

**Asia-Pacific Round Table on Sustainable Agriculture
14-15 September 1999**

Conference Recommendations

Preamble

The population of the Asia Pacific region is expected to grow by 160% over the next 25 years. Food production, from an increasingly overextended natural resource base, will need to grow by 50-75 % to keep pace with this population growth and changing diet.

There is an urgent need for all stakeholders to join in addressing the need to enhance food security whilst protecting the environment for future generations. This will ensure the application of modern science, including biotechnology, in ways that are acceptable to consumers.

The Round Table suggests the following recommendations be circulated to relevant national and international fora, for their consideration when developing policies and action plans.

1 Sustainable Food Production & Trade: *What role should global trade regimes and national governments play in encouraging sustainable food production in the Asia-Pacific region?*

- 1.1 The WTO must take a strong lead in ensuring a level playing field in terms of standards, tariffs and inter-regional trade of agricultural goods.
- 1.2 Special attention should be given to the challenges of infrastructure development in terms of roads, markets, post-harvest storage, handling and distribution in developing countries.
- 1.3 Direct subsidies should be avoided, and public sector investment should focus on infrastructure and human resource development. Research and extension investment decisions should take into account the socio-economic and cultural situation of smallholders as well as large commercial interests.

2 Biotechnology & other technological innovations: *What actions are needed to ensure that biotechnology contributes to sustainable food production?*

- 2.1 There should be increased collaboration in, and sharing of research aimed at promoting agricultural productivity and diversification for sustainable development, (e.g. via the CGIAR network).

- 2.2 Collaboration between public and private sectors, between developed and developing countries, and between consumer groups and farmer-oriented NGO's, should be encouraged with the aim of transferring the benefits of technological innovation.
- 2.3 International harmonization of the regulatory framework needs to be urgently addressed, to allow appropriate harnessing of new technologies.
- 2.4 There should be more transparency in, and sharing of developments in biotechnology and germplasm, and in:
 - recognizing intellectual property rights
 - establish common regulatory and quality testing mechanisms
 - education and training at all levels.

3 Food Safety: *How can stakeholders ensure a transparent system for assuring safe produce?*

- 3.1 An international regulatory system for the endorsement / certification of "safe produce" should be introduced.
- 3.2 Acknowledgement of, and actions to ensure the implementation of consumer "right-to-know" principle concerning food safety, by all stakeholder groups.

4 Food Security: *How can issues of food security be addressed?*

- 4.1 Planners and legislators need to strike an appropriate balance of national level investment in research, extension and infrastructural support between large scale and smallholder agriculture, to ensure stability both in year-on year, and longer-term food security levels.
- 4.2 Need a greater emphasis on smallholder needs, in terms of upgrading financial services, technology uptake, market access, pricing and credit policies, improving land and water management and minimizing environmental impact of smallholder agriculture on marginal lands.