

Media Monitoring Report

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AGRICULTURE

USAID-funded project to boost adoption of stress-tolerant rice in Nepal

Sept 22: Rice production is very important to the food supply and national economies of Nepal and Cambodia. However, these countries suffer from low production of rice caused by insufficient rain, irrigation problems, flooding, lack of seeds, and outdated traditional technology.

Accelerating the Adoption of Stress-Tolerant Rice Varieties by Smallholder Farmers in Nepal and Cambodia (USAID-ASTV) was launched to help solve some of the problems plaguing their rice productivity. The project seeks to contribute to the efforts of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the governments of Nepal and Cambodia toward poverty and hunger reduction and increase food and income security for resource-poor farm households, through provision and distribution of high-yielding rice varieties tolerant of abiotic stresses.

USAID-ASTV, funded by USAID, recently concluded its inception and planning workshop for Nepal in Hotel Annapurna, Kathmandu on 16 September. The event had intensive discussions on quality seed production of STRVs and multiplication by both public and private sector, as well as how the project can capitalize on the seed system and new seed policy in Nepal for the success of the project.

Welcoming the participants totalling 110 in the opening session, Director General Yubak Dhoj G.C. of the Department of Agriculture, Government of Nepal, acknowledged IRRI's efforts for providing about 252,000 tons of seeds of different stress-tolerant rice varieties (STRVs) such as drought-tolerant, Sukkhadhan 1 to 6 and submergence-tolerant, Swarna-Sub1 and Samba Mahsuri-Sub1, to name a few.

"Farmers in Nepal will have more STRV seeds available to them," said Director General Dhoj. "They will adopt more of the varieties once the seeds are disseminated to them."

[Dr. Abdelbagi Ismail](#), overall project leader and IRRI principal scientist, acknowledge the contribution of all the participants to the group discussions and workplan development for the project's main activities. These are the drought- and flood-tolerant varieties; seed production

and distribution and policy issues; biotic stresses; gender and social equity; GIS and targeting; and M&E and other socio-economic studies.

Meanwhile, Dr. Faith Bartz from USAID-Washington, presented the *Feed the Future* program, the U.S. Presidential food security initiative, to which this new project is aligned.

“I would like to see strong collaboration of project stakeholders with agriculture secretaries and ministers in achieving the project’s activities and updates,” said USAID Mission in Nepal AID Project Development Specialist, Mr. Navin Hada. He encouraged the project implementors to come up with strong coordination mechanism with public and private sector.

“The USAID has been helping to establish foundation in agriculture research and development in Nepal,” said Chief Guest, Mr. Uttam K. Bhattarai, Secretary, Ministry of Agricultural Development, Government of Nepal stated, “Now, it provides funds through IRRI for disseminating and promoting drought and submergence-tolerant as well as mid-mountain rice varieties to increase rice production.”

During the closing of the program Dr. Ismail remarked that “such active and enthusiastic participation and involvement of all partners will ensure successful implementation of the project.”

Dr. Uma Shankar Singh, acting IRRI representative to India and Nepal, and Dr. Bhaba Tripathi, senior associate scientist in IRRI-Nepal office, served as overall coordinators for the event.

<http://www.agprofessional.com/news/usaaid-funded-project-boost-adoption-stress-tolerant-rice-nepal>

How to Defeat Big Agriculture

Sept 22: For small farmers -- and those who pay attention to things like climate change, food systems and water -- the answers to ecological sustainability are right under our feet:

Dirt. Soil. Ground. Land.

Community control of these precious resources (terrestrial ecosystems, forests and biodiversity) is critical to achieving "Life on Land," as Goal 15 is known.

The major threat facing life on land, small farmers and those of us who eat (aka all of us) is the global expansion of large-scale, industrial agriculture. Under the guise of the "Green Revolution" and false-promises to "feed the world," industrial agriculture (think Monsanto, Cargill) is hell-bent on expanding these toxic, monocultural practices.

[Half of all greenhouse gases](#) are produced by the global-food system, according to the respected international agriculture-research organization, [GRAIN](#). And that's saying something, since transportation and power plants account for massive amounts of pollution that endanger our planet.

Valdir Misnerovicz, a member of Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST) [spoke](#) about ecological sustainability in stark terms, describing two forces at play in the world right now that he called "the project of death" (i.e., the extraction and exploitation inherent to global capitalism) versus "the project of life" (i.e., solidarity, sustainability, support). "The project of death doesn't care about people, it only cares about capital; it doesn't want to produce food, it wants to produce products... and big profits."

The legacy of industrial agriculture has pushed millions of farmers into debt and hunger, using an industrial model that relies heavily on expensive and toxic chemicals and pesticides.

For Valdir, the better choice is obvious: "Small farmers don't produce commodities, they produce food. Small farming is the farming of hope."

Indeed, [70 percent of the world's food](#) is still produced by small farmers, according to the ETC Group, using only 30 percent of the world's agricultural resources. [Agroecology](#), a new farming-approach movement that combines ecological agriculture with traditional-farming knowledge and small, local farms is fast becoming recognized as the climate-cooling alternative that can out produce industrial agriculture by far. According to a [UN report](#), small-scale farmers can double food production within 10 years in critical regions by using agroecological methods.

Malawi, which had introduced a massive chemical-fertilizer subsidy program a number of years back, began an agroecology program for more than a million of their poorest farmers and found that maize yields increased by [two to three times](#).

Valdir's organization, the MST, has expanded training for agroecology as part of its mission to promote food sovereignty, or the idea and practice of communities making decisions about their own food systems, including controlling the seeds they plant, the methods they use and the food they eat in a sustainable and culturally appropriate way.

