

# — Sustainable commercial floriculture —

**W**ith its diverse agro-climatic conditions, the Asia-Pacific region is emerging as an important region for commercial floriculture. In addition to meeting traditional local demand, the region has considerable potential for the export of floricultural products to major flower markets worldwide. With the continual increase in expendable incomes, domestic demand for floricultural products has been growing fast. Many member countries are attempting to expand floriculture to cater for the domestic and overseas markets. However, the development of commercial floriculture is not an easy task for developing countries because of its specific features of perishability, volatile markets, seasonality, and quality sensitivity, to name a few. The small size of production also hinders the vast majority of floriculturalists in the region.

The Asian region has diversified experience in floriculture, and APO member countries are in different stages of commercial floriculture development. For example, as the largest producer and consumer of flowers and potted plants in the Asia-Pacific, Japan has developed a modern and very sophisticated floriculture market chain. Some developing member countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia have developed specific floriculture sectors aimed at overseas markets.

To share experiences among member countries and discuss issues and strategies in the development of sustainable commercial floriculture, the APO held a seminar on the “Development of Sustainable Commercial Floriculture” in Islamabad, Pakistan, 7–12 March 2005. The program was implemented by the National Productivity Organisation in collaboration with the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council. Nineteen participants from 12 member countries attended the seminar.

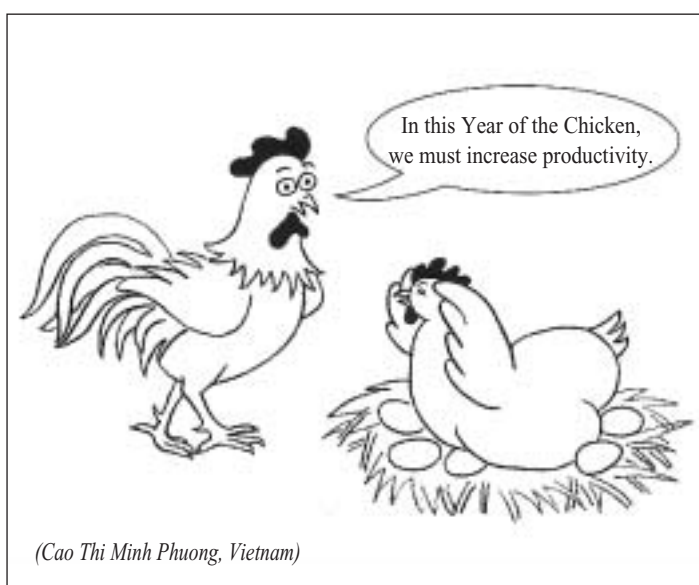
Seven resource speakers from Thailand, the Netherlands, India, and Pakistan took part. They spoke on: 1) Floriculture: worldwide patterns in production,



*Participants examining a rose garden*

trade, and consumption; 2) Development of commercial floriculture in Asia and the Pacific; 3) Management skills required for better floriculture production; 4) Harvesting, postharvest handling, and packaging of flowers for consumer satisfaction and better marketing; 5) Successful export of floriculture products: experience of Thailand; 6) Indigenous roses and rose culture in Pakistan; and 7) Promoting effective marketing strategies for floriculture products of Asian developing countries.

The seminar generally agreed that the importance of floriculture is growing in all member countries but preharvest practices, postharvest management, and marketing of floricultural products are far from satisfactory. Postharvest losses of floriculture products are especially high in the region. This high level of postharvest losses must be reduced or eliminated to increase growers' incomes. Efficient production and postharvest management are necessary to ensure the top quality that is such a stringent demand of the international market. Postharvest management activities including marketing should be undertaken with a country, regional, and international perspective.



The participants identified issues and problems confronted in the floriculture chain (preharvest, postharvest, and marketing). Preharvest issues include the lack of quality plant materials and insufficient germplasm; inadequate information on large-scale plant material propagation methods; lack of technology in growing structures such as greenhouses; poor knowledge of modern culture techniques; disruptions in the supply of quality inputs; too few cooperatives/producers' associations; and insufficient capital and skilled manpower. Some postharvest issues/problems are unavailability and/or poor dissemination of technology; lack of national quality standards in some countries on the one hand and strict international standards on the other; lack of or poor-quality, high-cost packaging materials; poor packaging design; and poor infrastructure, including cold storage chains. Floriculture marketing is hindered by limited markets, underdeveloped domestic markets, insufficient market research and market information databases, insufficient marketing structure, underdeveloped market niches, and little market promotion. 🌹