



**REPORT OF A MEETING ON THE DIVERSEEDS PROJECT AND
PLANT GENETIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**in Department of Cultivation, MARD
(18th January, 2008)**

1. Participants

The meeting was involved by 18 participants as representatives of Department of Cultivation - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) (5 participants), Department of Legislation (1 participant), Hanoi University of Agriculture (6 participants), Vietnam Seed Association (2 participants), Vietnam Farmers' Union (1 participant), Institute of Ecology and Plant Resources (1 participant), National Institute of Medicinal Materials (1 participant), Magazine of Agriculture and Rural Development (1).

No	Name	Organization
1	Prof. Academician Tran Dinh Long	The chairman of Vietnam Seed Association
2	Prof. Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Kinh	The vice chairman of Vietnam Seed Association
3	Dr. Ha Quang Dung	Office of Legislation, Department of Cultivation
4	Dr. Nguyen Thanh Minh	Office of New Plant Variety Protection, Department of Cultivation
5	Dr. Nguyen Tri Ngoc	Director of Department of Cultivation, MARD
6	TS. Ninh Khac Ban	Institute of Ecology and Plant Resources
7	Dinh The Vu	Office of New Plant Variety Protection, Department of Cultivation
8	Ung Xuan Thu	Office of Legislation, Department of Cultivation
9	Dr. Nguyen Van Tap	National Institute of Medicinal Materials
10	Nguyen Viet Ha	Vietnam Farmers' Union
11	Trinh Xuan Thien	Department of Legislation
12	Pham Ha Thai	Deputy editor, Magazine of Agriculture and Rural Development
13	Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Dinh	Coordinator of the project "Genetic Resources Policy Initiative", Hanoi University of Agriculture
14	Prof. Dr. Nguyen Viet Tung	Hanoi University of Agriculture
15	Dr. Nguyen Thanh Lam	Coordinator of the Diverseed project in Vietnam, CARES, Hanoi University of Agriculture
16	Nguyen The Phuong	CARES, Hanoi University of Agriculture
17	Pham Thi Dung	CARES, Hanoi University of Agriculture
18	M.Sc. Pham Thi Mai Huong	CARES, Hanoi University of Agriculture

2. Location: Department of Cultivation - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)

3. Time: 8.00 am, 18th January, 2008

4. Contents of the meeting

Prof. Dr. Nguyen Viet Tung spoke to open and expressed objectives of the meeting

- Introduction of the Diverseeds project (Contents and works was and has been carried out, and issues posed after the finish of the project)
- Discussion on the way to enter the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)
- Discussion on constraints and difficulties in conserving rare and precious plant resources in Vietnam.
- Establish a network to exchange information on plant resource conservation in Vietnam via Internet.

Dr. Nguyen Thanh Lam:

- A brief introduction of the Diverseeds project
- Participants of the project
- The ideal of the Diverseeds project
- Periods to implement the project:
 1. Identify issues related to plant genetic resource conservation in Vietnam
 2. Organize exchange and discussion workshops in China, Slovenia, Vietnam, and a summary workshop in Rome (Turn 1-2007)
 3. Knowledge exchange through Internet among researchers, policy makers, managers, and farmers.
 4. Exchange and discussion workshops in KhonKaen (Thailand), Kunming (China) (Turn 2-2008)
 5. Propose recommendations

Prof. Academician Tran Dinh Long

- The list of project participants does not involve representatives from MARD (This is why this meeting was organized in MARD to exchange information and introduce the project).
- The ideal of the workshop in Rome:
 1. When will Vietnam participate in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture?
 2. Organize exchange and discussion workshops in China, Slovenia, Vietnam and a summary workshop in Rome.
- At present, Vietnam has not been positive in exchange of gene sources of rare and precious plants.
- Vietnamese varieties have been utilized by several countries without permission of the Vietnamese government → Many Vietnamese varieties have been lost due to genetic erosion.

