



CAC NEWS

CGIAR Collaborative Research Program for Sustainable Agricultural Development
in Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC)

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ARMENIA * AZERBAIJAN * GEORGIA

* KAZAKHSTAN * KYRGYZSTAN * TAJIKISTAN * TURKMENISTAN * UZBEKISTAN

Consortium
Members



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- Conservation and evaluation of plant genetic resources;
- Natural resource conservation and management;
- Livestock management and feed production;
- Strengthening of NARS.

Meetings/Workshops/Conferences Organized

Important Initiatives

Human Resource Development



Participants of the Program Steering Committee meeting

SIXTH CGIAR-CAC PROGRAM STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

The sixth Program Steering Committee (PSC) meeting of the CGIAR Collaborative program for sustainable agricultural development in Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, from 5-7 June, 2003. The meeting was hosted by the Uzbek Scientific-Production Center for Agriculture (UzSPCA) in collaboration with the CGIAR Program Facilitation Unit (PFU). In all, 34 participants attended, including the Heads of eight NARS from the CAC region, representatives of donor organizations and the eight CG Centers participating in the Consortium.

In his opening address, Prof. Dr. Adel El-Beltagy, Director General, ICARDA, reiterated the commitments of the Directors General of the 10 CG Centers working in CAC to strengthen their collaboration with the NARS of the region. He paid tribute to the Government of Uzbekistan for the effective support provided to the CGIAR Program for CAC since 1998. He also thanked the donor agencies, namely, the World Bank, ADB, IFAD, etc., for having supported important initiatives by the CG Centers in the CAC countries. Prof. Dr. El-Beltagy also expressed his gratefulness to the NARS leaders from the region for their efforts in building a true partnership with the CG Centers. He emphasized that the main beneficiaries of this "hand in hand" collaboration are millions of farmers in the region.

Dr. J.P. Srivastava, the Chairman of the Executive Committee, congratulated the NARS leaders from the region and the representatives of the Centers, involved in the CAC Consortium for the good progress made during the last year, particularly in the field of genetic resource conservation and germplasm improvement. He was also appreciative of the important role played by PFU CAC in coordinating the research

activities of all the ten CG Centers involved in the Consortium.

From the CAC region, Dr. Sherali Nurmatov, UzSPCA, Uzbekistan co-chaired the meeting, whereas from the CG Centers, Dr. Ian Makin, Director, Southeast Asia Regional Office, IWMI co-chaired in place of Dr. Frank Rijsberman, DG, IWMI.

Dr. Raj Paroda, the Head, PFU, presented the highlights of annual achievements under the title "From action to impact" He also emphasized the need for further strengthening of the important CAC program.

The presentations by the eight Heads of the NARS-CAC indicated the benefits that the NARS received from the collaborative research. It was heartening to see that already six varieties have been released and many new varieties of cereals and legumes will be released soon by the State Variety Testing Commissions. The Heads of NARS-CAC also appreciated the support received in the area of human resource development and desired that all the CG Centers involved in the Consortium for CAC to play more active role similar to those of ICARDA, CIMMYT, IPGRI and IWMI. Need for strengthening the linkages between NARS and Centers of the Consortium threaded all the reports of the national leaders of agricultural research systems. Presentations by different CG Centers on the collaborative activities with NARS-CAC also highlighted the impressive achievements made during the year 2002/2003.

Also, a Donor Support Group Meeting was held on 6 June, 2003. Dr. Raj Paroda made a presentation on "Achievements and future strategy for CAC Program", which was well received by the participants. Representatives from the leading donor organizations in

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Important Events

the region, such as the World Bank, ADB and JICA made their statements, indicating the priorities in the region and also the need for establishing better linkages with the on-going development projects. All agreed that more support for the ARD activities in the region including CAC Consortium is needed for getting desired impact of the results so far achieved.

A field visit was organized for the participants by UzSPCA and PFU on 7 June to see the collaborative activities in the Tashkent State Agrarian University, Uzbek Research Institute of Plant Industry (UzRIPI) and Uzbek Research Institute of Cotton Growing. They were particularly impressed by seeing the renovated storage facility at the UzRIPI Gene Bank, which had been implemented with the support of USDA, and technical backstopping provided by ICARDA and IPGRI.

The Steering Committee also decided to hold the next PSC meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan, sometime in May/June of 2004.



Dr. Raj Paroda making the presentation

ICARDA BOARD MEETS IN TASHKENT

The 37th ICARDA Board of Trustees Meeting was held in Tashkent from 19-23 May, 2003 to emphasize the importance being attached by ICARDA to the Central Asian and Caucasian countries. ICARDA BOT consists of seventeen world-known scientists in different fields of agricultural research. From 1999 till 2003, the Board was ably chaired by Dr. Robert Havener, who at this meeting, passed on the responsibility to Dr. Margaret Catley-Carlson.

On 21 May, 2003, the BOT members met with HE Dr.



ICARDA Board meets HE the Minister of Agriculture of Uzbekistan

Nosirjon Yusupov, Minister of Agriculture, Uzbekistan. He was very appreciative of ICARDA's role in the region and especially in Uzbekistan, where the beneficiaries of its collaborative Program activities are both the scientists and the

farmers. He emphasized that ICARDA also helps the decision makers in solving important problems at the national scale.

During the Field Days, organized on 19

and 23 May, the members of ICARDA BOT visited different experimental sites to see some of the activities being undertaken jointly by ICARDA scientists and the researchers working in different Uzbek Institutes. They were impressed by seeing the activities at the experimental site of the Tashkent State Agrarian University (TSAU) and also by the success story of the Uzbek Gene Bank's renovation at the Uzbek Research Institute of Plant Industry. They also had an excellent opportunity to interact with the scientists and farmers at the Boykozon benchmark site and at the Sydykov Shirkat while on their way to Samarkand, where they saw good work on Karakul sheep.



