

APAARI Participation in AFITA/WCCA 2004 Conference, Bangkok, Thailand

The Asian Federation for Information Technology in Agriculture (AFITA) and the World Congress on Computers in Agriculture (WCCA) jointly organized an international conference from 9-12 August 2004 at the Four Seasons Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand. The AFITA/WCCA2004 conference provided forums for agriculture related professionals to exchange information on applications and developments in the use of IT. There were approximately 400 participants with more than 100 paper, poster and technical workshop contributions from various countries and organizations. Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Royal Kingdom of Thailand graciously presided at the grand opening ceremony of the Conference on 9 August 2004 at 15:00 hrs at the Four Seasons Hotel, Ratchadamri, Bangkok. The conference was organized by following institutions: AFITA, AIT, ASAE, CIGR, EFITA, FAO, HAIL, IAALD, JIRCAS, JSAI, MOAC, NECTEC, PanAFITA, UNESCO, and NSTDA.

APAARI participated in the Conference extensively. It was represented by Dr. Sahdev Singh, APAARI Assistant Executive Secretary; Dr. Ajit Maru, APAARI Resource Person and Dr. Ashraf Tanvir, APARIS Steering Committee Member. The 9 participants of APAARI organized training workshop on ***Capacity Building for Developing National Agricultural Information Systems (NAIS) of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Bhutan, East Timor, Mongolia and Vietnam*** also attended the Conference as second part of their training program. Below are some of the highlights of the APAARI contributions in the Conference. The full papers and presentations of APAARI contributions are available on the official AFITA/WCCA 2004 web site <http://www.afitaandwcca2004.net/>.

1. Technical Workshop on Distributed Databases in Agricultural Research

This 90-minute technical workshop was delivered by Dr. Sahdev Singh, APAARI in collaboration with AIT's information systems unit. More than 60 participants attended the workshop. It demonstrated the concepts of distributed databases and multi-host search engines. It is increasingly becoming more difficult to create and manage centralized databases due to effort and resources involved. For easy creation and maintenance, a decentralized approach of database management is gaining popularity. APARIS functions (RAEL and ARD Info Gateway) were shown as examples on how an agricultural research activity being carried out at several locations can have a decentralized/distributed database which can be used all researchers involved in the activity. Relevant literature and open source scripts were provided to the participants during the workshop.

2. Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS), paper by Dr. Raj Paroda and Dr. Sahdev Singh

The paper was presented by Dr. Sahdev Singh as Dr. Raj Paroda was unable to attend the conference due to prior commitments. There were about 50 participants who showed a lot of interest in APARIS during the question-answer session. Dr. Singh was also invited to chair this session in which 5 papers were presented on information resources and databases.

3. Status of ICT applications in Agricultural Research and Development Institutions in the Asia – Pacific Region, paper by Dr. Ajit Maru, Dr. Sahdev Singh and Dr. Jean-Francois Giovannetti

Based on a recent study conducted by APAARI, this paper was presented by Dr. Ajit Maru and there were about 50 participants. The session was devoted to Rural development and Planning.

4. AFITA Board Meeting and Other Activities

Dr. Singh also attended the AFITA Board meeting. During which, APAARI was requested to host the AFITA web site in a similar manner as APCoAB web site. He was also selected as India Representative in the AFITA forum for the next two years.

The Conference provided excellent opportunity to promote APARIS and network with potential collaborators, including Dr. Stephen Rudgard and Dr. Johannes Keizer (FAO WAICENT Program) Mr. Michael Riggs (FAO-RAP), Mr. Dondy (SEARCA), Mr. Simon Wilkinson (eNACA coordinator), CABI, HAIL, JSAI, and several others.

The next AFITA Conference will be organized in India in 2006. An informal request was made to APAARI to be one of the co-sponsors of that event.

On the last day of the Conference, recognizing the APAARI contributions, the organizers invited Dr. Sahdev Singh for a special dinner hosted for the Conference co-sponsors.