



First Indian banana festival and conference held in New Delhi

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A festive celebration marks the first Indian banana festival and congress held at Pragathi Maidan New Delhi from 4-6 August 2005. Exhibits were held to showcase the rich and colorful banana industry of India.

Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar inaugurated the three-day event, which aside from the banana products of India, also features varieties of the fruit from 6 countries namely, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

Some 250-300 delegates from the country attended the event. Participating departments include ICAR, National Horticulture Board, Khadi Village Industries Commission, APEEDA, Department of Agriculture of the Government of India, and of Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Assam, Kerala, Mizoram and Maharashtra. A handful of private companies also graced the festival. The main value-added products exhibited were fibre-based handicraft items like table mats, bags, toys, hats, etc. Banana chips and powder were also widely exhibited. Most of the banana product manufacturers were small-scale businessmen.

Among the fresh fruits, more than 10 different varieties of bananas were showcased: Manohar, Maldhog, Chenichampa, Amritsagar, Bhimkal, Kothia, Red banana, Nendran, Dwarf Cavendish, Rashtali, Ney Poovan, Monthan, Matti, Kanthali.

In line with the celebration, a one day banana conference was also held. Session 1 was on the production and post-harvest management of banana. Lectures on the performance of tissue cultured plants and their potential



in banana trade; biotechnology approaches in banana production; quality improvement and postharvest management strategies in banana; micro-irrigation in banana and INIBAP programme on conservation and use of banana diversity were conducted.

During the open forum, farmers have showed great interest in the new FHIA hybrids, especially FHIA-23, FHIA-21, FHIA-01, FHIA-02 and FHIA-03. These farmers have requested to supply the planting materials to evaluate the performance and local acceptance.

Session 2 was on developing domestic and international markets for banana. Discussion topics include promotion of banana in the gulf market; international standards and phytosanitary requirement for banana exports, global trade in banana; and marketing of banana in the gulf market. The last session featured success stories on banana cultivation.



Banana review and planning workshop held in the Philippines

Is there a pressing need for a tissue culture laboratory in each partner state college and university? This is one of the issues discussed during the Annual Banana Review meeting and Planning workshop held at the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD) from 1-2 August 2005.

Collaborating state universities and colleges (SUCs) such as Cavite State University (CVSU), Quirino State University (QSC), Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMSU), Ilocos Sur Polytechnic College (ISPC) and the Institute of Plant Breeding (IPB) presented the recent progress of evaluation and adoption trials of the introduced and popular cultivars distributed through the National Repository Multiplication and Distribution Centres (NRMDCs) of INIBAP-AP.

A planning workshop followed after the presentations. A number of participants raised the issue of maintaining a tissue culture laboratory in each university. According to them, there is a need for this especially since Lapanday, the private tissue culture company that supplies disease free planting materials in big bulk, has already shown its inability to meet the high demand for planting materials. QSC, for instance, is involved in a commercialization project, which requires more than 500 planting materials. Lapanday has told them that they could not supply their order at one time.

Although a need for a tissue culture laboratory was identified, a consensus was not reached regarding this issue. Some were hesitant as there



have been funding for the establishment of tissue culture laboratory before but the universities were not able to maintain it. The reason for this, according to them, is the lack of trained people to perform the tissue culture laboratories. There were also not available spare parts for the tissue culture equipment in the country.

Possible research topics and areas for interventions and funding were also identified and discussed during the workshop. Among the important points raised is that contrary to the belief of many, introduced varieties are not really meant to replace local cultivars but instead serves an option to add in the farmers' wide array of choices.

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Sixth Australian Banana Industry Congress held

With the theme, 'Determining the future', the sixth Australian banana industry was held at the Cairns International Hotel Tully Showground, Queensland from 10-13 August 2005.

The congress was organized by the Australian Banana Growers Council (ABGC). According to ABGC president Patrick Leathy, this year's theme is "more than a catchy phrase, but conveys the resilience and independence inherent in an industry that insists on setting its own agenda, not responding to that set by others".