Through the MST, more than one and a half million formerly landless people have settled on underutilized land to produce food for themselves and their country. The results continue to transform once-depleted soil into productive farms, provide hundreds of tons of agroecologically produced food for area schools and markets, and incorporate agroforestry to restore nutrients and stability to denuded landscapes.

Valdir spoke during a farmer-learning exchange with 150 participants, including representatives from India, Nepal, Mexico, Brazil and the United States, organized by the Popular Peasant Movement (MCP). A success story in its own right, the MCP's Creole Seed Program saved and produced 273 tons of native seeds last year in just one state alone, including numerous varieties of beans, cassava, corn, squash and other key food crops.

"We have resisted against GMO seeds and pesticides," says Jossier Boleão of the MCP when talking of the greater yields they get from native seeds to the GMO seeds. "And if we save 2,000 *reales* [by not buying GMO seeds and pesticides] we can plant that much more."

In the process of preserving biodiversity and nurturing soil, the MCP has also reversed land loss and soil degradation. This kind of approach surely does not please industrial giants such as Cargill and Monsanto, who have other designs on the land.

Yet Jossier from the MCP and Valdir from the Landless Workers Movement aren't backing down -- which is a boon to all of us who want to eat healthy food and breathe clean air. Because small farmers like Valdir and Jossier cool the planet and produce more food per hectare than Big Ag.

And in the process, they save the planet.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chungwha-hong/how-to-defeat-big-agriculture_b_8171622.html

Tanahun reeling under urea shortage

DAMAULI, Sept 25: As the agitation in Tarai continues, it has had ripple effects elsewhere, especially in the hills. Tanahun is reeling under scarcity of chemical fertilisers lately.

As per the sources at Damauli sub-branch of Agriculture Inputs Company Ltd, the district has been reeling under acute scarcity of urea, a type of chemical fertiliser, owing to difficulties in transporting fertilisers from Birgunj.

“We have to walk a long distance to get here to receive some 15-20 kg fertiliser but even after queuing for hours we have to return empty handed,” complained Bhim Bahadur of Kahunshivapur-6, Chainthok.

While some village-based cooperatives dealing in fertilisers accused the company of discriminating against them by not providing them as much fertiliser as they provide to the town and bazaar-based cooperatives, the company has denied the accusation.

“Nothing of that sort has happened. We acknowledge that there is scarcity but it is due to the continuous strike in the Tarai,” said the company’s Damauli sub-branch chief Bal Bahadur Panth, adding fertilisers were distributed equally to all 86 cooperatives licensed to sell fertilisers in Tanahun, Lamjung and Gorkha districts.

As per the data at sub-branch, it has distributed 1730.050 metric tonnes of chemical fertilisers worth over 50 million to the cooperatives in the three districts in this fiscal so far.

The cooperatives are selling carbamide for Rs 24 per kg. Wherever the fertiliser is being sold, the cooperatives are selling up to 5 kg to a farmer.

According to experts, this is the right time to apply fertiliser to plants.

<http://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/tanahun-reeling-under-urea-shortage/>

Nepal active in Expo Milano 2015

KATHMANDU, Sept 27: The Nepal Day has been celebrated organising various cultural and promotional ceremonies in Expo Milano 2015 in Milan of Italy on Wednesday.

Nepal's Commissioner General and General Secretary for Ministry of Commerce and Supplies Jeev Raj Koirala, Deputy Commissioner General Amrit Ratna Shakya, Programme Coordinator Vinayak Shah and Honorary Consul of Nepal in Rome Paolo Nugari participated in the ceremony on behalf of Nepal, including Nepali community with large population, Nepal lover Italians and other Europeans.

Likewise, Minister for Commerce and Supplies Sunil Bahadur Thapa, Italian Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of the environment Barbara Degani, Nepali Ambassador to Italy Deepak Dhakal, Commissioner General of Expo Milano 2015 Bruno Paskino and Commissioner General of Italian Pavilion Diane Brokaw took Part in the ceremony.

The Chief Guest, Minister Thapa, said that in the Expo Milano 2015, Nepal had won the heart of visitors by constructing the most attractive and excellent Nepali pavilion and the function had helped publicise and promote the incredible cultural heritage, arts and crafts internationally.

He remarked that the visitors to the Nepali pavilion constructed in the pagoda style were thousands on a daily basis and it meant that the pavilion was not just attractive; it also propagated the glimpse of Nepal's distinguished cultural heritage.

The Minister said he was proud to participate in the creative programme just after the promulgation of new constitution in Nepal.

He said that Nepal concentrated on economic development, promoting tourism, increment of investment and creating employment.

Participation in this kind of functions helped achieve the objectives as the nation's present agenda is economic social development and transformation, he added. The Minister also expressed gratefulness to the Italian government and citizens for their support and contribution by providing relief and reconstruction during the post-earthquake stage in Nepal. He concluded that Nepal was safe for foreign investment and visit together with the commencement of new constitution.

Nepali Honorary Consulate in Rome, Degani, said that Nepal's distinguished participation in Expo Milano 2015 helped strengthen the longtime economic, cultural relations between Nepal and Italy and also to publicise the arts, culture and tourism potential of Nepal.

The ceremony also supported Nepal to brighten the tourism image of the nation and spread messages that Nepal was safe and peaceful.

The ceremony enjoyed Nepali instrumental music by Pranamundi Cultural Team's musicians and the cultural procession by various artists.

A Nepali kitchen was also available for the visitors.

As many as 700,000 Euros have been collected from the well-wishers for the earthquake victims of Nepal.

<http://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/nepal-active-in-expo-milano-2015/>