

MEETING REPORT

## ‘Regional Expert Consultation on Underutilized Crops for Food and Nutrition Security in Asia and the Pacific’

**Anuradha Agrawal<sup>1</sup>, Anjula Pandey<sup>1</sup>, KS Varaprasad<sup>2</sup>, RK Tyagi<sup>3</sup> and RK Khetarpal<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, Pusa Campus, New Delhi-110012, India

<sup>2</sup> 87, Central Bank Colony, LB Nagar, Hyderabad-500068, Telangana, India

<sup>3</sup> Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, FAO Annex Building, 201/1 Larn Luang Road, Pomprab Sattrupai District, Bangkok-10100, Thailand

A “Regional Expert Consultation on Underutilized Crops for Food and Nutritional Security in Asia and the Pacific” was organized at Bangkok, Thailand, from November 13-15, 2017, with the following objectives:

- To create awareness on the role and value of underutilized plant resources/ crops/species/plants/ neglected underutilized species/orphan/minor crops (here afterward common abbreviation as UUCs is used in present write-up) which have potential for diversification of food basket to ensure better food and nutritional security in Asia-Pacific region;

- To share experiences and learn lessons to accelerate the use of UUCs as crops for future;
- To assess research and development (R&D) status on priority crops, and policies needed to promote the use of these potential crops for future use in Asia-Pacific region.

The Expert Consultation was organized by Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), Asia-Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology and Bioresources (APCoAB), Bangkok, Thailand and Council of Agriculture (COA), Taiwan, in collaboration with World Vegetable Centre (WorldVeg),



**Participants of the Regional Expert Consultation on Underutilized Crops for Food and Nutrition Security in Asia and the Pacific**

Taiwan; International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), India; Crops for Future (CFF), Malaysia; International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Lebanon; Bioversity International, Italy and Department of Agriculture (DOA), Thailand. In all, 54 participants from 18 countries of the Asia-Pacific region (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Fiji, Germany, India, Iran, Japan, Lao, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam) deliberated on the issues. The participants comprised Senior Officials, researchers from National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), Consultative Group (CG) Centers, experts on UUC, representatives of research institutions, donors, private sector, NGOs and a farmer. The meeting was structured to include inaugural, technical, special and plenary sessions. The technical sessions comprised: (i) Thematic Technical Presentations (9 speakers); (ii) Strategies on Underutilized Crops for Food and Nutritional Security (9 speakers); (iii) Country Status Reports on Underutilized Crops (16 countries); (iv) Working Group Discussion and Recommendations (4 groups) and (v) Panel Discussion on Policy Support for UUCs to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (8 Panellists).

The meeting provided an excellent platform for sharing experiences and gaining knowledge related to UUC of Asia and the Pacific. These crops have food and nutritional value with the possibilities of their commercial use and eventual benefit to small-holder farmers. The 3-day deliberations led to a collective agreement that R&D and promotion of UUC would address SDG goals on ending hunger, poverty alleviation, good health and well-being, besides attaining sustainable production and consumption, climate change and sustainable use of ecosystems. Consensus also emerged that policy makers should give due attention, generate political will and

mobilize funding and subsidies, to promote greater use of these plants. The meeting was beneficial in assessment on the importance of most potential crops, status of their R&D and gap areas which need attention to mainstream these crops into the existing cropping pattern systems. Interaction with participants from various countries provided a platform for exploring the possibilities of establishing a regional network for knowledge sharing (on crops, experts, centres of excellence for capacity building) and research collaborations. It was agreed that a global funding system for scholarships, exchange, projects along with awareness generation programs is urgently required. Important action points that emerged included definition of UUCs at global and national levels, documentation and baseline data development of species and diversity, facilitation of germplasm exchange, along with collecting, characterization and evaluation through bilateral or regional cooperation, capacity building at regional level for conservation and use of UUCs, education and awareness-generation for greater promotion of these crops.

The proceedings and recommendations of the above meeting can be viewed at:

- <http://www.apaari.org/web/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2018/Regional%20Expert%20Consultation%20on%20UUC%20-%20Proceedings%20and%20Recommendations%20-%20Final.pdf>

The Thematic, Strategic Papers and Country Status Reports of Asia-Pacific Countries have also been compiled and edited which were presented during the Expert Consultation, and can be viewed at:

- <http://www.apaari.org/web/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Regional-Expert-Consultation-Underutilized-Crops-Papers-and-Country-Reports.pdf>