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Economic Cooperation

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Second Experts Meeting on Agricultural Technical Cooperation: Executive Summary Report

Submitted by: ATCEG

**Second Senior Officials' Meeting
Cebu, Philippines
22-25 May 1996**

**SECOND EXPERTS' MEETING ON
AGRICULTURAL TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION
(ATC)
Canberra 6-11 May 1996
SUMMARY REPORT**

The Second APEC Experts' Meeting on Agricultural Technical Co-operation was hosted by Australia in Canberra, on 6 to 11 May 1996. Delegations from Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, the People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Philippines, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and the United States were present. The APEC Secretariat was also represented. The list of delegates appears as Annex I.

2. The Meeting was Co-Chaired by Dr Te-yeh Ku, Coordinator for the ATC's Lead Shepherd, Director, Food and Agriculture Department, Council of Agriculture, Chinese Taipei and Mr K H Matthews, Executive Director, Department of Primary Industries and Energy, Australia.

Item 1: Opening Remarks from Co-Chairs

3. The Co-Chairs welcomed delegates and noted that the meeting represented an important opportunity for cooperation on agricultural matters within APEC.

Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda

4. The Meeting adopted the Revised Provisional Agenda (Annex II).

Item 3: Business Arrangements

5. The meeting arrangements made provision for small group meetings prior to and in parallel with the plenary sessions. These informal meetings were designed to exchange information between experts on specific ATC activities, including future plans, and proved a very useful mechanism for facilitating subsequent discussion in the plenary sessions. The meeting determined that it should continue to use this mechanism for future meetings.

6. The meeting noted the format proposed by the APEC SOM Chair for reporting on implementation of joint activities under Part II of the Osaka Action Agenda and arranged for reports to be provided accordingly.

Item 4: Implementation of Osaka Action Agenda Part II with regard to Agricultural Technical Cooperation

7. In introducing this item, the Co-Chair noted that the Osaka Action Agenda, together with the Leaders' Declaration and Joint Ministerial Statement in Osaka, provide an overall framework and structure for APEC fora to develop and extend cooperation activities under the Economic and Technical Cooperation pillar. Each APEC forum has three important functions during 1996:

- to implement the Action Agenda in its specific area of responsibility;
- to consider the implications of the Action Agenda for its priority actions and future work programs; and

- to submit appropriate recommendations to the SOM for follow-up action in time for the 1996 Ministerial meeting.

8. The meeting agreed that it was important to avoid duplication with other APEC fora, particularly the proposed Task Force on Food which still has to be considered at SOM II. Some delegations suggested that this fact should not preclude the ATC meeting from putting forward suggestions to the SOM on the nature of work on agriculture that might usefully be undertaken within APEC. It was recognised that the detail of the work to be undertaken by the ATC would need to take into account the work program of the proposed Task Force on Food.

9. The meeting noted that there has been a clear consensus among member economies that ATC is not empowered and will not deal with trade liberalisation and facilitation issues which are covered under Part I of the Osaka Action Agenda.

10. The meeting noted the importance which the Osaka Action Agenda placed on common concepts, joint activities and policy dialogue. Some delegations expressed a view that ATC should focus in the initial stage on technological aspects of cooperation. In the light of discussion on this issue, the meeting agreed to seek to develop a framework for cooperation on agriculture and food which identified the principles which should guide cooperation in this area, the scope of future cooperation activities in ATC, and appropriate mechanisms for cooperation.

11. The meeting identified a Possible Framework for Agricultural Cooperation (at Annex III) which incorporates the following elements:

A) Principles for Cooperation

- (i) Mutual Respect and Equality
- (ii) Mutual Benefit and Assistance
- (iii) Constructive and Genuine Partnership
- (iv) Consensus Building

B) Scope of ATC Activities

The meeting agreed that the ATC will carry out its activities consistent with the vision statement and action plans agreed at its first meeting and subsequently incorporated into the Osaka Action Agenda.

The work of the ATC will proceed in parallel with, and complement the work of, other APEC groups including in maintaining appropriate liaison and mutual feedbacks with the proposed Task Force on Food. The ATC will concentrate in its future work on developing a dialogue and implementing agreed action programs on economic and technical cooperation along the chain of agriculture and food production, processing, marketing and distribution with a special emphasis on opportunities for agricultural technical cooperation.

