

Entrepreneurial agribusiness through innovation

Business incubation is emerging as one of the most innovative instruments to support SME creation and development all over the world. The exceptionally fast growth of business incubators has to be replicated in the agribusiness sector,” asserted APO resource speaker Dr. Kiran A. Sharma, International Crop Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics, India, during the recent APO multicountry observational study mission on Entrepreneurship and Agrotechnology/Agrobusiness Incubation held in the Republic of China (ROC), 22–26 June. The mission was organized in collaboration with the Council of Agriculture (COA), Executive Yuan, China Productivity Center, and National Chung Hsing University (NCHU) to help participants promote innovation in agriculture, enhance the capacity of agribusiness entrepreneurs, and create modern technology-based SMEs by learning from the experience of the host country.

The five-day mission was packed with information from overseas and local resource speakers. Director Steven Chiang, Agribusiness Incubator Program (AIP), University of Hawaii, USA, spoke on the “agripreneur” incubation approach of the AIP, which is customizable/flexible, fast, simple, and applicable by clients. The NCHU operates the Innovation and Incubation Center (IIC), a leading agrotechnology/agrobusiness incubator in the ROC. NCHU Vice President Dr. Yung-Sheng Huang explained that the IIC consists of a professional incubator team working in partnership with professors, incubator partners, and industry allies. NCHU Institute of Technology and Innovation Management Prof. Ta-June Lu reviewed government strategies to promote innovative technology and the ROC’s innovation incubators. Local speakers Dr. Robert Lai, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and Prof. Benjamin Yuan, National Chiao Tung University, spoke on government policies for innovation and in agriculture and the importance of knowledge-based innovation for future agricultural growth, respectively.

Site visits were made to seven technology/business incubators and their clients: the Innovation Incubator of the NCHU (IINCHU) that provides companies in



Visiting the Taiwan Orchid Plantation, a public facility for orchid entrepreneurs

technology-based industries with a service package comprising finance, marketing, public relations, mentoring, and international business support; Livestock Research Institute; Taiwan Orchid Plantation; the COA; IINCHU section in Taichung Science Park; Nankang Biotech Incubation Center; and 7th Taipei International Food Show.

The study mission confirmed that the ROC’s success in business incubation in the agriculture sector is primarily due to strong policy and institutional support, the provision of an environment conducive to generating and promoting innovation, and close linkages between universities, research institutes, and industry. After sharing information from each country, participants concluded that the concept of agrotechnology/agribusiness incubation is relatively new to the Asia-Pacific region. It was also noted that the roles and functions of incubators vary and depend on the level of development. The ROC’s initiatives and methods for promoting innovation motivated participants to plan their own future activities. 🌀