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Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY COMMISSION

TWENTY-FIRST SESSION

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ASIA-PACIFIC FOREST INVASIVE SPECIES NETWORK

SECRETARIAT NOTE

1. The Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN) was inaugurated at the Twentieth Session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) held in Nadi, Fiji, in April 2004. A pre-session workshop *Developing an action plan for addressing forest invasive species in Asia and the Pacific* identified five priority elements for the network:

- Organizational structures to support the network
- Stock-taking of national activities
- Awareness raising
- Capacity building
- Database and information sharing

2. Organizational structures: To date, national focal points for the APFISN have been designated by 24 APFC member countries. Coordination of APFISN activities has mainly been conducted by FAO staff and consultants. The Chinese Academy of Sciences contributed the services of a designated coordinator for four months during 2005. In January 2006, the Kerala Forest Research Institute assigned a senior scientist to work as APFISN coordinator on a long-term basis. Financial and in-kind support for the network, and its activities, has been provided by several countries and institutions in the region, including the State Forestry Administration of China, Chinese Academy of Sciences, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, Asia-Pacific Association of Forest Research Institutes (APAFRI), Government of Fiji, Australian Center for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Kerala Forest Research Institute and FAO.

3. Stocktaking of national activities: Guidelines for reviewing national needs and activities were prepared in consultation with national focal points and distributed to countries. To date, seven countries have submitted completed reports. The reports will be analyzed to identify significant gaps in national and regional efforts to combat invasive species and to enable APFISN activities to better address areas of weakness.

4. Awareness raising: An APFISN website has been developed as a distinct segment of the APFC website. A concept note describing the initial structure of the APFISN website has been developed and work is ongoing to develop the suite of webpages envisaged for posting of various reports and documents. An APFISN brochure and a factsheet to assist with awareness raising have also been prepared. APFISN representatives have attended a number of international meetings and conferences and made presentations to raise the profile of the network at events such as a Roundtable of Asia-Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Networks, a COFO side event on invasive species, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Invasive Alien Species conference in August 2005.
5. Capacity building: Three capacity building workshops were held during the past two years:
 - A workshop on *Development of an Asia-Pacific regional strategy for Eucalyptus rust* was held in Bangkok, Thailand, in October 2005. This workshop was held in collaboration with ACIAR and FAO, and was attended by 38 participants.
 - A workshop on *Developing an Asia-Pacific strategy for forest invasive species: the coconut beetle problem - bridging agriculture and forestry* was held in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, in February 2005. This workshop was held in collaboration with the USDA Forest Service, FAO and APAFRI, and was attended by 26 participants.
 - A workshop on *Early warning systems for forest invasive species* was held in Peechi, India, in February 2006. This workshop was held in collaboration with the USDA Forest Service, the Kerala Forest Research Institute and FAO. Approximately 40 participants attended.
6. Databases and information sharing: The Chinese Academy of Sciences has taken the lead in developing an APFISN database. A template database has been developed for adaptation to individual country requirements and work is now progressing to identify existing databases that could be linked into a single APFISN database that can be accessed via the Internet. Information sharing has included publication of the proceedings of the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Conference, distribution of workshop reports and information sharing by e-mail.
7. An overall assessment of the effectiveness of the APFISN in the two years since its inception suggests that the pace of network development has been slower than envisaged at the outset. Fewer activities have been implemented and many activities have not progressed as rapidly as desired. A major constraint up to January 2006 has been a lack of full-time coordination and of continuity in coordination. Other challenges have been to effectively engage national focal points to work proactively on initiatives and to access the financial resources required to implement regional initiatives.
8. The designation of a dedicated APFISN coordinator by the Kerala Forest Research Institute is a significant step forward in the development of a fully functional and vibrant network. Efforts are also ongoing to secure additional financial resources through contributions from APFC member countries, the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme and various external sources.