C) Mechanisms for Cooperation
[considered under Agenda Item 7]

Item 5: Review of Agreed Action Plans

(1) Exchange of Plant and Animal Germplasm (Shepherd: Chinese Taipei)

12. Chinese Taipei reported on implementation of the action plan and the results of the questionnaire sent out to collect information on plant and animal germplasm. It was noted by the Shepherd that the majority of responses focused on plant germplasm, and it was agreed that this warranted first priority, but that member economies with animal databases should use this process to link together. The meeting also noted the outcome of a small group meeting which had reviewed progress and had agreed on the next steps.

13. As part of these next steps, the outcomes of the FAO International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, to be held in June 1996, would be relevant to ATC activities. It was also noted that APEC would focus on regional needs.

14. The meeting noted the revised action plan tabled by the Shepherd and endorsed the proposal to convene a seminar on the development of germplasm databases, to be hosted by Chinese Taipei in early 1997. It was agreed that the title of this area of activity should be changed to Conservation and Utilization of Plant and Animal Genetic Resources.

(2) Research, Development And Extension of Agricultural Biotechnology (Australia)

15. The meeting commended Australia for completing the first step in the action plan and noted the valuable contribution made by the resource paper -on agricultural biotechnology which identified opportunities for -strengthening existing arrangements in APEC.

16. The meeting agreed to update the existing action plan to include the Australian proposal for a workshop on commercialisation of genetically modified organisms. This will provide the opportunity for members to make presentations on biotechnology developments in their own economies and to discuss at expert level the issues raised in a Chinese Taipei paper on research, development and extension of agricultural biotechnology.

17. There was general recognition that APEC activities should be consistent with global developments in this area, but that APEC members could benefit from joint activities and exchange of information in the areas of biotechnology research, technology transfer, biosafety systems, the interface between public and commercial aspects and public perceptions of biotechnology. It was agreed that much information exchange could occur on the Internet.

(3) Marketing and Processing of Agricultural Products (United States)

18. The meeting commended the efforts of the United States on this item and endorsed the United States proposal to design a questionnaire on transport, wholesale and retail practices, packaging, technical expertise and training facilities in member economies. The results of this questionnaire will be used to help plan future work in this program and will also be made publicly available.

19. The Shepherd reported on work being undertaken by PECC, and the meeting commended PECC for its efforts and endorsed PECC's proposed Refrigeration and Food System Marketing Conference, to be held in Hong Kong in October 1996. Private sector participation in this event is encouraged.

20. The meeting approved the action plan as revised in a small group session and reported by the Shepherd. New action items for the medium and long term include developing cooperation projects to improve post-harvest technology for handling perishable products, developing cooperation projects to improve food processing technology, considering means to harmonize grade standards, requirements and regulations, and exchanging product supply and demand information among APEC member economies. The meeting further agreed that the title of this area of activity should be changed to Marketing, Processing, and Distribution of Agricultural Products. The meeting stressed the need for cooperation with other APEC fora and PECC to avoid duplication and make the most of limited resources.

(4) Plant and Animal Quarantine and Pest Management (United States)

21. The meeting noted a report by the small group meeting which identified a set of criteria under which they felt cooperation should proceed:

- Action plans should fully utilise and complement work done by other international and

regional organisations and should not duplicate work done in these organisations or in other APEC fora,

- Education and training efforts should centre on implementation of international standards by member economies,
- An active ATC is necessary to ensure that all members participate in the goal of understanding and implementing internationally recognised Sanitary and Phytosanitary standards.

22. The meeting agreed that the report of the Small group meeting should be presented to participants in the APEC seminar on implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements on Technical Barriers to Trade and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, to be held in Manila in May 1996. Additional input will be gathered at that seminar, and the Shepherd will collate and circulate a revised list of possible work activities in this area for comment by member economies. Through this process a proposed action plan will be developed and reported through the ATC Lead Shepherd to Senior Officials, with the understanding that the ATC Experts may wish to revise this plan at the next ATC meeting.

