The 3rd APARIS Steering Committee Meeting was held from 9:00 -12:00 AM on 8th August 2004 at the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand. The participants included: Dr. Seishi Ninomiya, JIRCAS/NARO, Japan (Chair, APARIS Steering Committee); Dr. Ashraf Tanvir, PARC, Pakistan (Member); Dr. Malcolm Hazelman, FAO-RAP (Member); Dr. Ajit Maru, APAARI Resource Person (special invitee to report to GLOBAL.RAIS Initiative); Mr. P. K. Saha, APAARI (Liaison Officer); Dr. Qiaoqiao Zhang, CABI (special invitee); Mr. Satoru Miyata, Regional JIRCAS Coordinator (special invitee); and Dr. Sahdev Singh, APAARI (Member Secretary).

Dr. Seishi Ninomiya, the APARIS Steering Committee Chairperson, welcomed the participants and invited comments on the meeting agenda items and the background paper that was provided to all participants in advance and also during the meeting. He emphasized that the meeting discussions should concentrate on practical, doable activities that APARIS can undertake considering its current financial and manpower limitations. Dr. Ashraf Tanvir of PARC, Pakistan was invited to co-chair the meeting and he also welcomed the participants. The main agenda for discussions was the APARIS Business Plan for 2004-2007 under 3 broad themes as follows:
The Chair invited Dr. Sahdev Singh, Member Secretary, to brief the participants on on-going activities of APARIS as described in details in the Background Paper. The participants expressed their satisfaction with the APAARI efforts and also agreed that APARIS should continue to focus on the above three broad themes in accordance with the GFAR’s initiative to evolve a global agricultural information system of which APARIS will be the Asia-Pacific node. The deliberations prioritized the activities of APARIS Business Plan for 2004-2007 as follows:

a. Advocacy

1. Collecting, collating and providing access to information, on a biannual basis, related to status of ICT use and information systems in NARS of the region and agriculture and rural development related ICT use indicators at national and regional level (2005 and 2007).
2. Developing an advocacy paper on ICT and agricultural information related policy and strategy issues at national, sub-regional and regional level that can provide fact-based support for advocacy role of APARIS (early 2005).
3. Organize, during APAARI General Assemblies, a 1/2 day sensitization and awareness workshop on policy and strategy issues in enabling, enhancing and enlarging agricultural information systems for senior NARS and agricultural policy makers and managers (2004-2007).
4. Identify and publish success stories on ICT/ICM in ARD using case studies from selected Asian countries (2005)
5. Associate and network with other initiatives and forums to promote awareness about ICT/ICM in ARD and also publicize APARIS in the on-going AFITA Conference in Bangkok as well as the next one in India in 2006; FAO-RAP/SPC sub-regional workshop in the Pacific in September 2004; and as co-sponsor of the NARO Field Server Workshop in Bangkok in January 2005. (2004-2007)

b. Capacity Development

2. Three Sub-regional Training Workshops for NINPs and two ICT/ICM trainers from each country (in 2006)
   a. South Asia (Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka) in collaboration with SAIC
   b. South-East Asia (ASEAN countries) in collaboration with SEARCA
   c. the Pacific (APAARI member countries) in collaboration with SPC
3. National Workshops, facilitated by NINPs and trained NAIS trainers, for two officers from each major national agricultural institute (in 2007)

c. Integration of Agricultural Information Systems and Resources

1. Develop an online compendium of good practices, standards, guidelines, protocols etc. for agricultural information exchange and sharing in the Asia-Pacific region (2004-2007)
2. Participate, as a representative of the Asia-Pacific Region’s NARS, in negotiations related to setting of standards, guidelines, protocols related to agricultural information systems at the global level (2004-2007)
3. Conduct seminars at Sub-Regional levels, South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific countries related to sharing and exchange of information, especially on the use of standards, guidelines and best
practices in agricultural information systems in conjunction with the Sub-regional training workshops proposed in the Capacity Development section and other APAARI related activities. (2004-2007)
4. Further strengthen the directory of agricultural information on the web and the Gateway/Portal function to access the information resources of various institutes (2005-2007)
5. Promote data and information sharing among various member institutes using applications such as MetBroker and localized crop models

It was suggested that APAARI should develop a detailed Business Plan using concept notes for these activities and submit to GFAR for consideration and also identify potential collaborators and donors in close consultation with APARIS Steering Committee members and focal points in Support Group Organizations such as GFAR, FAO-RAP, ACIAR, AIT, JIRCAS/NARO, CABI, SDLEARN, and others.