

AIDE MEMOIRE

MOAC-ACIAR Meeting on Agricultural Research Cooperation

12 March 2007

The above meeting was held in Bangkok to consider follow-up action to the Thailand-Australia Agricultural Research Forum (TAARF) held in Canberra on 23-24 November 2006. The meeting was chaired by Dr Suthiporn Chirapanda, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and Mr Peter Core, Director, Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). Other attendees included Prof Dr Montri Chulavatnatol, Director, Agricultural Research Development Agency (ARDA) and Dr Simon Hearn, Senior Adviser, ACIAR. There were representatives from Department of Agriculture, Department of Livestock Development, Department of Fisheries, Department of Forestry, Office of Agricultural Economics, Thailand Research Fund and Thailand Embassy, Australia.

It was agreed that the meeting should focus on the scope for future joint research activities between ACIAR and Thailand partners including an emphasis on collaboration with third countries in the region such as Laos and Cambodia. Both ACIAR and Thailand agencies already have research partnerships in both third countries which provide a sound basis for further regional collaboration.

The meeting focused on three key themes of potential engagement:

- Biosecurity and market development
- Fostering Thailand – Laos – Australia regional cooperation in agricultural research for development
- Adoption of ACIAR research projects past and present and the need to engage NGOs effectively for this purpose

Representatives of Thailand agencies presented outlines of possible projects which could usefully be undertaken in partnership between ACIAR and relevant Thai agencies. These overarching projects were considered to have the mixture of bilateral and regional potential with particular attention to Laos. These included:

- Plant biosecurity including molecular identification of quarantine pests
- Development of fish passage technology
- Avian influenza research with an emphasis on improving laboratory facilities, field diagnosis and small farmer management systems
- Biosecurity and market development in the livestock sector

ACIAR also provided an outline of its current and anticipated new projects in 2007-08 in Thailand and Laos. Thai representatives expressed interest in possible involvement in vaccine business development in Laos (AH/2006/155) and increased productivity and profitability of rice-based lowland cropping systems in Lao PDR (CIM/2006/041).

ACIAR also outlined current actions undertaken with World Vision to improve future collaboration with the view to scaling out ACIAR projects at the community level to improve the adoption of previous and current research projects. This is expected to be targeted in northeast Thailand with particular attention to management techniques and opportunities for difficult soils.

Future Actions

The meeting noted and agreed to the following areas for early action:

1. ACIAR and ARDA will shortly sign an agreed Memorandum of Understanding to promote collaborative research in agriculture, fisheries and forestry in Thailand and other countries in the region through a framework of cooperation.
2. ACIAR will work jointly with Thai agencies in progressing research on plant biosecurity with initial attention to molecular technologies for plants such as seed potato and tropical fruits. The Thai Department of Agriculture will provide further information for consideration by ACIAR and the Australian CRC on Plant Biosecurity. In the next few weeks the CRC on Plant Biosecurity will send relevant specialists to Thailand for joint discussions on how CRC can assist in development of these techniques and other diagnostic tools.
3. The parties will work jointly to consider the refinement of laboratory capabilities in the field of Avian Influenza (AI). ACIAR will provide a short paper on how this could be addressed with reference to Australia, Thailand and other countries in the region. Special attention should be given to access by smallholders and to consideration of research into social and management systems for smallholders to address AI risks.
4. Three areas for potential joint work in Laos were identified as:
 - a. fish passage technology on which ACIAR will provide further project information
 - b. lowland rice-based cropping diversification in Laos
 - c. vaccine development in Laos in which Thailand participation will depend on ACIAR providing more information of its intention
5. Possible projects to improve regional animal health, nutrition, disease control and quality systems for market development.
6. Joint funding for training and capacity building workshops to address specific requirements such as taxonomy and a possible workshop on AI research opportunities in the region.
7. All parties will consider how they can contribute financially to these joint endeavours recognising the need for mutual funding.

8. All parties recognized the need to effectively include the Lao government and agencies in consideration of any trilateral projects.
9. ACIAR will provide MOAC with advice on proposed action by World Vision to enhance research adoption, when the current deliberations with World Vision have been further progressed.