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13th Steering Committee Meeting of the CGIAR Program for Sustainable Agricultural Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus



Prof. Karim Maredia visited greenhouse farmer's farm in Kibray district of Tashkent region

Maredia expressed his appreciation and gratitude for collaboration and assistance of ICARDA in realization of this project. They discussed plans for further work. Prof. Maredia also visited Tashkent State Agrarian University, where he met with the rector and the staff. During the meeting they discussed possible plans for collaboration on the project and capacity building for development sustainable system of agriculture in the country. In the University, Karim Maredia was acquainted with biological laboratory, where useful insects are breeding, including introduced parasite (entomophagous) – a predatory mite *amblyseius*. Also, he visited training and experimental farm of the University, where experimental field plots and greenhouses for experiments on cultivation of various crops are situated. Experiments on protection of tomatoes in greenhouses from harmful insects (whitefly, aphid and thrips) were carried out in this training farm by using predatory mite *amblyseius*. Also, experiments on grafting of tomato on resistant to complex diseases of rootstocks were carried out in the greenhouse, with the aim of growing high-quality seedling of tomato promising varieties in the open and protected ground. Specialists on plant protection from the institutes were invited to the meeting, where they discussed issues on project tasks implementation for development of environmentally safe methods of protection tomatoes from pests, diseases and weeds. Prof. Maredia expressed his wishes for further research on the project program.

Barno Tashpulatova, IPM
Ravza Mavliyanova, AVRDC

Utilization of Marginal Quality Water in Agriculture: Potential and Constraints with Special Reference to Central Asia and Caucasus



Prof. Faisal Taha (first from right), Director Technical Programs, ICBA summarized the key achievements and role of ICBA activities for improved livelihood of rural poor in Middle East, Central Asia, Northern and Western Africa

The 35th Annual Meeting of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from June 20-24, 2010. During this meeting the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) jointly conducted a seminar on “Utilization of marginal quality water in agriculture: potential and constraints with special reference to Central Asia and Caucasus”. The seminar was organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In his speech, Dr Ahmed Al-Masoum, Deputy Director General, ICBA emphasized new integrated program for the conservation and rational use of water resources developed by ICBA in order to support water-scarce countries to improve the land's productivity, social equity and environmental sustainability. He also underlined that the Center's mandate is to help these countries to improve water use through an integrated water resource systems approach, with special emphasis on the effective use of marginal quality water. The Center's operations cover the Middle East, North Africa, West and Central Asia. The main problem of irrigated agriculture, as noted in his welcoming speech by Dr Asad Musaev, General Director of Agrarian Center, at the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, is the increase of soil salinity, which can and should be seriously considered through the use of modern reclamation and irrigation management practices. One alternative approach of water resources would be the utilization of drainage water, which is a forced measure, as this water is highly mineralized and its mis-management can seriously affect crop growth. However, conjunctive use of 'drainage water and fresh water' can improve the crop yield and prevent soil re-salinization or secondary (human caused) salinization. Drainage water according to the opinion of Dr Mustafa Mustafaev, Research Institute of Soil Sciences and Agrochemistry, National Academy of Sciences Azerbaijan can also be used for animal husbandry and aquaculture purposes. The additional direction of research

for combating soil salinization as has been mentioned in the presentation of Prof Valida Alizade, Director of the Institute of Botany, Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, could be the introduction and utilization of native and introduced halophytic flora, which will become an effective and alternative fodder production under harsh desert climate.

A shallow water table can also induce soil salinization. The regulation of water table fluctuations can be achieved through the control of irrigation management practices or by the establishment of artificial agro-phytocenosis of aboriginal or introduced halophytic trees/shrubs in pure plantations and/or intercropped with salt/and drought tolerant annual and perennial fodder grass and legumes. The benefits of implementation of this low cost technology by utilization of low quality water for irrigation for increasing productivity of marginal lands and development of crop/livestock production was presented by Dr. Kristina Toderich, regional representative of ICBA for Central Asia and Caucasus.

In conclusion of the seminar, Prof. Faisal Taha, Director Technical Programs, ICBA summarized the key achievements and role of ICBA activities for improved livelihood of rural poor in Middle East, Central Asia, Northern and Western Africa. He also underlined that several biosaline agriculture projects being carried out in these countries and its lessons could be transferred to Central Asia and Azerbaijan saline environments. Field survey, organized by Agrarian Center, Ministry of Agriculture of Azerbaijan along Caspian Sea coastal areas clearly showed the potential of introduction of biosaline technologies including utilization of low quality water to increase productivity of degraded salt affected lands.

All the participants expressed the necessity of close collaboration and development of new projects in biosaline agriculture, horticulture, arid forage production and animal husbandry including the transfer of innovative biosaline technologies, knowledge sharing and capacity building. Islamic Development Bank representatives showed great interest to develop such activities in Central Asia and Caucasus.

**Kristina Toderich, Faisal Taha, Ahmed Almasoum
ICBA**

Strengthening partnerships with Turkmenistan

The 13th Steering Committee Meeting of the CGIAR Program for Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) and ICARDA's Regional Planning Meetings were organized in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on 13-16 June, 2010. During these events, Dr. M. Solh, Director General, ICARDA, also met with high-level policymakers in Turkmenistan, H.E. the Minister of Agriculture of Turkmenistan Mr. O. Gurbannazarov and the President of the Academy of Sciences, Turkmenistan Dr. G. Mezilov.

During the meeting with the Minister of Agriculture Dr. M. Solh briefly informed him about the activities of CGIAR Program in the CAC Region and particularly in Turkmenistan. He mentioned about the recently started Project "Exploration of synthetic wheat for developing salinity tolerant, improved quality winter wheat for Central Asia". Dr. M. Solh also highlighted the importance of trainings and participation of Turkmen scientists in the regional meetings.

H.E. Mr. O. Gurbannazarov, Minister of Agriculture of Turkmenistan, appreciated very much the activities of ICARDA and other CG Centers in Turkmenistan. The Minister of Agriculture also informed that the Turkmen Government established a new lake "Altyn Asyr" formed of drainage waters and kindly requested ICARDA and other CG Centers for assistance in the development of crop and livestock production around the lake. The Minister also indicated that the salinity is a critical problem for Turkmeni-



Meeting with the Minister of Agriculture of Turkmenistan:

Left to right: Dr. Z. Khalikulov, Acting Head of PFU-CGIAR, Dr. K. Shideed, Deputy DG, ICARDA, Dr. M. Solh, D G, ICARDA, H.E. Mr. O. Gurbannazarov, Minister of Agriculture, Turkmenistan, Mr. M. Ataev, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Turkmenistan, Dr. A. Annaev, Director, Grain Institute of Turkmenistan, and Dr. G. Goshayev, Director, Crop Husbandry Institute of Turkmenistan