

United Nations Nations Unies

Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (UNAPCAEM)
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International Seminar and Exhibition on Information and Communication Technology
Applications for Agriculture and Rural Industry and Agro-based Enterprise Development,
5-7 April 2004, Beijing, China

Concluding Remarks

UNAPCAEM together with UNESCAP, the Chinese Academy of Engineering (CAE), and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Mechanization Sciences (CAAMS) organized this International Seminar and Exhibition. There were 102 participants in this seminar with the majority of the participants from China and with participation also from six other countries, i.e. India, Republic of Korea, Bangladesh, Philippines, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and USA.

There were 21 scientific papers and reports and one keynote speech presented by the speakers highlighting topics in the following major areas: status and application of ICT within agriculture and rural enterprise development in the participating Asian countries, national information centres, development of agricultural informationization, application of GPS (Global Positioning System) in agriculture, agricultural expert systems, distance learning through ICT applications, precision agriculture using satellite techniques, application of low cost solutions for wireless rural networking, VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) application in rural telephoning, UNESCAP experience on internet based agriculture service network, satellite based agricultural information system for sea-locked island areas, computer aided machinery design systems, “village phone” system to improve the livelihoods in rural areas, agricultural produce information database, agriculture price information service, decision support system and development of Asian farm machinery network.

In his keynote speech academician Wang Maohua mentioned; “Information technology has brought world-wide impacts to modern agriculture and food production over the past two decades. ICT technology extension would not only be benefit to promote the rural informatization development, narrow the digital divide between rural and urban communities, support the decision maker to better manage agricultural resources and production process, but also would be an important tools to develop UNAPCAEM activities to serve the regional technical development and cooperation in the field of agricultural engineering, equipment innovation and rural development”.

Information is critical to the social and economic activities that comprise the development process. Information and communications technology (ICT) provides the key opportunities in the work against rural poverty; ICT offers great potential to empower people of disadvantaged communities, mainly living on agriculture, in developing countries. ICT service development is a complex problem, presenting both practical and policy challenges. It is also apparent that solutions that work in developed countries cannot simply be transplanted to developing country environments; the solutions must be adapted to the local needs and conditions.

This seminar shows the important role of the United Nations to bring to common knowledge and use, the scientific results, which may benefit agricultural production through

technology development and technology transfer, as mentioned by Dr. Tapio Juokslahti, Director, of the UNAPCAEM.

Some of the recommendations of the participants for the future; digital divide in urban-rural and national-international should be narrowed down, existing ICT policies should be implemented to its full extent in the countries, ICT should be utilized in agro-based industries, more efficiently, all data related to agriculture should be made available through 'one window', agricultural marketing and price information systems should be upgraded with appropriate ICT facilities and skilled manpower, public statistics databases should be made available on the web, Awareness among the policy makers on the potential of ICT is a critical element of its development, an intranet (network) should be established among the NARS organizations, scientists/researchers and extension personnel should have opportunity of free access to Internet, governments should take steps to build three basic infrastructures in the rural areas: electricity, telephone, and Internet connectivity

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Time and venue of the seminar was: 5-7 April 2004, China International Science and Technology Convention Center, No 12 Yumin Road, Beijing 100029, China, email: apcaem@un.org

The United Nations Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (UNAPCAEM) is a new official subsidiary body of the United Nations in Beijing. Its mandate is to contribute to poverty reduction in the rural areas through promotion of advanced technologies in agricultural production, post-harvest machinery and processing and in value addition processing.