



Asian Productivity Organization “The APO in the News”

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ASIAN Countries Bridge Gaps in Organic Products Certification

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Tehran, Iran - A new breed of qualified trainers and inspectors of organic products from developing Asian countries are now equipped to face the challenges of the global market for certified organic food products after being convened in the Advanced Training Course on Certification of Organic Products.

Twenty four (24) participants from the member economies (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Taiwan, IR Iran, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam) joined the said training course aiming to promote a deeper understanding on the requirements of the latest international organic standards, certification rules and regulations, and inspection procedures and acquire the competencies needed to perform the functions of an organic inspector effectively and efficiently.

Dr. Lorenzo Peris, a consultant from Italy, discussed about organic standards and regulations. In his presentation, he highlighted that certification is for products and not for the farm or the farmer. Though organic farming system is a component of having organic products, the market is looking for a certified product and not a certified farm/farmer. Following the standard is a vital aspect in achieving product certification. He also discussed the different standards of EU, China, Germany and USA. The bilateral agreement on organic standards of two countries is important in labeling/exporting products.

Meanwhile, Mr. Zejiang Zhou, president of IFOAM Asia, presented the overview of the organic industry, the international trends and challenges, general requirements of standards on livestock and aquatic. According to him, based on the IFOAM, organic livestock husbandry is based on the harmonious relationship between land, plants and livestock. Likewise, he said that the specific standard in China do not have any country equivalent as China is very particular with air, water and soil testing. They are the only country that has a tracking system for their organic products. Furthermore, Dr. Zhou highlighted also the organic marketing and trade. In his discussion, he pointed out that the growing number of organic contributors shows that more and more producers and consumers are now aware of the benefits of utilizing organic products.

Likewise, Dr. M. Reza Ardakani, director of IFOAM-Iran, also shared the current status of Iran organic standard, regulation, certification, marketing and trade of organic products. With the support of IFOAM, Iranians can see the potential in organic wild pistachio. They also strengthened horticultural crops with no chemical fertilizer and pesticide to the different regions planted with pomegranate, fig, pear, quince, cherry, apricot, walnut, apple, and grapes fruits. They also utilized the modern factories and facilities for bio-fertilizer production.

Included in the activity was a simulation of field inspection around Babaie Pomegranate Garden in # 23, Ostad Motahari 3.1 St., Saveh Province. The participants were divided into two groups; the first group started with the inspection of documents while the second group did the OJT in the field. After an hour and a half, the two groups switched. During the field inspection, the speakers pointed out that it is important to check the weeds, the soil, irrigation, water, storage, equipment and materials used, the physical appearance of the plants, the animals used, the buffer zone and neighboring farms. In the inspection of documents, the speakers said that it is vital that the farm has a management plan and adequate record keeping. It is also important to verify the consistency of the farm records. The participants also had an opportunity to observe how the two speakers did the questioning and how did they handled some confusing questions.

During the latter part of the training, participants presented country reports. There were only nine (9) countries chosen to report: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Mongolia, Taiwan, Vietnam, Cambodia and Iran. The Philippines' presentation, given by Ms. Graciel V. Gacutan of ATI-RTC 8, was adjudged Best Presentation. Speakers noted that it is a good point for the Philippines to have the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB) as overseer of the organic agriculture certification program, something which other countries do not have as they have different active organic organizations that are not united. Vietnam was adjudged second Best Presentation while Iran was third.

The training provided more windows for the participants to foster organic certification of products in their respective countries and served as venue to strengthen the camaraderie among the participating countries.

Held last August 20-24, 2016 in Tehran, Iran, the training was organized by the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) in collaboration with the National Iranian Productivity Organization (NIPO), Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture, Agricultural Research and Education Organization (AREO) and Institute of Technical and Vocational Higher Education (ITVHE).