High-powered array of international and domestic banana experts have been gathered to speak in the congress. INIBAP-Asia Pacific regional coordinator

Dr Agustin Molina attended the congress.

Among the topics discussed in the congress are: non-chemical management of banana pests and diseases; innovations in soil health management for Latin America; adding value to bananas via banana nutritional message; waste to energy in the banana industry; maximizing returns from your investment in R&D and promotion levies; how research can help the banana industry, etc.

A Banana Family Field day at Tully Showground was one of the highlights of the congress. Furthermore, for the first time since the congress started, there were interactive sessions with hands on component right in the middle of the NQ growing region.

The congress culminated with the banana bar and the banana industry ball.



India is the world's largest producer and consumer of bananas with an estimated production of 16 M tonnes annually.

Although domestic production exceeds the world's trade of bananas, the country's exports are not up to mark due to a myriad of reasons. India is currently working on this problem. It is foreseen that in a few years' time, India will be able to jack up its export market. The recently held Indian Banana Congress and Festival is one proof that the Indian government means serious business in promoting bananas. The Indian government has also hiked up the subsidy of bananas to 60% (roughly Rs18500 per hectare) in order to encourage the masses to cultivate bananas and later on, enter the export market. The organizers of the Congress also aimed for the event to facilitate commercialization of banana for its rich, nutritional medicinal values, handicraft small scale industries and various uses.

While the research institutes of banana in India are moving forward to the postharvest research in bananas, they are still very much focused in improving banana production and conserving their rich *Musa* genetic diversity. The pictures below show how much progress the banana projects has been reaping, regarding the field trials of IMTP and its follow up project, the Evaluation and Promotion of *Musa* Germplasm.



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It was also reiterated that the distribution of suckers must be avoided to prevent the spread of devastating banana diseases such as Banana Bunchy Top Virus and fusarium wilt. For the evaluation and adoption trials, it was agreed that there must be a standard protocol for sensory evaluation. Also of major importance is the market-consumer demand studies and a credit programme to complete the banana investment package. The activities and results of the technology assesment protocol (TAP) study could also be used for future INIBAP-PCARRD-SUCs collaborative projects.

Proposals for funding that was agreed upon was on product development, training, upgrading of tissue culture laboratory and development of information materials. The upcoming banana uses enterprise workshop and technofair was also given focus. During his closing remarks, INIBAP-AP Regional Coordinator Agustin Molina expressed his enthusiasm to the banana collaborative project and remarked how functional it is: "After all that is said in the meeting, I still believe that the key issue that we have to address is the profitability and production systems of the small scale farmers," he concluded.

INIBAP-AP organizes a banana production training in Cambodia

As only a recent member of BAPNET, Cambodia has much to learn to catch up with fellow BAPNET-member countries. INIBAP-AP is gladly extending its helping hand to Cambodia, for one, by organizing a training on banana production last 12-15 September 2005, where Regional Coordinator Agustin Molina and Associate Scientist Inge Van den Bergh served as the trainers.

The topics covered during the training are: opportunities and challenges in the world banana production and market; use of tissue culture; nursery management; production systems; field management; postharvest quality; and pests and diseases management.

Men Sarom of Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) gave an overview of the constraints and challenges faced by the banana industry in Cambodia. Dr Molina spoke of the INIBAP programmes, and its relevance to the banana production in Cambodia.



Participants to the training course at CARDI.

The workshop also included a field visit to CARDI and hands-on exercises.

Participants of the workshop are the research personnels in CARDI involved in banana research and production. A total of 20 people completed the workshop.



New Publications

Two new publications are available for distribution at the INIBAP-AP office. 'Towards management of *Musa* nematodes in Asia and Pacific' edited by FS dela Cruz, I. Van den Bergh, D. De Waele, D.M. Hautea and A.B. Molina is the proceedings of the training workshop on enhancing capacity for nematode management in small-scale banana cropping systems held at the Institute of Plant Breeding, University of the Philippines Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines in 1-5 December 2003. An accompanying technical manual, containing the technical presentations in the training workshop, was also published with the same title and editors.



Inibap is a network of the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI)

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