

NETWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (NEDAC)

2007

FAO-NEDAC Regional workshop on “Role of agricultural cooperatives in bio fuel development at community level for rural food and livelihood security”; Pattaya, Thailand

Senior government officials, cooperative leaders and experts on biofuels from China, India, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand met in Pattaya, Thailand on 5 and 6 July 2007 to discuss how agricultural cooperatives can take advantage of the growing opportunities in biofuel development in Asia.

Rural poor and biofuel cooperative enterprises

FAO Press Release

25 June 2007

Asian agricultural cooperative leaders, senior government officials, biofuel experts and representatives of United Nations agencies will meet in Pattaya, Thailand on 5 and 6 July 2007 to discuss how agricultural cooperatives can involve the rural poor in viable and sustainable biofuel cooperative enterprise development.

Inadequate or inequitable access to energy affects the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of small farmers, landless and indigenous people. Rapidly rising fossil energy costs for farm inputs, local transport and agricultural machinery pose a major challenge to small farmers' households. The daily collection of fuel wood and other biomass is a big drain on the time, energy and health of rural women and girls, depriving them of better livelihood opportunities.

A recent UN study that weighed the pros and cons of biofuel development highlights potentials for improved farm productivity and non-farm livelihood opportunities without compromising food security. Bio-energy can be central to community-level efforts towards food and livelihood security in the Asian and Pacific region.

Agricultural cooperatives offer a viable, equitable and cost-efficient way of harnessing local potentials for biofuel development benefiting small farmers and other rural poor, in particular rural women, both as energy producers and users. They have the institutional capacities to provide relevant information and promote awareness building at community level on overcoming challenges in biofuel development for livelihood improvement.

Suitable technologies, financial support and enabling policies for biofuel development are needed to promote involvement of agricultural cooperatives as small and medium enterprises in the production, processing, marketing and local use of biofuels.

The regional workshop "Role of agricultural cooperatives in biofuel development at community level for rural food and livelihood security" is organised by the Network for Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in Asia and the Pacific (NEDAC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Cooperative League of Thailand (CLT).

Representing 3 million farmer cooperatives in 12 Asian countries, NEDAC offers a strategic regional platform that can link agricultural cooperative enterprise development with the production, use and marketing of biofuels for improved rural livelihoods in Asian countries.

The NEDAC-FAO workshop will review best practices, constraints, options, policy and capacity building priorities and strategies for community-level, cost-effective and sustainable production, processing, transport and marketing of biofuel products for small farmers and other rural poor.

The conclusions, action plan and project proposals to emerge from the FAO-sponsored workshop will be presented on 7 July as part of the celebration of International Cooperative Development Day at the CLT Training Centre in Bangkok, under the theme Energy.

FAO and NEDAC member countries work together on innovative cooperative development strategies needed to tackle high rural poverty levels in this region as part of national efforts towards attaining the first UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to halve hunger and poverty by 2015.