Trustees visit the research site at the TSAU

REVIEW MISSION VISITS THE REGION

Center Commissioned External Review (CCER) for ICARDA's Outreach Program was undertaken recently. The CCER team consisted of Dr. Lukas Brader, former Director General, IITA (chair); Dr. Abderrazak Daaloul, Director General for Agricultural Production, Ministry of Agriculture, Tunisia; and Dr. Mohammad M. Roozitalab, Deputy Head, International Scientific and Research Cooperation, AREO, Iran. The review was to examine the regional coverage; devolution/outourcing; relations with policy makers; Centre-Region interactions; interplay between the Headquarters and Regional Programs; ICARDA's role in the context of the Regional Programs; and the information and communication management.

It was decided that out of 32 countries in CWANA region, covered by ICARDA's mandate, the team will visit 8 countries, of which 3 were selected from the CAC region. From 10 -19 April, 2003, Drs. L. Brader and M. Roozitalab visited Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. During these visits, the mission

reviewed the activities conducted by different research institutes and interacted with the NARS leaders and policy makers. They observed that the NARS partners were appreciative of the ICARDA's support in facilitating the linkages of the national researchers with the international scientific community and also emphasized the importance of training activities organized by ICARDA, including training in English. The collaborating farmers, with whom the mission also interacted, especially in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, were enthusiastic about the new technologies tested on their fields and expressed their interest to continue working with ICARDA and the national scientists.

Drs. Brader and Roozitalab were impressed by the scope of the research activities undertaken during the last 4 years and the impact, which has become evident in such a short time. They also appreciated the well established partnership in the region and felt that, in future, with little more support the impact would be much greater through ICARDA's Regional Program for CAC.

Research Highlights

WHEAT

TRAVELING WHEAT WORKSHOP IN UZBEKISTAN

A traveling workshop on “Establishing demonstration trials under on-farm conditions” was organized by ICARDA in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture of Uzbekistan and the Uzbek Scientific Production Center for Agriculture from 23-24 May, 2003. In all, 51 participants visited the demonstration sites in Tashkent, Syrdarya, Jizzak and Samarkand provinces to see the performance of the new promising winter wheat varieties sown at 16 locations in Uzbekistan. They jointly identified four promising entries (Bukhora-Sharif, Mira, Durдона and Fravo), which could be entered into final testing by SVTC.



Participants observing on-farm trials in Jizzak province

BARLEY

PROMISING BARLEY VARIETY IN KAZAKHSTAN

Barley is the second most important grain crop after wheat in the CAC region. During FSU (Former Soviet Union), around 7.0 m ha was sown in Kazakhstan. Presently, barley is grown only on around 1.75 m ha. Winter barley is mainly grown in southern Kazakhstan and Jambyl provinces, where winter is mild. Dr. A. Ortaev, Barley Breeder from the Krasniy

Vodopad Station, annually tests more than 1,000 accessions received from ICARDA. As a result, three varieties of barley, Ortai-111, Aziret-114 and Sultan-118, have been identified as promising giving about 30% higher yield over the standard check. Ortai-111 is being submitted to the State Varietal Testing Commission this year.

LEGUMES

NEW CHICKPEA VARIETY FOR UZBEKISTAN

Chickpea is an important ingredient in the Uzbek traditional cuisine. “Plov”, a traditional rice dish in Uzbekistan is cooked with chickpea, which is also the main ingredient in the famous “Nakhara” soup.

Dr. Mamura Mannapova from Andijan Research Institute of Grain and Legumes has identified two promising varieties of chickpea, FLIP 98-143C and FLIP 99-4C from the ICARDA nurseries. Presently, she is having seed multiplication of these varieties for submission to SVTC by the end of 2003. These two varieties are especially good for making the “Nakhora” soup because of nice taste and white color of chickpea. Dr. Mannapova hopes that the fruits of the partnership among

Legume Breeders from ICARDA and Uzbekistan will be soon transferred from the experimental fields to the nutritious protein rich diets of Uzbek people.



Drs. Djumakhanov and Mannapova examining chickpea nursery

POTATO

CIP SCIENTISTS VISIT THE REGION

Dr. Sarath Ilangantileke, Regional Representative of CIP in South and West Asia, Delhi, India, and Dr. Meredith Bonierbale, Head, Crop Improvement and Genetic Resources Department, Lima,



Potato - a favourite food of children

Peru, visited Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan from 10-21 June, 2003. They met with the scientists of the Uzbek Research Institute of Vegetables, Melons and Potato, the Kazakh Research Institute of Potato and Vegetables and Tajik Academy of the Agrarian Sciences and also visited the farmers' fields. The main purpose of the visit was to identify collaborating scientists involved in potato research and to assess the major constraints in potato production in the region. During the discussions with the scientists, it was decided to develop a collaborative project for improving potato production in the region of Central Asia and the Caucasus. In this connection, CIP will organize a need assessment workshop on potato in October, 2003 in the region. Potato scientists from all the eight countries of CAC region will be invited to participate in this workshop. The visit of Drs. Ilangantileke and Bonierbale was organized and facilitated by PFU-CGIAR for CAC.

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Important Events

We have already informed our readers about the supply of in vitro cultures of 11 potato varieties from South America introduced for adaptation trials in five countries of CAC. These varieties were developed by the national potato programs of Argentina (INTA) and Chile (INIA), situated in long day

environments, and possess resistance to viruses, which are the major cause of degeneration of vegetative potato seed in CAC region. One of the varieties ("Achirana-INTA") was successful in northern China following its introduction by CIP in 1979. The details of 11 varieties introduced are presented in table below.

