the various member economies in terms of the agricultural sector, marketing and production systems unique to the economies and the region have evolved. Likewise, tremendous variation in capabilities to develop post-harvest marketing and processing technologies is apparent.

17. Because of the different levels of post-harvest technology, the need to harmonize quarantine procedures, grading standards, residue monitoring and quality testing was noted. The establishment of a database in this area was considered a useful first stage.

18. Members were urged to exchange information on technical cooperation capacities and requirement, and consider how best to develop linkages to existing post-harvest technology institutions in the region. It was agreed that members pursue cooperation with the CTI with the goal of incorporating information on agricultural standards, requirements and regulations into a future version of the APEC tariff database.

D. Plant and Animal Quarantine and Pest Management

19. It was pointed out that the issue of border protection is sensitive because of the risk of pest introduction and the possibility of quarantine measures being used as trade barriers. It was acknowledged that each member economy has the right to develop systems which meet its particular requirements. These systems should be based on generally agreed principles, such as the WTO/SPS Agreement.

20. The establishment of an information network on quarantine and pest management was supported by member economies. Some member economies expressed a wish to exchange expertise in this area. The importance of active participation in workshops was emphasized. A broadly-shared view is that duplication of efforts should be avoided and that the existing international forums examining plant and animal quarantine issues be used, where practical, to address any problems identified by member economies. It was suggested that technical experts be involved in any subsequent APEC ATC meetings covering quarantine and pest/disease management issues.

21. Some members expressed their wish to conduct surveys of plant and animal pests and diseases where there was a possibility of these being spread across borders, and where surveys were seen as part of disease or pest management strategies.

E. Cooperation in the Development of Agricultural Finance Systems

22. Member economies shared their agricultural financing experiences, including agricultural cooperatives, quasi-governmental financial institutions, current financing and lending schemes, and support for the agricultural sector. Support for the Chinese Taipei proposal outlined in Document 2 was expressed by many member economies.

23. It was reiterated and proposed that the existing financing programs and systems in the APEC region be identified and tapped to make full use of regional resources. It was also suggested that existing communication technology be optimally used in the establishment of an agricultural credit information network and that a network of consultants and experts be established for training and information exchange. There was consensus among member economies about the need to continuously exchange information on agricultural financing system.

F. Technology Transfer

24. Technology transfer mechanisms in the agricultural sector in some member economies were discussed. Some members expressed strong support for the Chinese Taipei action plan for technology transfer and technical training (Document 2).

25. The discussion focused on the need to strengthen linkages and foster free flow of information related to agricultural technology, e.g. information, process, products, experts, etc., in light of changes in the region. APEC members were urged to consider allowing both public and private sector members (farmers, extension workers, researchers and scientists) free access to agricultural databases throughout the region. In the development of agricultural information networks, members were also encouraged to make use of what is currently available both within and external to APEC.

26. Some members identified several gaps in technology transfer, including agricultural machinery, agribusiness management, product processing and quality, accessing databases, integrated pest management and sustainable agriculture.

G. Agricultural Technical Training

27. Some member economies expressed support for the Chinese Taipei action plans on agricultural technical training (Document 2). Most of the discussion that ensued focused on information and networking, and the need to promote human resource development in the agricultural sector. It was felt that there should be a mechanism for promoting agricultural training in the region, and that members should cooperate when undertaking such tasks, e.g. through circulation of training materials.

28. Other member economies also indicated that training objectives should extend beyond the farmer level to include extension services and training of management personnel. Training of trainers was emphasized.

29. Specific recommendations include the identification and collection of information on existing multilateral and bilateral training programs for APEC member economies; the establishment of a database for such information; and the possibility of establishing training programs to be disseminated electronically.

30. Some members suggested that technology transfer and agricultural technical training be combined in the future; please refer to Annex III for the action plans.

Other Matters

Vision Statement

31. There was considerable discussion about amending portions of the Preamble of the Vision Statement. A final version of the Vision Statement appears as Annex IV.

32. The Meeting agreed upon the Vision Statement and action plans, which will be passed through the SOM to APEC Ministers and Leaders.

Shepherds

33. It was suggested that Chinese Taipei take the lead role in coordinating ATC efforts in the region, which was strongly supported by the Meeting. Chinese Taipei wholeheartedly accepted the suggestion to be the Lead Shepherd.

34. After further discussion, the following member economies will act as the shepherds for the six subject areas:

--Plant and Animal Germplasm. Chinese Taipei;

--Biotechnology. Australia;

--Marketing and Processing. United States agreed to act as the Shepherd for the first year, but left the position open for following years;

--Plant and Animal Quarantine and Pest Management. United States;

--Agricultural Finance. Japan was nominated, but needs to confirm whether or not it can accept this responsibility. It was later suggested that Chinese Taipei and Japan cooperate on this matter, which was well-received.

--Technology Transfer and Agricultural Technical Training. Indonesia. It was agreed to combine the sixth and seventh subject areas as suggested by Chinese Taipei.

Date and Venue of Next Meeting

35. Chile tentatively agreed to host the next Experts Meeting on ATC, subject to confirmation. It was suggested that the next Meeting take place in March 1996.

Adoption of Summary Report

36. After further review of the Summary Report, the final version of the Summary Report was adopted by the First APEC Experts Meeting on ATC.

37. The delegates expressed their most sincere appreciation for the warm hospitality provided by Chinese Taipei. They also unanimously congratulated Chinese Taipei for the excellent arrangements for the Meeting.

38. The Chair thanked all the delegates for their hard work and participation, especially those who participated in the drafting sessions, and looked forward to working closely with members to implement the Vision Statement and action plans of ATC.