


Rethinking higher education in agriculture and the environment

The Asia Pacific Association of Educators on Agriculture and Environment (APEAEN) was born on 5 August 1997 during the APO symposium on Agricultural Education Systems in Japan as a follow-up action of the Secretariat. Initially composed of 17 countries, APEAEN membership has now increased to 21 countries in the region. It is a nonstock, nongovernmental international body of educators, researchers, extension workers, administrators, policymakers, development specialists, and institutional staff involved in education, agriculture, the environment, and health. The association addresses the development, improvement, and professionalization of agricultural and environmental educators to enable them to become effective partners in rural development, while researching appropriate strategies to cope with environmental concerns due to global warming, health issues, and sustainable development.

The APEAEN has recently organized its 3rd International Conference in Agriculture and Environment in the science city of Munoz, the Philippines, 4–7 November. Reflecting the complexity of bringing about change in agricultural and environmental education, the theme was “Preparing for the Future: Rethinking Higher Agriculture Education and Environment in the Asia Pacific.” The conference debated whether higher agricultural education in its present form could survive without change and how APEAEN members could support the necessary change process. The conference was

attended by 120 individuals working in higher education in agriculture and the environment representing institutions in 12 countries. The exchange of ideas during the conference and concomitant APEAEN 10th anniversary celebration encouraged 20 participants to join the association as new members.

The conference identified two thrust areas: the reengineering and conceptualization of agricultural education to integrate environmental concerns, especially in terms of the urgent needs of less developed countries; and the provision of consultancy services under the APEAEN to increase membership and generate income. Consultancy services could include writing project proposals and integrating scientific findings into agricultural educational services to serve as an instrument for poverty alleviation. As the parent organization, the APO will support the APEAEN as a partner and complements in those two thrust areas.

After three keynote presentations, 28 papers were presented, of which four received Best Paper Awards. Ten poster presentations on the conference theme were exhibited at the venue. Site visits were also made to eight centers within Munoz. 

Contributed by Dr. Marylin B. Perlas, Executive Director, APEAEN