Table: Details on potato varieties introduced by CIP to the region

CULTIVAR NAME	CIP NUMBER	TUBER SKIN COLOR	FLESH COLOR	SHAPE	EYE DEPTH	DISEASE REACTION			
						LB ¹	PLRV*	PVY*	PVX*
SERRANA-INTA	720087	White-cream	Yellow	Long-oblong	Shallow		R	H	I
ACHIRANA-INTA	720088	White-cream	Cream	Round	Shallow	MR	R		
SIERRA VOLCAN	720089	White-cream	Cream	Round	Shallow				
HUINKUL	720090	White-cream	White	Oblong-oval	Shallow	MS		R	
PRIMICIA-INTA	720140	Brownish	Pale yellow	Round	Shallow				
SURENA-INTA	720141	White-cream	White	Oblong-oval	Shallow		MR		
AMERICANA-INTA	720147	White-cream	White	Long-oblong	Shallow			H	
ARAUCANA-INTA	720148	White-cream	White	Round	Shallow				
CHACAY-INTA	720149	White-cream	Cream	Obovate	Shallow		R	H	H
PAMPEANA-INTA	720150	White-cream	White	Round	Shallow		MR		
YAGANA-INIA	720139	Cream	Pale yellow	Oblong-oval	Shallow		R		I

Note: ¹ Late Blight (*Phytophthora infestans*); * Partial results; MR- moderately resistant; MS- Moderately susceptible; R- resistant; H- hypersensitive; I- Immune (extreme resistance).

GROUNDNUT

HYBRIDIZATION WORK AT UZRIPI

During the last three years, ICRI SAT provided the CAC countries with the germplasm materials of groundnut, including early and medium maturing varieties, with resistance to foliar diseases and drought and also some good confectionery lines. In the process, some promising varieties suitable for agro-climatic conditions in the region have been identified for final testing and release. Dr. Makhfurat Amanova,

Head, Oilseed Crops Laboratory, the Uzbek Research Institute of Plant Industry has submitted two promising varieties of groundnut to the State Varietal Testing Commission for release under the names Salomat and Mumtaz. She has also initiated hybridization work with these new varieties using local variety Kibrai-4 under greenhouse conditions with a success rate varying from 33 to 63%.

CONSERVATION AND EVALUATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

A TRAINING CENTER ON APRICOT ESTABLISHED IN TAJIKISTAN

A new training centre on apricot genetic resources was officially opened on June 23, 2003 in Tajikistan. It is based at the Sogdiyskiy branch of Scientific and Production Centre (SPC) "Bogparvar" in Khojent and established within the IPGRI/UNEP/GEF (PDF B phase) project on "In situ/on farm Conservation of Agricultural Biodiversity in Central Asia".

The training activities at the centre have already started. IPGRI organized a short-term training course on "Assessment of distribution of diversity of wild and cultivated apricot" from 23-27 June, 2003. Two participants each from all the five countries of Central Asia participated in this training course. Specialists from the SPC "Bogparvar", Tajikistan and leading geneticists from other countries of the region delivered lectures on relevant subjects.



Mr. M. Nawar, Egypt, giving a lecture on Genetic Resource Information System (GRIS)

SECOND ISC MEETING OF UNEP-GEF PROJECT

The second International Steering Committee (ISC) meeting for the PDF B phase of the UNEP-GEF project on 'In situ/on farm Conservation of Agricultural Biodiversity (Horticulture Crops and Wild Fruit Species) in Central Asia' was held on 22-23 April, 2003 at the Kazakh Research Institute of

Agro-industrial Economy and Development of Rural Areas. Representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well as from IPGRI and UNEP-GEF participated in the meeting.

The main objectives of the meeting were to analyze the
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progress achieved under the PDF B project phase; to discuss the development of the full project proposal and its budget; to develop a fund raising strategy; and to review the work plan for other activities under the PDF B phase.

Dr. A. Moldashev, Director of the Kazakh Research Institute of Agro-industrial Economy and Development of Rural Areas, opened the meeting. He also briefed about the Institute's activities on socioeconomic studies.

Ms. Shirin Karryeva, the Regional Coordinator of the PDF B phase made her presentation entitled "Progress on

implementation of PDF B phase: outputs and constraints". Also the National Coordinators and Regional Consultants briefly reported about the project activities implemented in their respective countries.

Dr. Marieta Sakalian, Task Manager, UNEP GEF made a presentation on "Developing a project for UNEP/GEF". She explained as to how to address the issues of baseline, alternative and incremental costs and instructed the participants on GEF requirements for the development of the project and conditions of co-financing.

(Source: Ms. Sh. Karryeva, IPGRI-Tashkent)

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION SYSTEMS FOR SALT-AFFECTED AREAS IN CENTRAL ASIA

The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture's niche and complementary role in the international agricultural research system was recognized by the CGIAR soon after ICBA's establishment in 1999. With the support of ICARDA and ICRISAT, ICBA became affiliated to the CGIAR centers in 2001 and, since then, the relationship has gone from strength to strength. ICBA partners CGIAR centers both in collaborative research and development projects, and in developing training courses addressing salinity problems.

The decision to hold a joint ICBA-ICARDA training course on biosaline agriculture in May 2003 in the Central Asian region responded to a significant demand for training to deal with the region's alarming salinity problems. With more than 50 percent of the 10 million hectares of irrigated agricultural lands affected by salinity, more than 50 km³ of drainage water produced annually, and more than 30 km³ of brackish and saline underground water resources, the region is the largest of the dry environments with salinity problems. A second joint training course with ICARDA is planned for 2004 in Kazakhstan in conjunction with a workshop on biosaline agriculture.

The challenges in the region offer a great opportunity for ICBA, in partnership with the CGIAR centers working in the region and national institutions, to achieve lasting impact on agricultural production through capacity building and the development of appropriate technologies and plant production systems for sustainable and profitable agriculture.

ICBA's particular niche is to assist with the development of urgently needed management and production systems where water or soils are saline. The goal is to identify the most pressing needs through meetings with national research system scientists, to achieve better management of the resources available.

