Participatory irrigation management for enhancing agricultural water productivity

"Without water, there can be no agriculture, in particular sustainable agriculture," asserted Pakistan Soil and Water Management Specialist Dr. M.S. Shafique, one of three APO experts for the recent workshop on the Participatory Approach to Water Resources Management in Agriculture: Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM), IR Iran, 23–28 January 2010. PIM, an irrigation management system involving the irrigation users or farmers in all aspects at all levels, has been adopted in many member countries as a means of increasing the water productivity of irrigation systems. The six-day workshop sought to assess the recent developments in the implementation of PIM in member countries, especially those with elaborate irrigation systems. It also sought to identify the issues in and impediments to the wider adoption of PIM so that action plans could be formulated to address them. The Iranian Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture and National Iranian Productivity Center implemented the workshop.

In his lead presentations, Dr. Shafique spoke on the issues and options in managing water resources in terms of sustainable agriculture in the Asia-Pacific region, including the various models of PIM. When emphasizing the need to build the capacity of grassroots-level organizations, he mentioned water users' associations (WUAs) as being the key players in sustainable water management.

The importance of WUAs was also highlighted by Hasan Ozulu, head of the Turkey Chapter for the International Network on Participatory Irrigation Management. Ozulu presented Turkey's successful transfer of irrigation management from the government to water users. This was made possible by the existence of an elaborate rural infrastructure at the grassroots level. "Where producers have more authority and responsibilities for water management, transparency can improve pricing, cost recovery, and performance of the irrigation system," he remarked. Three other experts shared their views and expertise on different aspects of PIM and cost-effective technologies for enhancing the productivity of agricultural water resources.

Study tour to the Qazvin Irrigation System

In addition to the experts' presentations, the workshop consisted of 10 PIM country case studies presented by participants, an observational study tour to the Qazvin Irrigation System, and group discussions that produced a list of recommendations and action plans for promoting PIM in participating countries. The recommendations included adopting an integrated water management approach; establishing grassroots-level stakeholder (farmer)-centered water management; conducting fair, transparent elections for choosing farmers' representatives to WUAs and other bodies; launching effective programs for the capacity building of WUAs or similar organizations; developing a sense of ownership of water management among farmers; and close coordination among all concerned ministries/agencies in planning, developing, and managing water resources.

"The Green Productivity Advisory Committee (GPAC) is a uniqu
able society in Asia," wrote President and CEO Setsuhiro Shi
the 8th annual GPAC meeting in Tokyo, 12 February. Dr. Tosh
in 2003 with high-level representatives from over 60 Japanese corporations v