



Regional Workshop on

Youth and Agriculture: Challenges and Opportunities

23-24 October, 2013

Islamabad, Pakistan

CONCEPT NOTE

Organized by

**Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI)
Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC)**

Regional Workshop

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Concept Note

Agriculture continues to be the engine of inclusive and accelerated economic growth, development as well as livelihood security in the Asia-Pacific region. The region supports 55 and 70 per cent of world's total and agricultural population on less than one-fifth of total global land. Higher returns from investments in agricultural research for development (AR4D) have been well documented in many developing countries of the region. In the 21st Century, new paradigms of regional development are inextricably linked and revolved around the nexus between agricultural development for food, nutrition and livelihood security on one side and the ecological integrity for sustainability on the other. The smallholder farmers, comprising over 80 per cent of the farming households in the region, have become poorer over the years due to multiple risks associated with agriculture. Since Green-Revolution era, the agricultural challenges have intensified, due to over exploitation of resources interlinked with rapidly increasing globalization, soaring fuel and food prices, volatile markets and growing climatic extremes. The threat to agriculture and food security in the region is now evident with much severity due to multiple challenges of higher population growth, natural resource degradation and ageing farmers owing to progressive volatility of social and economic competitive opportunities in farming vis-à-vis non-farming sectors. Notwithstanding, Asia-Pacific region, the home of 750 million young people (48 per cent of the world's youth) is the most vibrant in terms of agricultural and economic development. The rural youth in the region, however, is moving away from agriculture due to lack of basic amenities, professional knowledge and inspirational pathways for their employment security. It is very well appreciated and evident through the successful business models of leading public and private sector organizations as well as multi-national companies (for example IT sector) that youth is more innovative, productive as well receptive and curious to engage in and contribute to new technologies and advancements. On the contrary, in agriculture sector, there has been a wide gap in youth's energy and elderly people's experience, which is leading to ageing farming, slow pace of adoption of new innovations and technologies, huge losses in technology dissemination and delinking science with society and hence making farming non-remunerative, non-resilient and

unattractive for the youth. The developing countries of the region are facing challenges of vast demographic divide within society, region and country due to migration of rural and agricultural youth (including young women) to booming urban and non-farm sectors to seek socially more respectable and remunerative jobs. The majority of rural farm youth of the agriculturally vibrant and important region of the world have almost no attraction towards farming due to lack of professional capacity and skills on agri-businesses, access to new knowledge, finance, markets, enabling policies and hence becoming out-of-place and underpaid job seekers. Under such scenario, therefore, the business as usual in agriculture is neither a remunerative and respectable profession particularly for youth nor a sustainable pathway to meet food, nutrition, and livelihood commitments in the Asia-Pacific region.

The challenges of retaining youth in agriculture have been recognized globally which also figured prominently in the Global Conference on Agriculture Research for Development 2 (GCARD2) organized by Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) at Punte del Este, Uruguay during 2012. The GCARD 2 have put-forth “Youth (including young women) and Agriculture” as one of the focal discussions. Chair of GCARD2 organizing committee, reiterated that *“Globally agriculture is an ageing and undervalued profession and youth need special encouragement in all aspects of AR4D”*. Youth do not perceive agriculture as a remunerative and prestigious profession, and until they find meaningful economic as well as prestigious opportunities with value added back-stopping and attractive work environments in farm sector, they will continue to move away from farming. Even those who want to adopt agriculture as a profession are discouraged due to socio-cultural mindset of the society. The medical, engineering and IT professional parents would like their kids to enter in the same profession, but a farmer hardly wants to have his/her kids to adopt farming profession. This trend not only contributes to the emerging phenomenon of over-urbanization and growing unemployment, but also leading to social disparity and affecting global food production. Prioritizing investments in youth and agriculture is, therefore, very crucial for greater and active involvement of youth in farm advisory, knowledge providers, creating technology led businesses to provide value added services, generate employment opportunities and act as local technology agents to link science with society for enhancing agricultural productivity for a food secure society. Empowering youth (including young women), developing their capacity through engaging in informal and vocational training and creating awareness on new opportunities in agriculture including secondary and specialty agriculture and involving them in policy planning is the way forward for transitioning youth

from 'Job Seekers' to 'Job Providers' in order to boosting rural economies and bridging the gaps in rural and urban divides at different scales in the Asia-Pacific region. The organizational, regional and national leaderships of the Asia-Pacific region, therefore, need to plan immediate initiatives on investing in the farm youth and prepare them as agricultural professional leaders of tomorrow's agriculture to sustainably feed the projected global population of 9.2 billion by 2050. The way forward, therefore, warrants providing unblemished and tangible pathways for engaging youth in agriculture through developing and implementing the farm youth and gender friendly agricultural practices and policies.

As first stepping stone to GCARD2 decisions, a national initiative on young professionals in agriculture was taken in India to deliberate on *"Foresight and Future Pathways of Agricultural Research through Youth in India"*. The event was organized by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), jointly with Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) and Trust for Advancement in Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), at NASC Complex Pusa, New Delhi on 1-2 March, 2013. The deliberations in the event led to the development of a Roadmap to define and delineate the pathways for cultivating a new generation of young agricultural professionals and entrepreneurs with greater emphasis on technical capacity enhancement, institutional development, innovative networking and appropriate investments to harness the full potential of youth and bring qualitative change in their lives .

In the Asia-Pacific region, the agricultural constraints and opportunities as well as challenges of youth do not differ much. But, different countries are approaching differently on tapping agri-professionals for greater involvement in the farm sector. There are several youth led successful models in different countries for transforming agriculture. However, these models lack appropriate mechanism for regional and cross boarder learning from each other. Therefore, there is an urgency to comprehensively define youth (including young women) and agriculture priorities, policies, investments and to develop a repository of best-bet practices/business modules for possible replication in similar geographies and socio-economic circumstances across the region. Realizing new challenges and opportunities for youth in agriculture, the First Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on "Youth and Agriculture: Challenges and Opportunities" is planned to be hosted by Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) in Islamabad, Pakistan on 23-24 October, 2013.

Objectives

- To assess national and regional constraints, opportunities and priorities for attracting youth (including young women) in agriculture to ensure food, nutritional and environmental security
- To explore mechanisms for empowering farm youth through their involvement in decision making process at local, national, regional and global level
- To understand pathways to ensure effective participation of youth in agriculture through enabling policy environment
- To develop suitable mechanisms for greater involvement of youth through various initiatives and collaborations
- To create synergies and networks for capacity development, access to new knowledge and linking science to society through youth

Expected Outcomes

- National, and regional constraints, opportunities and priorities for attracting youth (including young women) in agriculture identified
- Specific pathways for youth led agricultural research for development (AR4D) at national and regional scales formulated
- Youth-led agri-business models with enhanced capacity, awareness and greater involvement in decision making, agri-advisory, agri-entrepreneurship and policy advocacy developed
- Regional network on “Youth and Agriculture” for sharing knowledge, innovations, technologies and expertise in the similar target environments and socio-economic settings established
- A road map developed for sustainable food, nutritional, and environmental security through empowering youth in the region

Organizers

- Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), Bangkok, Thailand
- Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), Islamabad, Pakistan

Participants

Young researchers and extension professionals, agricultural entrepreneurs, farmers and innovators as well as senior policy makers/NARS leaders from Asia-Pacific region

Venue and Time

The regional workshop is planned to be organized at Islamabad, Pakistan on 23-24 October, 2013

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