Livestock producers in Central Asia suffer from the effects of widespread degradation of the steppes. Feed is in short supply and imported feed is costly. Foremost among the opportunities is the potential to improve livestock production by

growing forage with saline water. Forage is grown successfully with saline water in many parts of the world and adapting these forage production systems to the Central Asia region could positively impact the productivity of the steppes.



Dr. Muhammad Al-Attar, DG, ICBA

Growing forage with saline water also offers tremendous prospects for rehabilitating vast areas of severely degraded rangelands. Where saline water is abundant, there is the potential for setting up systems to produce seed of salt-tolerant plants for distribution and planting on rangeland for supplementary forage production.

Poor maintenance of large irrigation systems and poor irrigation management have led to increasing salinity in drainage water. This water, under appropriate practices, can be re-used for agricultural production. Likewise, abundant saline and brackish groundwater resources, a hitherto unused resource, can be harnessed.

In the variable climate of the region, where rainfall is scarce and unreliable, saline water is a valuable supplement to rainfall, particularly for forage crops. Enhancing the salinity tolerance of conventional crops, such as wheat and barley, and encouraging crop diversification with other salt-tolerant crops, through the exchange and evaluation of germplasm, could play a vital role in increasing productivity.

In building partnerships in the region, ICBA scientists look forward to exploring strategies for training and collaborative projects in these key areas with their Central Asian counterparts.

(Source: Dr. Muhammad Al-Attar, Director General, ICBA)

INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE FERGANA VALLEY (IWMI)

The project staff has published a booklet on "How to establish a Water Users Association: Guidelines for Social Mobilizers", which provides simple guidance on establishing Water Users Association (WUA) following a bottom-up approach and can be used effectively by the projects staff, water authorities and NGOs. The booklet has been published both in English and Russian, and is currently under translation into Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Tajik languages. So far, more than 400 copies have already been distributed. The Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources of Uzbekistan has desired to have a revised version in Uzbek language published. The social mobilization and institutional development strategy of the project

has also been published.

Recently, the Rural Restructuring Agency of Uzbekistan visited IWMI to discuss arrangements for a joint training of the staff from an ADB-funded Rural Advisory Service Project. It is proposed to have the training organized in Fergana Valley in early July, 2003.

In Kyrgyzstan, IWMI staff is testing the principles of a time-based water distribution in a WUA "Japalak". Water roster has been devised and farmers have been trained on water distribution through "Warabandi", the system, which is widely practiced in Indian and Pakistani irrigation systems.

(Source: Dr. M. Ul-Hassan, IWMI-Tashkent)

Research Highlights

ADB REVIEW MISSION

Dr. Tumurdavaa Bayarsaihan, Project Economist, East and Central Asia Division, ADB visited the ICARDA office in Tashkent on a review mission to assess and evaluate the progress achieved under the ADB-funded project on soil and water management. To have a better understanding of the project activities and also to discuss in detail the proposal for the second phase, Dr. Bayarsaihan desired to have a meeting with the National Coordinators from five participating countries, which was held on 25 -26 April, 2003. During the meeting, Dr. Raj Paroda, Regional Coordinator, ICARDA CAC, Dr. Mekhlis Suleimenov, Assistant Regional Coordinator, ICARDA CAC, and Dr. Akmal Karimov, National Professional Officer made detailed presentations on the project achievements and the project strategy. The National Coordinators also apprised Dr. Bayarsaihan about the progress made and the major impacts of the project in their respective countries.

Dr. Bayarsaihan also visited the Boykozon Benchmark site and interacted with the project implementation team as well as farmers. He felt that with relatively modest resources, ADB has been able to effectively support the selected high-priority adaptive research activities in Central Asia, which are directly relevant to ADB's objectives. In his mission report, he

emphasized that the project has played a crucial role in maintaining and reviving the research capacities in Central Asia. He also highlighted the role of ICARDA as a trusted broker among research organizations in Central Asia, who provided effective technical backstopping as well as management to the RETA.



During the meeting with Dr. T. Bayarsaihan

LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT AND FEED PRODUCTION

AI MONITORING AT BOYKOZON

The lambing season of nearly 600 artificially inseminated ewes of a synthetic coarse wool breed in Uzbekistan ended in early April. The ewes were inseminated in October-November, 2002, through a laparoscopic intrauterine technique with frozen semen of dairy East Friesian and Lacaune sheep breeds provided by the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The background of this special crossbreeding program targeting the diversification of livestock production to meet the market demands was covered in the previous issue of the CAC News. This activity being conducted under the Project "Integrated Feed and Livestock Production in the Steppes of Central Asia", funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), is a result of multi-partnership in research collaboration with sheep producers of Uzbekistan.



Dr. Mavlonov with a record-weighting lamb (20 kg)



Young lambs on summer range

Dr. Sobir Mavlonov from the Uzbek Scientific Production Center for Agriculture (UzSPCA) is monitoring the performance of the crossbred lambs in collaboration with the farmer Mr. Mirkhait Mirsaitov and with the assistance of Ms. Madina Musaeva from ICARDA office, Tashkent. In total, 376 crossbred lambs were born consisting of 54% of Lacaune and 46% of East Friesian breeds. The flock of crossbreed animals and mothers is being managed under the same traditional grazing in mountainous rangelands. According to the farmer, the crossbred lambs have shown good adaptation to the local range vegetation and also had faster growth than the lambs of coarse wool sheep synthetic breed. At the age of two months, the crossbred lambs averaged around 13.3 kg of body weight as against 11.6 kg body weight of lambs from the local breed.

Meetings/Workshops/Conferences Organized

THE NEW MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE IN UZBEKISTAN

Prof. Abduwohid Juraev has newly been appointed as the Minister of Agriculture and Water Management, Uzbekistan. Dr. Raj Paroda, Head, PFU and Regional Coordinator, ICARDA - CAC, met H.E. Prof. Juraev and congratulated him on behalf of the Consortium partners and also on behalf of Director General, ICARDA, Prof. Dr. Adel El-Beltagy, on his appointment on this prestigious position. Dr. Paroda assured the Minister that all the ten CG Centers would continue providing support for agricultural development in the CAC region. He also briefly informed the Hon'ble Minister about on-going collaborative activities in the region, especially in Uzbekistan.