(5) Cooperative development of agricultural finance systems (Japan, Chinese Taipei)

23. The meeting commended the efforts of Japan and other member economies in providing information on their agricultural finance systems. The meeting noted the report of the small group meeting which focused on short term objectives, including the collection and exchange of information and the establishment of a network of coordinators as well as experts and consultants.

24. The meeting endorsed the Chinese Taipei proposal for a joint seminar on agricultural finance systems and genetic resources in Chinese Taipei in early 1997. In this seminar, members will discuss longer term objectives and the way to establish a database on coordinators, experts, consultants and training opportunities.

25. Members agreed to make the report on the agricultural finance systems of member economies publicly available at APEC studies centres and to other interested parties in an appropriate way.

(6) Agricultural Technology Transfer &
(7) Agricultural Technical Training (Indonesia)

26. The meeting noted the report of the small group meeting, which provided a constructive forum for discussion and agreement to an action plan, building on the action plan agreed at the first meeting. The meeting agreed to establish a database for information concerning institutions involved in technology transfer, training facilities, courses, activities and seminars available in APEC member economies. Members agreed to make use of electronic systems for information exchange. The meeting agreed these two work areas should be combined into a single activity under the title Agricultural Technology Transfer and Training.

27. The Co-Chair suggested that Indonesia might wish to write to the Shepherds of the other ATC work areas seeking their advice on priorities for agricultural technology transfer and training as the basis for further work.

28. The group has redeveloped the action plan to take account of comments from the plenary and the Co-Chair and has harmonised this with the initial action plan developed at the first ATC meeting. New elements involve the strengthening of existing regional agricultural technology transfer and training facilities and the development of cooperative training programs among member economies.

Item 6: Proposals for New Subject Areas for ATC

6.1 Proposals on Sustainable Agriculture

29. The meeting received an oral report from Australia on the outcomes of the small group meeting on sustainable agriculture. The meeting endorsed this report and agreed in principle that sustainable agriculture should be included in the work program of the ATC.

30. A list of possible areas for information exchange was presented, which identified a range of interests in the areas of natural resource management, effective farm management, impacts on rural communities and indices for measuring sustainability. It was stressed that this list was not presented as a work program for the ATC and it did not limit any subjects which members may wish to pursue, but provided an opportunity to begin the process of information exchange. Members could identify additional areas where they have an interest.

31. The meeting agreed it was important to put in place at an early stage useful and efficient processes to facilitate the exchange of information among members utilising current technologies and existing data sources wherever possible. Several specific activities were identified to initiate these processes including to identify suitable mechanisms for the exchange of information, use of workshops and seminars and the establishment of a network of experts and contacts relevant to ATC. Members were invited to nominate areas where they could contribute. New Zealand's offer to examine the experience of other groups and fora was appreciated. The meeting agreed to continue discussion on this item at the next meeting.

Item 7: Organisational Status of ATC

32. There was a clear recognition of the importance of agriculture to APEC economies and general support for an ongoing forum to exchange views on agricultural issues other than those embraced by Part I of the Osaka Action Agenda. The meeting noted with satisfaction the progress made on the agricultural technical cooperation work program initiated at the first meeting and recognised the further opportunities for future concrete cooperation agreed at the second meeting.

33. It was agreed at the Sapporo SOM in July 1995 that this Second Experts Meeting on ATC should consider the most appropriate institutional arrangements for this forum and report back to the SOM during 1996.

34. Against this background, the meeting agreed on the need to formalise the ATC. While a majority saw merit in this taking the form of a Working Group in line with similar fora under Part II of the Osaka Action Agenda, some delegations expressed their concerns about moving to a Working Group at this stage. It was however agreed that discussion would continue on a framework for cooperation on agricultural issues with a view to evolution to a Working Group on agriculture in future. It was agreed that the meeting would recommend to the SOM that an Experts Group on ATC should be established in the interim which reflected its current mandate and which, like the ATC meetings, would report directly to the SOM.

Item 8: Arrangements for Reporting on Implementation of Joint Activities

35. Members agreed to provide progress reports in matrix format to SOM II in 1996.

Item 9: Other Business

36. The meeting heard a report from the Secretariat regarding the availability of funding from the APEC Central Fund and the criteria for assessment of projects by the Budget and Administrative Committee. The meeting noted that a commercial electronic publishing system is now available; and that the Secretariat and some APEC Working Groups have established home pages on the Internet.

