

Report of the Third Steering Committee Meeting of INCANA 19-20 June, 2007 Damascus, Syria

The third Steering Committee Meeting of INCANA (Inter-regional Network on Cotton in Asia and North Africa) was held in Damascus on 19th -20th June, 2007. The meeting was organized by General Commission for Scientific Agricultural Research (GCSAR) and INCANA Secretariat with the support of AARINENA (Association of Agricultural Research Institutes for North East and North Africa), APAARI (Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutes) and ICARDA-CAC regional office.

Totally 12 participants attended the meeting including representatives from Egypt, India, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The meeting was inaugurated by Dr. Majd Jamal, Director General of General Commission for Scientific Agricultural Research. After welcoming all the participants and wished that their stay in Damascus will be fruitful and comfortable, he mentioned that Syria strongly support INCANA especially in coordinating and exchange of information. He also mentioned that cotton as a very important commodity plays major role in Syrian economy. About one million people are working on cotton directly and indirectly and it is the number one cash crop of the country.

Syria is a leading country in cotton production with high productivity of more than 4 tons of seed cotton/ha, Pest management has been done all through biological control and therefore cotton receives zero sprays of chemicals and this is the important feature of cotton cultivation especially organic cotton production in Syria. He extended his thanks to everybody in the meeting especially Dr. Hamdan, Executive Secretary of AARINENA, INCANA coordinator and Dr. Roozitalab and wished the meeting a grand success.

Dr. Hamdan, Executive Secretary of AARINENA welcomed the participants and expressed his appreciation to the Government of Syria and Dr. Majd Jamal and INCANA Secretariat for organizing this meeting. He mentioned the importance of exchange of knowledge and information among the stakeholders of agricultural research in the region and the role of INCANA for achieving this goal. He also requested the participants for strengthening the network through formulating technical working groups in order to:

- 1- Optimize the limited resources available and to streamline and focus on the problems in each of the areas identified as priority areas;
- 2- Prepare work plans and assign responsibilities to the members of each working group and to the Secretariat;
- 3- Enhance and coordinate technical collaboration among relevant member institutions;
- 4- To provide INCANA webpage and Newsletter with information for dissemination among member countries

Mrs. Aisel Gharedaghi, Coordinator of INCANA, welcomed the participants and extended her great appreciation to Syrian Government for hosting the meeting. She presented report of INCANA activities and achievements including the network expectations from the member countries and hoping to establish active Working Groups at the end of the meeting.

After group photo and coffee break the first session started, which was chaired by Dr. Fawzi Taher. First he thanked Dr. Jamal and Dr. Hamdan for introducing him to INCANA and gave a brief report on FAO sub-regional office which was established a few months ago in Ankara, Turkey. Then country reports were presented as follow:

- 1- Egypt
- 2- India
- 3- Iran
- 4- Pakistan
- 5- Sudan
- 6- Syria
- 7- Uzbekistan
- 8- Tajikistan
- 9- Turkmenistan

The session continued by presentation of Dr. Khadi from India about "Development of Bt Cotton in India" and Dr. Al-Salti from Syria on "Development of IPM on Cotton in Syria".

The second day of the meeting started at 8:30. It was a round table discussion on INCANA work plan for 2007-2009 and establishment of Working Groups or center of excellences.

The representatives from member countries presented their research priority areas and the institutional and human capacity on cotton. Then the meeting decided to establish the following Working Groups and the lead institution:

- 1- Biotechnology application including development of transgenic cotton for biotic and abiotic stresses (India)
- 2- IPM on cotton (Syria)
- 3- Mechanization of cotton cultivation (Uzbekistan)
- 4- Soil and water management (Pakistan)
- 5- Seed technology and marketing (Egypt)

After coffee break session II continued by discussing following topics:

- 1- Budgeting for the Network and Secretariat will be continued as before by APAARI, AARINENA, GFAR, ICARDA, CACAARI and FAO regional office in Ankara (Dr. Fawzi). The Secretariat will provide records of expenditure.
- 2- Some financial would be supported by FAO regional office in Ankara for organizing advanced training workshop on IPM in one Central Asian countries.
- 3- Future activities of the Network:
 - Submission of 4 pre-proposals from working groups (2-3 pages) including capacity building and training for finding donors.
 - Organizing at least 2 workshops or training courses on following topics :
 - IPM
 - Seed technology
 - Cotton quality assessment and evaluation
 - Drought and water management
- 3- Newsletter will be published biannually and members should help the Secretariat on content and should also help in updating website and database of INCANA.
- 4- It was decided the 4th steering committee to be hold in Egypt based on the approval of the Egyptian Government which will be intimated by Dr. Monir Gad, Director of Cotton Research Institute .