H.E. Prof. Juraev, being one of the first collaborators, expressed his gratitude to ICARDA for the support in agricultural research being provided in the region. He assured of his full support for the CGIAR Collaborative Program, which according to him, is well recognized by the various Ministries in his countries. He particularly desired ICARDA's support for the seed production of improved varieties of cereals, legumes and fodder crops and also for the efficient natural resource management. Prof. Juraev also felt that a special project on seed production could be developed as FAO-TCP, with technical backstopping by ICARDA.

Dr. Paroda assured the Hon'ble Minister of best possible support by ICARDA and other CG Centers for improving the

livelihood of resource poor farmers in the region.

PFU-CGIAR wishes all the success to Mr. Juraev in his new assignment and assures him of best possible support for agricultural research for development.



From left to right: Dr. Paroda, HE Dr. Juraev and Dr. Nurmatov

MEETING WITH THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE OF TURKMENISTAN

Dr. Raj Paroda, Regional Coordinator, ICARDA CAC and Head, PFU CGIAR in CAC visited Turkmenistan from 29- 30 April, 2003. During this visit, he met with HE Mr. B. Atamuradov, who has recently been appointed as the Minister of Agriculture of Turkmenistan. HE Mr. B. Atamuradov emphasized his satisfaction with the Consortium activities in his country and informed Dr. Raj Paroda about major structural changes that took place in the agricultural system of Turkmenistan in the end of 2002. He informed that in view of the importance of food security and increase in agricultural production, a Council of Agriculture was established with HE Mr. Saparmurat

Turkmenbashi, the President of Turkmenistan as the Chairman and Mr. Atamuradov, the Minister of Agriculture of Turkmenistan as the Vice-Chairman. The President is personally supervising the work of the Council that indicates high importance attached to the issues of agricultural development in Turkmenistan. HE. Mr. Atamuradov also briefed about the actions taken by the Government of Turkmenistan to promote agricultural development in the country. These included 50 % subsidies on mechanization, seed materials, fertilizers and chemicals, etc. Also, the farmers can now retain some grain yield and sell it at their own, while the Government guarantees the minimum price. He also emphasized that the President of Turkmenistan is keen to establish an institution of "Land Master" in the country and, therefore, new initiatives on land tenure policies are being developed. A group of economists is also working to provide the farmers with all possible help and develop a mechanism of incentives for advanced farmers. Also, HE. Mr. Atamuradov indicated the priorities that have emerged in agricultural system of Turkmenistan, including attaining of self-sufficiency in rice and sugar beet production, increase of maize and potato production, and also the development of poultry production.

Dr. Paroda highlighted that the CG Centers, involved in the CAC Consortium, always follow the needs of the countries when deciding their research priorities. He assured the Minister of the best possible support to address the priorities of Turkmenistan. In addition, Dr. Paroda indicated that CGIAR Centers would appreciate having more Turkmen scientists participating in the international/regional scientific conferences as well as training courses and workshops. He also assured of best possible rice research support through active involvement of IRRI and through human resource development.



HE Mr. Atamuradov with Dr. Paroda and Prof. Babaev, Rector, Turkmen Agricultural University

THE FIRST CENTRAL ASIAN WHEAT CONFERENCE

The 1st Central Asian Wheat Conference was held at Almaty from 10-13 June, 2003. The objective of the Conference was to assess the modern status of research and cooperation on wheat in Central Asia, particularly, in the field of wheat breeding, genetics, plant protection, biotechnology and agronomy; to evaluate the achievements of the regional cooperation on wheat varieties' promotion and seed production; and to facilitate the information exchange between scholars and specialists from Central Asia and other countries. The Conference was co-sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Kazakhstan, GTZ, CIMMYT and ICARDA, and supported by USAID, the Washington State University, FAO and the Winrock International.

The conference was attended by 244 participants from 28 countries (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Philippines, Taiwan, Jordan, Canada, USA, Italy, France, Great Britain, Denmark, Mexico, Syria, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania).

The Vice-Minister of Agriculture of Republic of Kazakhstan Dr. A. Kurishbaev opened the conference and Dr. Sanjay Rajaram, an eminent Wheat Breeder of international fame, chaired the Inaugural Session, in which Dr. Raj Paroda and Dr. Thomas Payne represented ICARDA and CIMMYT, respectively and addressed the audience. Dr. Kurishbaev stated that Kazakhstan is the main producer of high quality wheat in the region meeting the international requirements. According to him, the average grain export from Kazakhstan has increased by 30% in the last three years, amounting to 4.5 million tons, of which 4.0 million tons is wheat alone and the Government provides good support to the wheat producers and promotes improved agricultural technologies and varietal improvement, including subsidies for elite seed production, mineral fertilizers and chemical supply.

During the conference, plenary sessions, group discussions and poster presentations were held representing seven main sections: Current Trends in Wheat Production, Winter Wheat Breeding and Genetics, Spring Wheat Breeding

and Genetics, Wheat Biotechnology, Wheat Grain Quality, Wheat Breeding for Biotic and Abiotic Stresses, and Wheat Cultivation Technologies.

