

# The Asian Grain Legumes Network — an update

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The Asian Grain Legumes Network (AGLN) was initiated in 1986 to facilitate exchange of plant material and appropriate technology to increase production of the network's mandate crops groundnut, chickpea and pigeonpea in Asian countries. The specific objectives of AGLN are to:

- assist members to identify plant material and technology that provide high yield in groundnut, chickpea and pigeonpea,
- help identify and provide appropriate training to members,
- assist in information exchange on its mandate legumes,
- foster special research projects in support of AGLN, and
- help co-ordinate among AGLN co-operators research activities on its mandate crops.

## NETWORK COUNTRIES

To form an administrative framework for AGLN, ICRISAT has established co-operative links with most of the national programs and regional and international organizations working on these legumes in the Asia-Pacific region. At present the Network involves 10 core countries: Bangladesh, Burma, the People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Other countries in the region have also been involved in network activities, they will be included in the network in a more formal way as and when the need is felt.

ICRISAT has formal agreements or memoranda of understanding (MOU) signed with all the 10 core countries. These MOU's serve as a basis to facilitate the movement of staff and exchange of such things as plant material, and technology, within the network.

## NETWORK ACTIVITIES

- membership. One of the first activities of the network has been to identify scientists interested in being members of the network. The members or co-ordinators include the scientists and administrators working on grain legumes in national programs, regional and international donors and research institutes, and the scientists of ICRISAT. An AGLN Co-operator Form for becoming a member in the network can be obtained from the co-ordinator, AGLN.

- Co-ordination Unit. The AGLN co-ordination unit, consisting of a Network Co-ordinator, Legumes Breeder, and Secretaries is being provided by ICRISAT's Legumes Program. This unit co-ordinates the network's activities and facilitates the interaction among network members.

- Country AGLN Co-ordinator. In order to streamline the network activities each country nominates an AGLN-Country co-ordinator. Each country co-ordinator acts as the AGLN administrative contact person and is responsible for co-ordinating all the network's activities in their country.

- Workplan. The AGLN Co-ordination Unit usually meets with AGLN members of each country to prepare an annual workplan of collaborative activities in each country. The workplan is designed to reflect the national priorities and commitments. The workplans are considered a part of the MOU of each country, and are reviewed every year or two.

- Exchange of material and technology. The AGLN Co-ordination Unit and AGLN members at ICRISAT assist the national program scientists select and receive suitable germplasm and advanced generation breeding material for evaluation as part of each national program. This includes the selection of suitable nurseries and trials from existing international trials networks, or formulation of special trials or nurseries to meet the specific requirements of each country. Similarly, information on agronomy and related technology (such as improved equipment for land preparation, sowing, spraying, and harvesting) is also shared among network members.

- Training. An important activity of the AGLN Co-ordination Unit is to assist national programs to identify their training requirements, and to make plans to provide required training at ICRISAT or elsewhere. Apart from the regular in-service training courses of ICRISAT, AGLN organizes special training courses to meet the needs of members. One such example is the "Training Course on Identification of Groundnut Viruses" held at Malang,

Indonesia. The course was sponsored by FAO, IDRC, and ICRISAT.

- Literature and Information Exchange. The AGLN Co-ordination Unit encourages the rapid dissemination of scientific information among network members. Literature concerning groundnut, chickpea and pigeonpea is provided to the co-operators on request. ICRISAT also publishes international newsletters for groundnut, chickpea and pigeonpea, for use by members. ICRISAT is planning to establish an information bank on AGLN mandate crops to assist in information exchange among network members.
- Workshops and meetings. Workshops and meetings provide the opportunity for AGLN members to discuss particular research areas, and exchange research results. The AGLN co-operates with other interested agencies and institutes to organize regional or international meetings to discuss and prepare future plans for collaborative research on given topics.
- Surveys and monitoring tours. ICRISAT staff and other resource personnel travel with national scientists to monitor AGLN trials, identify problems, survey for pest and disease incidence and crop loss, and develop plans for collaborative activities. Germplasm collections are also undertaken as joint network activities.

## COLLABORATION AND LINKAGES

As mentioned earlier, the network members are from NARS, ICRISAT and other regional and international organizations. The AGLN Co-ordination Unit endeavours to establish collaborative links between the AGLN and institutes and organizations in the region to co-ordinate the activities related to groundnut, chickpea and pigeonpea. The AGLN has established good links with ACIAR, ADB, AVRDC, CIDA, CGPRT Centre, FAO, IDRC, IIRI, Peanut CRSP, USAID and Winrock International.

## FUNDING

Since the AGLN is a collaborative effort, most of the research resources for network activities have come from the NARS. However, the Co-ordination Unit tries to financially support any activity that benefits the overall research activities of

the network. Such support has been for additional costs related to network activities for such things as labour, materials, equipment, training, and travel. The AGLN Co-ordination Unit receives support from ICRISAT core funds. The network activities to strengthen the NARS in Bangladesh, Burma, Nepal and Sri Lanka are funded by ADB. The AGLN has also received support from ACIAR, AIDAB, FAO, IDRC and Peanut CRSP for special projects.

#### REGIONAL LEGUMES NETWORK CO-ORDINATORS' MEETING

The AGLN completed 3 years in December 1988. The Regional Legumes Network

Co-ordinators' Meeting was held 15-17 December 1988 to review the progress of AGLN since its establishment, re-examine the research priorities for its mandate crops and recommend the future course of action for the network. The meeting was attended by the AGLN-country co-ordinators of 8 countries, representatives of 8 regional and international organizations, and ICRISAT staff. The meeting commended the progress made by AGLN, and made several recommendations.

These recommendations included the following:

- that support for AGLN activities continue to be a high priority area for ICRISAT,

- that AGLN re-evaluate its current objectives,
- that AGLN formulate an official steering committee,
- that emphasis on training at ICRISAT and in-country continue,
- that use of SATCRIS for information sharing be promoted,
- that AGLN recognizes the importance of food legumes outside its mandate,
- that AGLN seek appropriate funding to support network research activities.

The major continuing contact of the AGLN with the ACIAR Food Legume Program will be the Peanut Project in Indonesia.