

PREFACE

The year 2000 marked the start of a new century and a new millennium. It also marked 25 years of close collaboration between CIAT/Colombia and cassava researchers in Asia. This collaboration started in 1975 with the arrival at CIAT of three cassava researchers from Kasetsart University in Thailand for an extended period of training in cassava varietal improvement, pathology and agronomy. This initial group was followed in 1976 by three Thais and three Malaysians, and in 1977 by another four Thais and one Indonesian. Many other cassava researchers from Asia have been trained at CIAT in subsequent years. Between 1978 and 1989 CIAT also organized four production training courses for Asian researchers in which a total of 86 persons participated. Over the past 25 years a total of 141 Asian researchers received training at CIAT/Colombia, while another 12 obtained MSc or PhD degrees with CIAT funding. This training not only increased people's knowledge about many aspects of cassava production and utilization, but also cemented a strong bond of friendship between cassava researchers at CIAT and those working in national programs in Asia. It was precisely this mutual trust and friendship which allowed CIAT to set up a Regional Cassava Office for Asia in Bangkok, Thailand, in 1983. The CIAT cassava breeder and agronomist stationed in Bangkok were thus able to work very closely with cassava researchers in many Asian national programs, with the common objective of improving the yield potential and starch content of cassava varieties, to widen the genetic base of cassava germplasm, and to improve the sustainability and productivity of cassava, with the ultimate goal of raising the standard of living of cassava farmers while protecting the soil resource base.

Shortly after the establishment of the CIAT Regional Cassava Office for Asia, CIAT organized the first Asian Cassava Workshop, held in Bangkok in 1984, to discuss the situation of cassava in Asia, its potential and research development needs. This workshop provided the blueprint for future collaboration between CIAT and Asian national cassava programs, focusing on cassava breeding and agronomy. With financial assistance mainly from the Japanese government, CIAT organized the second Regional Workshop in Rayong, Thailand, in 1987; the third in Malang, Indonesia, in 1990; the fourth in Trivandrum, Kerala, India, in 1993; and the fifth in Danzhou, Hainan, China, in 1996. Proceedings of these workshops have been published, and these provide a permanent record of the progress made during each three year period.

The sixth Regional Cassava Workshop was held in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, from February 21 to 25, 2000. It was considered an opportune moment to pause and take stock, to review what had been done and achieved, to assess the present situation and the challenges ahead, and to discuss together how cassava can play an even more important role in the economic development of the countries in the region, and be a vehicle to improve the livelihood of cassava farmers, processors, traders and consumers. And, finally, to discuss again the need for future research and development to meet the challenges of a new era. Moreover, the Nippon Foundation supported project on "Improving the Sustainability of Cassava-based Cropping Systems in Asia", had finished the first phase (1994-1998) and had just embarked on a second phase (1999-2003). The sixth Regional Cassava Workshop was thus an opportunity to review the activities and

assess the results of the first phase of the project, and to discuss how best to move forward to achieve the ambitious targets set for the second phase.

The Proceedings of the sixth Regional Workshop, entitled “Cassava’s Potential in Asia in the 21st Century: Present Situation and Future Research and Developments Needs”, thus reviews in detail the research done in Asia in the areas of cassava varietal improvement and agronomic research over the past 25-35 years and describes the major achievements attained; it also reviews the Nippon Foundation sponsored FPR projects in four countries as well as a similar FPR project conducted in India. A number of papers also assess the current situation of the cassava industry in each country and in the region as a whole, and describe new potential uses of cassava and how these products can play a role in opening new markets for cassava, in order to keep cassava competitive in an ever more globalized economy.

During the Workshop the Advisory Committee of the Asian Cassava Research Network met to elect new representatives from each country. These are:

Watana Watananonta	DOA, Thailand:	Chairman
Reinhardt Howeler	CIAT, Thailand:	Secretary
Li Kaimian	CATAS, China	
S. Edison	CTCRI, India	
Nasir Saleh	RILET, Indonesia	
Tan Swee Lian	MARDI, Malaysia	
Fernando Evangelio	PhilRootcrops, Philippines	
Pham Van Bien	IAS, Vietnam	

The Advisory Committee decided that the 7th Regional Workshop will be held in Thailand, probably at the end of 2002.

CIAT wants to take this opportunity to express its most sincere thanks to the Nippon Foundation of Japan for the generous financial support they have provided, not only in funding the FPR project in various countries over the past seven years, but also to contribute to the organization of the sixth Regional Workshop. Without this support it would be impossible to continue the Asian Cassava Research Network and to continue organizing the triennial Workshops.

CIAT also wants to thank the Vietnamese government, and in particular the Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IAS) of south Vietnam, for hosting the sixth Regional Workshop. The hard work of the organizing committee resulted in a highly productive and enjoyable meeting, and provided an opportunity for all participants to renew friendships, to exchange ideas about the latest developments in cassava research, and to experience the good food and the hospitality of the Vietnamese people.

R.H. Howeler
CIAT, Bangkok
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