The major recommendations of the Conference are as follows:

- ▶ Yellow Rust Regional Network to continue successful collaboration on monitoring the pathogen population and evaluation of germplasm for resistance, laying more emphasis on fast multiplication and promotion of new varieties with pathogen resistance.
- ▶ A regional framework to be established for evaluation of bread-making quality of new wheat varieties, taking into account existing facilities and improvement of the quality labs in the countries of the region.
- ▶ Efficiency of the trials and technical aspects of germplasm exchange to be further improved.
- ▶ A uniform methodology on Spring Wheat Improvement to be developed with more emphasis on coordinated evaluation of germplasm for important traits.
- ▶ A project proposal on application of biotechnology in wheat breeding to be developed for submission to donor agencies.
- ▶ A set of leaflets on guidelines for planning and implementation of the on-farm experiments to be published in Russian.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. S. Rajaram, Chairman of the Conference emphasized that the First Central Asian Wheat Conference was highly successful and demonstrated increasing linkages between science on wheat improvement and wheat production practices in the region and the world as a whole. Mr. K. Metzler, GTZ, Almaty Office, speaking on behalf of the donors, expressed satisfaction with the results of the conference and indicated the interest of the donor community to support regional and international collaboration in wheat research and production. It was also decided to organize the Central Asian Wheat Conferences every three years in different countries of the region. The next conference is to be held during summer, 2006 in Kyrgyzstan.

VISIT TO TURKMENISTAN

Dr. Raj Paroda visited the Turkmen Agricultural University (TAU) on 29 April, 2003, where he had a meeting with Prof. A. Babayev, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and the Rector of the TAU. Prof. Babayev expressed his appreciation for ICARDA's support to the agricultural scientists of Turkmenistan, emphasizing that the partnership has got strengthened in the recent past. Prof. Babayev was pleased with the results achieved through the collaborative activities in the area of germplasm enhancement, particularly for wheat and barley, and stressed that the priorities have now been shifted to rice, maize, potatoes and legume crops, such as soybean, chickpea and lentil.

Dr. Paroda delivered a lecture to the TAU faculty and students numbering 200, on "Sustainable agricultural development in Central Asia and the Caucasus". The lecture was well received and Prof. Babayev desired to have a similar presentation for the research scientists at the Turkmen Research Institute of Agriculture and Water Resources.

Dr. Paroda also visited the Turkmen Research Institute of Agriculture and Water Resources and met with its new Director, Prof. O. Soyunov, who apprised him about the three varieties of winter wheat from ICARDA-CIMMYT-Turkey nurseries (Bitarap, Guncha and Garagum), which are performing well and may be released soon. These varieties have distinct advantages in disease resistance, heat and drought tolerance, and their grain



Drs. Tchesnova and Khojiev explaining varietal performance

yields had been 10-30% higher than the standard check Skifianka.

Similarly, the performance of three barley lines, Sonata, Alpha/Dura and Lignee-131, has been found to be highly promising. These lines have shown considerable advantage for heat and drought tolerance, and also the higher yield by 30%.

CAC REGIONAL FORUM MEETS IN TASHKENT

The meeting of the CAC Regional Forum was held in Tashkent on 7 June, 2003 and attended by all the NARS leaders and their representatives. They were: Dr. Samvel Avetisyan, First Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Armenia, Dr. Asad Musayev, Director General of the Agrarian Scientific Center, Azerbaijan, Acad. Gogotur Agladze, Vice-President of the Academy of Agricultural Science, Georgia, Dr. Ablay Sansyzybay, Director of the Research Production Center of Livestock and Veterinary, Kazakhstan, Dr. Asanbek Ajibekov, Director General of the Center of Agricultural Research and Consulting Services, Kyrgyzstan, Acad. Bobo Sanginov, President of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Tajikistan, Dr. Bayram Seidov, Head of the Main Scientific-Technology Department, Ministry Agriculture and Water Resources, Turkmenistan, Dr. Sherali Nurmatov, Deputy Minister and Director General of the Uzbek Scientific Production Center for Agriculture (UzSPCA), Uzbekistan and Dr. Bakhtiyar Kamilov, Head of the Department of UzSPCA and Executive Secretary for CAC Regional Forum.

The participants adopted the draft "Rules and Guidelines" and also the logo of the CAC Regional Forum. Beside, the elections of the new Executive Committee were held. Dr. Nurmatov was elected as new Chairman in place of Dr. Satybalidin, whereas Dr. Ajibekov and Dr. Avetisyan were elected as Executive Secretaries from Central Asia and Caucasus, respectively. Dr. Kamilov was elected as Executive Director for CAC Regional Forum.

The participants also thanked Dr. Azimkhan Satybalidin, for his leadership during the last three years, and also expressed their appreciation for the facilitation role played by PFU ICARDA in getting the Secretariat established, so that Regional Forum activities could be initiated further with the support of GFAR and ICARDA.

The PFU-CGIAR for CAC congratulates Drs. Nurmatov, Ajibekov, Avetisyan and Kamilov on their election to the new Executive Committee and wishes them all the success in their work.



CAC-RF meeting in session

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN KAZAKHSTAN



Conference in session

The Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan and attended by about 200 scientists, including those from different countries of Central Asia, Russia and also the international organizations. Dr. Raj Paroda, Regional Coordinator, ICARDA CAC, was especially invited to participate.

HE Mr. Yesimov, the Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan, opened the conference. In his address, he highlighted the need for establishing strong linkages between agrarian science and agricultural production in Kazakhstan. He also emphasized that the years 2003-2005 have been declared by the President of Kazakhstan as "Years of Village Regeneration" and, therefore, the role of agriculture has become very important.

Dr. A. Kurishbaev, the Vice-Minister of Agriculture, who is the new national Focal Point for Kazakhstan, made an impressive presentation, highlighting the importance of collaboration with the international centers, especially CYMMIT and ICARDA, for agricultural research and development in Kazakhstan.

Dr. Raj Paroda also made a presentation on assigned topic entitled "ICARDA's role in Kazakhstan" and highlighted the progress in the fields of germplasm improvement, genetic resource conservation, natural resource management and also in human capacity building. The presentation was well received and also appreciated by HE Mr. Yesimov, the Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan.