37. The meeting noted that arrangements for non-member participation in APEC Working Groups were set out in the Annex to the Joint Ministerial Statement at Osaka and agreed that non-member participation in the ATC Experts Group would be clarified at the next meeting.

Item 10: Next Meeting: Date and Venue

38. The meeting acknowledged with appreciation current provisional planning by the Philippines to host the next full meeting on ATC in April 1997.

39. The Lead Shepherd undertook to keep under review the need for a smaller, special meeting before then in the light of developments, including the clarification of the role of the proposed Task Force on Food.

Item 11: Adoption of Summary Report.

40. The meeting adopted the Summary Report.

41. The delegates expressed their appreciation to the Co-Chairs for the way the meeting was managed and the positive outcomes achieved. The delegates also expressed their sincere appreciation to Australia for arranging the meeting at such short notice and for the excellent arrangements for the meeting.

42. The Co-Chairs thanked delegates for their contributions to a very successful meeting.

<r>ANNEX II<r/>

AGRICULTURAL TECHNICAL COOPERATION SECOND EXPERTS MEETING

**Plenary Meeting
7-9 May 1996**

REVISED PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening Remarks from Co-Chairs
2. Adoption of Agenda
3. Business Arrangements
4. Implementation of Osaka Action Agenda Part II with regard to Agricultural Technical Cooperation
5. Review of Agreed Action Plans
 - 5.1 Progress Reports from Shepherds
 - 5.2 Updating of Action Plans
 - 5.3 Future Work]
6. Proposals for New Subject Areas for ATC
 - 6.1 Proposals on Sustainable Agriculture
 - 6.2 Others
7. Organisational Status of ATC

8. Arrangements for Reporting on Implementation of Joint Activities
9. Other Business
10. Next Meeting : Date and Venue
11. Adoption of Summary Report

<r>ANNEX III</r>

Possible Framework for Agricultural Cooperation

Consistent with Part II of the Osaka Action Agenda and building upon the progress made at the first meeting, the following draft framework for agricultural cooperation in ATC has been identified, comprising three elements:

- a) Principles for cooperation
- b) Scope for cooperation
- c) Mechanisms for cooperation.

A) Principles for Cooperation

(i) Mutual Respect and Equality

Agricultural cooperation activities will:

- contribute to sustainable growth and equitable development in the region;
- respect the autonomy of each APEC economy over its policies;
- pay due consideration to the rapid changes occurring in agriculture and the diversity of agricultural sectors in the region.

(ii) Mutual Benefit and Assistance

Agricultural cooperation activities will:

- contribute to reduce economic disparities among APEC economies and improve economic and social well-being;
- develop an environment favorable to the effective operation of market mechanisms;
- avoid duplication with, and add value to, other APEC activities or those activities undertaken by international agencies and regional forums.

(iii) Constructive and Genuine Partnership

Agricultural cooperation activities will:

- be open to participation by all interested members;
- integrate into the cooperation process the business/private sector as well as involve wherever possible other pertinent institutions;
- recognise members' shared responsibility for sustainable development.

(iv) Consensus Building

Agricultural cooperation activities will:

- incorporate the three essential elements of common policy concepts, joint activities and policy dialogue wherever possible;
- co-ordinate closely with other APEC forums

- allow members to make voluntary contributions commensurate with their abilities.

B) Scope for Cooperation

The ATC will carry out its activities consistent with the vision statement and action plans agreed at its first meeting and subsequently incorporated into the Osaka Action Agenda.

The work of the ATC will proceed in parallel with, and complement the work of, other APEC groups including in maintaining appropriate liaison and mutual feedbacks within the proposed Task Force on Food. The ATC will concentrate in its future work on developing a dialogue and implementing agreed action programs on economic and technical cooperation along the chain of agriculture and food production, processing, marketing and distribution with a special emphasis on opportunities for agricultural technical cooperation.

C) Mechanisms for Cooperation

(Appropriate mechanisms for cooperation will be considered under Agenda Item 7).