

BIO-CONTROL OF PESTS AND WEEDS FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT

This was the second collaborative project undertaken by the Centre with the partial support of the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for the member countries of the Group of 77 (PGTF/G-77), which has been approved by the Governing Council of the NAM S&T Centre.

Thirteen member countries of the Centre, viz. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Colombia, DPR Korea, Egypt, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Peru, Iraq, Tanzania and Zambia had indicated their interest to participate in the project. The Centre had requested them for background information relating to crops and pests affecting them and bio-control measures presently being used by them. Based on these inputs, the Centre worked out a programme to discuss the latest developments on biological control of common tropical pests, share the experience of the participants and work out a future programme of collaboration.

As the initial activity of the project, the Centre organised a 4-day Workshop and Project Planning Meeting on Biological Control of Pests and Weeds for Sustainable Agriculture during January 17-20, 2001 in association with the Project Directorate of Biological Control (PDBC) of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). The venue of the meeting was PDBC in Bangalore and the workshop programme was based on the information received and analysed by the Project Coordinator and Workshop Director, Dr. S.P. Singh, Director PDBC, Bangalore, which included interaction and discussion between the participants.

Representatives of 10 member countries of the Centre, viz. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Colombia, Egypt, India, Iraq, Malaysia, Nepal, Tanzania and Zambia attended this event. There were 21 eminent resource persons from India, including those who chaired various sessions. At the Inaugural Session H.E. Ms. Maria Clara Betencur, Ambassador of Colombia in India and member of the Governing Council of the Centre welcomed the participants on behalf of the Governing Council and stressed the importance of cooperation between member countries in this important area. Dr. S. P. Singh, Project Director, PDBC, welcomed the participants on behalf of the PDBC and ICAR. Director of the Centre Mr. KN. Johry indicating briefly the activities of the Centre and the collaborative project also spoke on the pest – resistant genetically modified organisms being promoted by MNCs and the need to closely monitor the situation to help decide upon a national policy on GMOs. Dr. Mangala Rai, Deputy Director General of the ICAR gave the Keynote address in which he touched upon several aspects of Integrated Pest Management and the need for greater understanding of the pests in the context of globalization of pests.

The technical session started off with the lead presentation by Dr. S.P Singh, Director of the PDBC who gave the overall status of biological control, the Indian experience and offered to share it with other participating countries. Country presentations were made on the status of biological control by Dr. M. Abdul Malek (Bangladesh), Mr. Narendra Kumar Pradhan (Bhutan), Dr. Jaime Jimenez Gomez (Colombia), Prof. Dr. Eid Mohamed Abou Taleb (Egypt), Dr. Zuhair Aziz Stephan (Iraq), Dr. A. Sivapragasam (Malaysia); Dr. Chiranjivi Regmi (Nepal), Mr. Oscar Bernard Joseph Mfugal (Tanzania) and Dr. Yakub Oeedat (Zambia). The status report of the nominee from Pakistan was circulated in the workshop in his absence.

The participants also visited a commercial insectary, the laboratories of PDBC and the research facility at the R&D Centre of Monsanto to familiarize themselves with different aspects of biological control. A set of recommendations was adopted at the concluding session of the workshop, as a follow-up of which the offers of India and Malaysia for

providing training facilities in Bio-control were circulated among member countries. Later only Iraq and Malaysia submitted their proposals. Therefore two Malaysian scientists Dr. Mohamed Roff and Mr. Syed Abdul Rahman from MARDI in Malaysia spent a week each at PDBC, Bangalore in January 2002 and an expert Dr. Farkad Abdul al Fattah from Iraq visited PDBC, Bangalore in March 2002 on a study visit and also to discuss proposals for future training of their scientists engaged in Biocontrol.

Having gone through the report of the Planning Meeting and Workshop H.E. Mr. P. Jagunath, Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture, Government of Mauritius requested the Bureau members and the Director, NAM S&T Centre, who called on the Hon'ble Minister during the 2nd Bureau meeting of the 9th Governing Council of the Centre held in Mauritius on September 4-5, 2001, to organize training in Bio-control for one of their scientists Ms. Seebun Davi Padmini at PDBC, Bangalore for 2 weeks. This training was provided in April 2002 with full financial support from the Centre, including the airfare, local hospitality etc.

The project on Bio-control of Pests and Weeds for Sustainable Agriculture Development has been successfully completed. It resulted in the publication of Bio-control of Pests and Weeds for Sustainable Agriculture Development - Proceedings of the workshop which was released during the international workshop on Technology of Application of Pesticides held in Kandy, Sri Lanka during June 23-26, 2003.

The Centre will consider and support any proposal received from participating countries arising out of the above project.