An International Conference on "Scientific support to the State Agricultural Program in the Republic of Kazakhstan", was held on 24-25 April, 2003 in Astana. The conference was organized by the

Dr. Paroda also visited the former Research Institute of Grain Farming in Shortandy, which has recently been reorganized into the Scientific Production Center of Grain Farming named after Acad. Barayev. Dr. A. Kaskarbaev, the Director of the Center and also the National Coordinator of the ICARDA project on soil and water management, funded by ADB, briefed Dr. Paroda about the history of the Center and the major achievements made by its scientists in the field of grain crops' breeding, conservation agriculture and crop diversification. The senior scientists of the Center also made brief presentations on their respective activities. Dr. Paroda was highly impressed with the progress achieved by the scientists of the Institute. He also appreciated the work of Dr. N. Kravchenko, Barley Breeder, who, in close collaboration with ICARDA, has developed some very promising varieties of barley, such as Batyr 1, Batyr 2 and Birlık.



Meeting with senior scientists at Shortandy

Meetings/Workshops/Conferences Organized

ICARDA PARTICIPATED IN ECO MEETING OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The ECO meeting of the Council of Ministers was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 11 June, 2003. The meeting was attended by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (or their representatives) of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. Dr. Raj Paroda, Regional Coordinator, ICARDA-CAC, represented ICARDA.

The meeting was opened by HE the President of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan Mr. Askar Akaev. This was the 13th meeting of the organization, which has completed 10 years last year.

In their statements, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the participating countries reflected on reconstruction of Afghanistan, besides emphasis on cooperation for commerce/trade, energy, agriculture and environment. Also, issues of transport and communication were addressed with greater emphasis on realization of Transit Trade and Transport

Framework Agreements.

The two important issues, which relate to future role of ICARDA in the ECO are: the development of institutional linkages among agricultural research and training institutes in the region, for which ECO would like ICARDA, FAO and IDB to provide required support; and the development of a mission document on ECO Cooperation in Agriculture, which was earlier included in the workplan of ECO for 2000-2001.

During the meeting, HE Mr. Askar Aitmatov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kyrgyzstan was elected as new Chairman of ECO, whereas Mr. Beknazar Narbayev from Kazakhstan was elected the new Secretary General, who will replace HE Mr. Saidu Mojataba Arastou on 1 August, 2003.

Dr. Raj Paroda also met with HE the present Secretary General of ECO Mr. Arastou, the three Deputy Secretaries General as well as the representatives of various countries and apprised them about ICARDA's activities in the region. HE Mr. Arastou, the Secretary General of ECO, was quite appreciative of the support by Prof. Dr. Adel El-Beltagy to ECO activities and liked to have more cooperation in future.

Also, ICARDA's posters and publications relating to various activities in the ECO member-countries were displayed. These were very well received and appreciated by the delegates. The poster on Afghanistan was highly appreciated by the delegation from Afghanistan headed by Dr. Mohammad Rahim Sherzoy, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.



Dr. Paroda meets HE Mr. Arastou



Inauguration by HE the President of Kyrgyzstan

Human Resource Development

JOINT ICBA - ICARDA TRAINING COURSE ON BIOSALINE AGRICULTURE

A training course on "Biosaline Agriculture and Sustainable Production Systems", organized jointly by the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) and ICARDA, was held 12-21 May, 2003 in Tashkent. The training course, involving 27 participants from five Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan, addressed the issues of soil salinity and poor quality water management. Being one of the major constraints to sustainable agricultural production in these countries, salinity management requires development of a joint strategy based on the world experience and also on the knowledge of scientists from the region.

The 10-day training course was held at the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers (TIAME) with financial support from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

The training course was inaugurated by Dr. Sherali Nurmatov, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Uzbekistan and Director General of the Uzbek Scientific Production Center for Agriculture (USPCA), who emphasized the severity of the salinity problem in the CAC region and particularly in Uzbekistan, where more than 2 million ha, 50% of the total irrigation area, are prone to salinization. He was very appreciative of the joint initiative by ICARDA and ICBA to

conduct this training course in Tashkent and wished all the participants to have a fruitful training and pleasant stay in Uzbekistan.

(Continued on page 11)



Opening session of ICBA course

The opening session was also attended by Mr. Ilgar Isayev, Executive Director, IDB for Albania, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan; HE Dr. Abdul Rahman Abdul Khaleg, Advisor, the Private office of the President of the United Arab Emirates; Dr. Mohammed Al-Attar, Director General, ICBA; Dr. Faroukh Akhnazarov, Rector, TIAME; Dr. Raj Paroda, Regional Coordinator, ICARDA-CAC; and Acad. Jamin Akimaliev, Director, the Kyrgyz Research Institute of Agronomy. The speakers emphasized the urgent need to address the problems of salinity through sharing the experience and adoption of effective technologies to combat both the salinity and desertification problems for the overall benefit of the resource poor farmers in the region.

Dr. Faisal Taha, Deputy-Director, ICBA, in his comprehensive presentation, covered overall activities of ICBA in the fields of salinity management and human resource development, whereas Dr. Raj Paoda gave an impressive

account of various on-going research activities in the region, including those on salinity management. Dr. Mekhlis Suleimenov, Assistant Regional Coordinator, ICARDA-CAC, acted as the focal point for this course supported by Dr. Akmal Karimov, NPO, ICARDA-CAC. Many eminent scientists, including Drs. Bassam Hasbini and Abdullah Dakheel from ICBA and Drs. Adriana Bruggeman and Theib Oweis from ICARDA delivered lectures and organized practicals for hands-on experience.



Distribution of Training Certificates

TRAINING OF PATHOLOGISTS AT ALEPPO

Two junior Plant Pathologists, Mr. Marat Beksultanov from Kyrgyzstan, and Mr. Ihtibar Ibragimov from Azerbaijan, received one-month training on yellow rust management under the leadership of Dr. Amor Yahyaoui during April-May, 2003 at ICARDA Headquarters. Yellow rust is the most severe cereal disease causing significant yield losses in Central Asia

and, therefore, training of specialists in yellow rust epidemiology was considered very important, including screening under artificial inoculation. They were also taught as to how to collect, multiply, and store yellow rust spores and also then to use for field inoculation. They also had an exposure for identification of rust races.

