

First NFP project: National Conference on Enhancing the Role of Mass Media Practitioners in Knowledge Transfer to Improve Agricultural Productivity

The National Follow-up Program (NFP) was designed to provide opportunities for all APO management to have equal access and opportunities to benefit from APO projects dealing with subjects most relevant to their needs. NPOs raised concerns about the limited opportunities their countries had to participate in multicountry projects, especially those with huge populations. The NFP was designed in response. The first project under the NFP was a sequel to a 2014 multicountry observational study mission on Best Practices in Promoting Innovation and Productivity in Agriculture for Mass Media Practitioners in Japan. The National Productivity Organisation (NPO) of Bangladesh expressed great interest in this project and submitted a sound NFP proposal soliciting APO support.

The mass media are a potent force in disseminating knowledge and information and influencing opinions and decisions among policymakers and investors. They can play an important role in minimizing information gaps and helping farmers become aware of better methods to improve their production base. Access to information, new knowledge, and technologies are important to increase farm productivity and improve farmers' welfare. The media could be the missing link in efforts of governments to transfer knowledge and information more effectively to the multitude of small farmers scattered in rural areas.

The APO in partnership with the NPO, Ministry of Industries, Bangladesh, organized a National Conference on Enhancing the Role of Mass Media Practitioners in Knowledge Transfer to Improve Agricultural Productivity in Dhaka, 20–22 September. Fifty participants representing the media, public and private sectors, print and electronic media, relevant ministries and agricultural extension departments, and agricultural researchers attended.

NPO Director Dr. Md. Nazrul Islam inaugurated the program, and in videotaped remarks, APO Secretary-General Mari Amano noted, “Knowledge dissemination is important to increase productivity levels, and the mass media can play a major role in spreading information on new research findings among producers and consumers. The media are viewed



Dr. Kozai delivering a presentation on plant factory opportunities and challenges. Photo courtesy of NPO Bangladesh.

as important partners of the APO in publicizing information on best practices and transferring knowledge to small farmers and entrepreneurs.”

APO-assigned expert Dr. Toyoki Kozai, Japan Plant Factory Association and Professor Emeritus of Chiba University, gave two presentations: Towards Technological Innovations in Agriculture; and Plant Factories with Artificial Lighting. Knowledge transfer, agritourism, agribusiness models, value chains, organic agriculture, food retail business, etc. were eagerly discussed, with special interest expressed in entrepreneurship development in greenhouse horticulture, agritourism, and organic agriculture in Bangladesh.

Six groups formed to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of different media categories, including social media, and how they could be used more efficiently for the agriculture sector. Recommendations covered active networks involving media, private-sector financial institutions, policymakers, knowledge agencies, extension services, and researchers.

Dr. Kozai lauded the NFP-sponsored conference as a great success and stated, “The APO, NPO, and the participants were aware of the important roles of mass media and should continue more programs with the media from the agricultural innovation and technology dissemination point of view.” 🌟