- Vietnam has lacked an integrative organization to control gene sources in an effective manner.
- Vietnam is currently willing to become a member of the Treaty and will receive supports from research institutes and MARD.
- Vietnam owns some types of varieties, including indigenous and local varieties. The concept of indigenous varieties is non-existent, only indigenous groups.
- Difficulties in exploitation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in Vietnam.
 1. The government has no support to farmers in local variety production.
 2. Due to the fact that traditional varieties yield lower productivity compared to new varieties, farmers prefer cultivating new varieties. Therefore, the advertisement activities should be made in order for farmers to be aware of the value of traditional varieties.
 3. Variety production systems are more or less carried out, however only in poor infrastructure. These systems, in addition, lack the involvement of companies and enterprises and the market-oriented development is therefore limited.
 4. *In-situ* conservation requires long time duration.
 5. At present, there has not been an integrative coordination board. Thus, the national coordination board with participation of many partners such as research institutes and related ministries should be established.
 6. Vietnamese gene sources lack international exchange (closed gene sources). Most of countries in the world currently own opened gene sources with catalogue on gene sources and gene types.
- Local communities need to participate into variety production systems.
- The research topic on “The role of local communities to gene source conservation” is going to be carried out.

Dr. Nguyen Thanh Lam

- At present, in Thailand, professors and experts have been assigned to examine contents of ITPGRFA in order to supplement articles appropriate to Thailand laws.
- The treaty is inappropriate to characteristics of all countries; many countries have still not participated in. FAO has agreed on setting up conditions conformable to each country in the way to exchange genetic sources.

Prof. Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Kinh

- Supplement difficulties in exploitation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in Vietnam
 1. The conservation of genetic resources is not given a pertinent concern.

2. There have not been policies to facilitate *in-situ* conservation yet, only policies to facilitate *ex-situ* conservation with limited budget.
 3. Vietnam has lacked certification for varieties produced by farmers. Currently only varieties produced by research institutes are certificated. Because of the lack of share, many varieties will be lost.
 4. Due to some challenges such as temperature increase and water deficiency in the future, drought-tolerant varieties are required → lack awareness of the gene conservation as well as hybridization.
- Policies on gene source conservation need to be systematized.

Prof. Dr. Nguyen Viet Tung

- The viewpoint of the Diverseeds project is to integrate into issues related to exchange of plant gene sources posed as an urgent issue.
- Poor countries are currently reserved in exchange of gene sources.
- The workshops are organized in order to seek for a consensus among nations.
- Some issues are posed here, including which levels will the exchange be carried out? According to which policies? In which catalogues (there are now 3 catalogues: frequent exchange, limitative exchange, and prohibitive exchange), and which benefits?
- The way to become a member of the treaty has not been established in Vietnam; therefore, this workshop plays as a premise for coming workshops to establish the way to enter the treaty.
- Exchange in gene sources need to be carried out in the framework of laws.

Dr Nguyen Van Tap

- In Vietnam, the gene conservation has been implemented in research institutes without close association, leading to genetic erosion.
- There have been more or less policies, regulations, decrees, and circulars relative to gene source management. However the implementation has not been thoroughly done.
- Some projects and programs on gene source conservation have been implemented; nevertheless, whether or not these projects have been done in a proper way?
- Due to impacts of market mechanism, many households have replaced traditional varieties. *In-situ* conservation needs to be done within household conditions in the linkage with related organization at home and abroad.
- There has been no specific methodology for gene source conservation.
- The National Institute of Medicinal Materials has experimentally cultivated some wild plants.

- It is necessary to carry out a survey on gene sources in order to propose national stature projects focusing on the following issues:
 1. Propose new management board
 2. Propose appropriate policies
 3. Establish pilot models in terms of plant groups (industrial crops, medical plants, etc.)
 4. Propose action plans

Prof. Academician Tran Dinh Long

- Ministry of Resources and Environment needs to participate in this conservation.
- Ex-situ conservation should be changed in the appropriate direction.

Dr. Ha Quang Dung

- A project management board should be established
- The ordinance of plant variety conservation has been passed.
- Decision No. 79 about international exchange of gene sources of rare and precious plants was dated on December 05, 2005.
- In this decision, a large number of gene sources of rare and precious plants is prohibited to exchange.
- Exchange on gene sources should be regulated at proper levels.
- The conservation should be based on the fact (example Nam Roi grapefruit, Thanh Ha litchi)
- Supplement difficulties in exploitation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in Vietnam
 1. The benefit share of indigenous gene sources has not been carried out among research institutes as well as farmers.
 2. The conservation of gene sources is only applied to food crops, industrial crops. What about vegetables?
- Policies on benefit share should be promulgated.