Miscellaneous News

MOU WITH AGRARIAN UNIVERSITIES

In an impressive gathering of all Board of Trustees of ICARDA and senior scientists and officials from National Agricultural Research System of Uzbekistan, two Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) were signed by ICARDA with both the Kazakh Agrarian University, Almaty and the Kyrgyz Agrarian University, Bishkek for strengthening cooperation in agricultural research. Dr. Tlektos Espolov, Rector, the Kazakh Agrarian University, and Dr. Batyrli Sydykov, Rector, the Kyrgyz Agrarian University appreciated the role of ICARDA in the region and wished that the research partnership between their institutions

and international centers working in the region will get further strengthened through these MOUs. Prof. Dr. Adel El-Beltagy, Director General, ICARDA assured of his best possible support for agricultural research for development of the CAC region and appreciated the prominent role played by both the institutions in building excellent human resource capability in their respective countries. Dr. Robert Havener, Chairman, ICARDA Board also expressed his appreciation for building such effective partnerships with the NARS in the region.

DR. PARODA'S BOOK RELEASED

A recent book of Dr. Raj Paroda, Regional Coordinator, ICARDA-CAC, entitled "Sustaining our food security", published by KONARK PUBLISHERS PVT LTD, was officially released by the Minister of Agriculture of India, Mr. Shri Ajit Singh, on 2 April, 2003 in a well attended gathering of around 150 senior scientists and officials from various Ministries and Institutes/Universities. Earlier in the morning, Dr. Paroda had a meeting with the Hon'ble President of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam, and presented a copy of his book, which contains his selected keynote addresses, speeches, papers and public fora lectures. The book embodies the visionary thoughts and views of Dr. Paroda on policy reforms, food security, conservation and management of genetic resources, natural resource management, infrastructure development, human resource development, the role of biotechnology, and the importance of national and international partnership in agricultural research. The President lauded the scientific achievements of Dr. Paroda and felt that this publication would be of great value to all those associated and concerned with Indian agriculture.

Dr. Joaehim von Braun, Director General, IFPRI in his congratulatory message to Dr. Paroda, indicated that this excellent book covered the whole spectrum of food security research. He especially liked the focus on sustainability and the

long run perspectives and considered the publication as an asset to himself and his colleagues at IFPRI.

More information about the book can be obtained through e-mail: kppl23@eth.net.



From left to right: Dr. Paroda, HE Dr. Abdul Kalam and Mrs. Paroda

FELICITATION TO DR. SHEVTSOV



Dr. Victor Shevtsov, who earlier worked for ICARDA in the region as a Cereal Breeder, was felicitated during the CGIAR Program Steering Committee Meeting for CAC, by Prof. Dr. Adel El-Beltagy, Chairman, CDC, Taskforce for CAC and by Dr. Jitendra Srivastava, Chairman, Executive Committee, the CGIAR Program for CAC. The valuable role played by Dr. Shevtsov in testing and promoting new varieties of wheat and barley was appreciated very much by both of them.

ICARDA PRESENTATION DAY



Representatives from CAC region

FUTURE EVENTS

A Joint United Nation University (UNU) -Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)-ICARDA International Workshop on "Challenges for Drylands in the New Millennium: A Cross-Cutting Approach for Assessment" will be held from 11-15 August, 2003 in Tashkent. The workshop will be hosted by the ICARDA Regional Office, Tashkent and Acad. Mekhlis Suleimenov, Deputy Regional Coordinator will be the focal point for this event.

A Subregional Partnership Building Forum for Central Asian Republics: Confronting Land Degradation and Poverty through Enhanced UNCCD Implementation will be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from 30 June-4 July, 2003. The Forum is being convened and co-sponsored by the members of the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) for Implementation of the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in the Central Asian Republics.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MS. NADIA

Ms. Nadejda Samoylova, Secretary from the ICARDA Tashkent office has won "ICARDA Staff of the Year" for 2002. She was recognized in the General Service category for the high volume of her work, and the precision with which she does it. She handles all administrative tasks effectively, from arranging visas and travel schedules to maintaining linkages with the Center's national agricultural research system cooperators. She is a friendly, effective facilitator of ICARDA's outreach mission.

PFU-CGIAR congratulates Ms. Nadia with this prestigious award and wishes her all the success in future.



Mr. I. Tagaev, Head of Agricultural Department of the President Office, Tajikistan and Dr. Sh. Nurmatov, Deputy Minister and Director General of UzSPCA accompanied by Dr. Z. Khalikulov, Consultant Scientist, PFU-CGIAR visited ICARDA, Aleppo, Syria to participate in the ICARDA Presentation Day 2003, which was held on 26 May, 2003. The Presentation Day was attended by more than 400 international dignitaries and agricultural scientists.

The distinguished guests from Central Asia were impressed by seeing different research activities on Germplasm Enhancement, Natural Resources Management, and Seed Production undertaken at ICARDA and they highly appreciated the role of ICARDA for the agricultural development in CAC countries.

A FAO Regional Workshop on "Management and rehabilitation of salt-affected and fertility declined soils for sustainable agriculture and food security" within the framework of the FAO TCP in Uzbekistan will be held from 7-11 July, 2003 in Tashkent.

The seventh ICARDA Regional Coordination Meeting for CAC will take place in September, 2003 in Yerevan, Armenia. The Meeting will be hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture of Armenia.

A training workshop on "Modern rice production technologies" will be held in Tashkent on 6-8 August, 2003. The workshop will be organized by IRRRI under the logistic support provided by PFU-CGIAR for CAC.