The contribution of Oman toward the establishment of the Regional Network on Plant Genetic Resources

The Near East North Africa Plant Genetic Resources Network (NENAPGRN) was established as part of the Association for Agriculture Research institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA) family of networks with the aim to strengthen collaboration and coordination in order to ensure collective efforts in the conservation and sustainable utilization of Plant Genetic Resources (PGR). Oman has made many contributions to the progress of the network as indicated below.

1. The first annual meeting of the Network was held in Oman in June 2011, hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. In this strategic meeting it was decided to develop a regional strategy for the conservation of Plant Genetic Resources.

Objectives of the meeting were:

1. To strengthen the governance system of the network and build up realistic mechanisms for making and taking decisions as well as for follow-up and implementation.
2. To agree on priority areas for collaboration and networking within the network.
3. To initiate a process for the development of specific project proposals as well as a regional strategy.
4. To initiate a process for the development of a funding strategy for the network.

5. To set up and agree on a work plan for the year 2011-2012.

The meeting was attended by 20 participants representing 12 member countries and institutes including ICARDA. Eight participants attended as observers from several international and national institutions.

2. Oman was involved in drafting the Regional Plant Genetic Resources Conservation Strategy and the Bylaws of the network.

The draft outlined the regional strategy providing:

1. background, justification and assessment,
2. the strategy for the future
3. a framework for action
4. and elements to progress towards a regional information system

The Board in August 2012 in the Cairo Board Meeting.

3. Oman chaired the board of the network from June 2011 to August 2012.

4. The Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Center (APGRC) of the Research Council joined as a member of AARINENA in June 2012.
The most recent event, organized and hosted by the Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Center of the Research Council in collaboration with NENAPGRN was a three day regional workshop titled “The implementation of the Regional Near East North Africa Plant Genetic Resources Strategy: National, Regional, and Global Roles”, held in Muscat, Oman, from 18 to 20 February 2013.

The main aim of the workshop was to discuss issues related to the implementation of the regional plant genetic resources strategy and to bring together member countries and other regional and international partners to discuss the national, regional and global roles in its implementation. The following six themes were discussed in the workshop:

1. National PGR strategies, taking Oman’s strategy on animal and plant genetic resources as an example
2. Funding PGR activities in the region
3. Capacity building for PGR activities in the region
4. Regional PGR information management
5. Establishment of strong National PGR programs as basic building blocks for regional collaboration.
6. Towards a Regional Plan of Action on PGR Conservation and Sustainable Use.

The working groups came out with a number of recommendations for each theme, which were discussed and adopted in a final form. Another important outcome of the workshop was the set of general recommendations with set up timeline for its implementation. Some of the recommendations of the meeting were:

1. The Coordinator was requested to invite non-NENAPGRN member countries in the region to become members.
2. Develop and/or update national strategies and action plans on PGRFA, including capacity building activities related to NENAPGRN operations and implementation of the Global Plan of Action on PGRFA.
3. Establish necessary links with FAO on the Information Sharing Mechanism on PGRFA for supporting establishment of national mechanisms.
4. Use available platforms, including web-sites and newsletters for enhancing the visibility of the NENAPGRN.
5. Develop a synopsis document on the regional PGR strategy.

6. A regional plan of activities for three years (2013-2015) is requested to be developed by the Executive Committee of NENAPGRN, based on the regional PGR Strategy. A wider consultative process should follow to develop a regional plan of action for the following phase of 2016 and beyond.