Dr. Nguyen Thanh Lam

- The establishment of large-scale projects should be agreed by the Department of Cultivation - MARD

Dr. Ninh Khac Ban

- At present, there are several organizations participating in conservation; however, each organization is partly responsible. Organizations need to closely cooperate.
- Gene erosion results from climate change, market mechanism (low prices for indigenous crops), and economic impacts.
- It is necessary to be aware of the potential value of conserved plants (for example: black jelly in Lang Son are often imported to China in a form of crude jelly and used as a drink in summers. At present, melting jelly has been created → these plants are conserved because of their economic value)
- In order to conserve plants, their economic value should be diffused and financial supports should be provided to farmers.
- Policies on indigenous knowledge protection should be proposed.

- Need to evaluate the value of indigenous varieties as well as outlets (for example: *Dalbergia bouruana gagu* are scatteredly planted in the midland and the Northern mountainous areas in Vietnam. They are often exported to China while Vietnam does not know what *Dalbergia bouruana gagu* are used for. Therefore, why and what for are *Dalbergia bouruana gagu* conserved in Vietnam?)

Dr. Nguyen Thanh Minh

- An organization mainly responsible for conservation works should be assigned.
- This workshop is considered to be an opportunity to establish a conservation project with specific objectives and active participation of National Institute of Medicinal Materials, Agricultural Genetics Institute, managers, and universities.
- Awareness of all subjects needs to be enhanced.
- Vietnam should quickly sign the treaty.

Mr. Trinh Xuan Thien

- Linkages among organization responsible for the conservation are currently rather loose.
- Policies on indigenous gene conservation are unclear and unspecific. These policies are mainly for local varieties.
- Department of Legislation will approve to initiate policies and law documents on conservation.

Ms. Nguyen Viet Ha:

- Farmers play a crucial role in *in-situ* conservation.
- The importance of conservation should be disseminated to farmers.
- Some points in *in-situ* conservation do not benefit to farmers.

Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Dinh:

- The objectives of the workshops and the importance of plant genetic resource conservation are known by all participants.
- We need to positively evaluate and officialize gene sources conserved. Should utilize budget from the government and avoid waiting for budget from international organizations.
- Due to limited budget, we should focus on the most important issues (for example underutilized crop species)
- Educational policies on genetic resource conservation should be initiated.
- Issues related to genetic resource conservation should be disseminated at high education level, university level, and master's degree.

Prof. Tran Dinh Long:

- Main contents in conservation works should be given more concerns.
- Large workshops need to be organized in order to discuss concerned issues.

Dr. Nguyen Tri Ngoc:

- Law documents with obvious barriers need to be proposed in order to avoid using laws for bad purposes.

- Measures for effective exploitation of crop gene sources should be proposed.
- The project coordination board should be established.

Dr. Nguyen Thanh Lam:

- The project secretary board has been established after discussions:
 1. Dr. Nguyen Thanh Lam, Hanoi University of Agriculture
 2. Prof. Academician Tran Dinh Long, Vietnam Seed Association
 3. Dr. Nguyen Thanh Minh, Department of Cultivation, MARD
- The secretary board is responsible for contact, organization of meeting, and proposal of representatives participating in workshops in Thailand and China (2008)
- Propose national stature projects and sub-projects focusing on the conservation and development of plant genetic resources to the government and sponsors.
- The secretary board is in charge of notifying results of projects and workshops to research institutes, universities, and related organizations.
- An e-conference has been established. Each participant has registered and will be then provided a username and a password. Topics of e-conference will focus on conserving genetic resources and proposing specific actions.

Mr. Pham Ha Thai:

- We are interested in this issue, especially genetic resource management and mitigation of genetic erosion. Information of this meeting will be published in the Magazine of Agriculture and Rural Development. We are looking forward to participating in such an interesting meeting in order to be aware of the status of genetic resource management in Vietnam.

Prof. Nguyen Viet Tung:

- Summary of the meeting
- We highly appreciate your enthusiastic participation and valuable contributions of representatives. We express thanks to the Department of Cultivation, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Hanoi, 18th January, 2008
Secretary of the meeting

M.Sc. Pham Thi Mai Huong