

APNAN - A Successful Network for Kyusei Nature Farming and EM Technology

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***Abstract :** Kyusei Nature Farming, a system of nature farming developed in Japan was associated with the technology of Effective Microorganisms (EM) in the early 1980s and explained to the world in 1989 through the First International Conference on this subject. A network was formed at this conference to expand the technology to Asia and the world. The network that was initiated with 13 members today has contacts in over 65 countries in all parts of the globe. The network functions by practice and not by spending funds excessively. It trains people in Kyusei Nature Farming and EM Technology on a model farm, helps develop demonstration units and organize regional and international events. The continued success of the network is presented as a model for education and training of people in organic systems in the developing world.*

Introduction

Networking is popular in many human activities, ranging from public interest to research and development. However it is best developed in agriculture, and operates in all areas of activities both at global and regional levels (Plucknett et al, 1990). Networking has gained momentum because it promises increased efficiency of resources and research in an era of tightening financial commitments. However, networking is an age-old practice as people have cooperated with one another since the beginning of the human race. The real scientific form of networking as we know it today developed in the 1960's.

Background

The concept of Kyusei Nature Farming and EM technology was developed in Japan, but the world was not aware of these aspects of nature farming. Thus, in 1989, the International Nature Farming Research Center (INFRC) of Japan hosted the first International Conference on Kyusei Nature Farming in Thailand. The participants of the 13 countries who attended this small conference developed the concept of a network to test the validity of EM technology in their respective ecosystems. Thus the network ASIA PACIFIC NATURAL AGRICULTURE NETWORK (APNAN) was born, with 13 members from the Asia Pacific countries ranging from Pakistan eastwards to the west coast of the USA: It was sponsored by the International Nature Farming Research Center. With time, the EM Research Organization (EMRO) of Okinawa and the Sekai Kyusei Kyo of Thailand became its co sponsors. Today INFRC, EMRO and EM Kyusei of Thailand support the network.

Development

Every network has its own development path, which arises from the need. Thus APNAN, from humble beginnings developed slowly but surely. The programs undertaken were the annual meetings to discuss research and plan future activities. Thus the first newsletter was born in the early 1990's, to disseminate information. With this development, new members countries participated, and today the network boasts

of over 21 members in the Asia Pacific countries, with contacts in over 65 countries. It moved from one room in a private home in Bangkok to its own office. However, the staff who man the network with all these contacts are only three, with the help of another person from overseas occasionally.

Activities

The original mandate of APNAN was to test the validity of Kyusei Nature Farming and EM in the member countries. However, today, the network carries out a heavy load of work, with its three and quarter staff members. They disseminate information through a very popular newsletter that is awaited by its readers in over 60 countries. It helps INFRC in organizing their Kyusei Nature Farming Conferences in different continents, from its base in Bangkok. Over the last 7 years the network has trained 178 people in Kyusei Nature Farming and EM. The numbers trained in Bangkok arose from 17 in 1994, when the trainings were initiated at the Sara Buri Training Center of Sekai Kyusei Kyo, Thailand, to 178 in 2001 (Figure 1). This is indeed exponential growth and participants who arrive in Bangkok are fed housed and transported, while being trained, at no cost. The participants have come from 4 continents (Figure 2). This is far in excess of the mandate region and the countries and regions are growing and it is anticipated that APNAN will cover most parts of the globe.

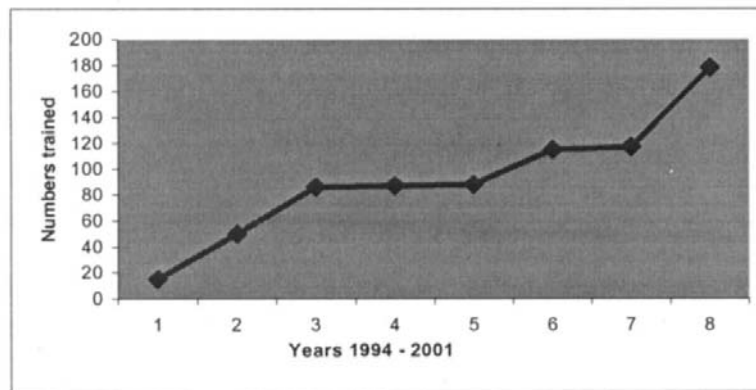


Figure 1. Trainees in Kyusei Nature Farming and EM in Bangkok

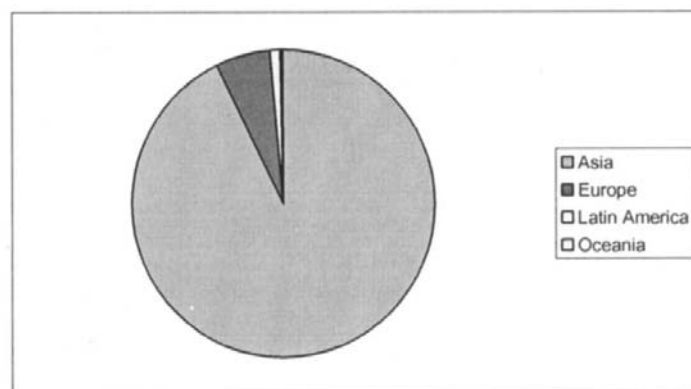


Figure 2. The Regions of the Trainees - 1994 - 2001

The network is called upon to conduct workshops in many countries of the mandate region, coordinate activities with IFOAM, and make EM in countries. The network has started a schools program in a member country. It works closely with governmental and non-governmental organizations of different countries. In addition, it is often called upon to visit non-mandate regions too to help out with programs of our sponsors. Thus, it is indeed an active network with three and a quarter members of staff.

Success and the Future

The success of an international network can be judged by 14 criteria (Plucknett et al, 1990). Briefly, these are: **A.** The problem is shared; **B.** Motivation; **C.** Planning and management; **D.** Areas of work defined; **E.** Solid foundation for work; **F.** Realistic agenda; **G.** Flexibility; **H.** New ideas; **I.** Regular trainings and meetings; **J.** Resource availability; **K.** Adequate funds for management; **L.** Training collaborators; **M.** Stability; **N.** Efficient leadership. APNAN is pleased that it meets all of these criteria. Most importantly APNAN is a model organization, which has no visible hierarchy. All staff do all the work whenever the need arises. This is the success and the network is very efficient in its resource management.

The success of a network also lies in its ability to expand its activities and not flounder. The history of the last 12 years of existence has clearly shown that APNAN has expanded exponentially and the future too will hold much promise. The demand for its activities is omnipresent- members do call on our network for help at all times. Thus the Asia Pacific Natural Agriculture Network (APNAN) can state with all humility and pride that it is a successful network. ...One of the best.. to do our mandate work at a low cost but with unmatched efficiency and success. The future holds much promise for the network for expanding activities of Kyusei Nature Farming and the technology of Effective Microorganisms. It is a true global network

Acknowledgements

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Reference

Plucknett D.L, N.J.H. Smith and S. Ozgediz. 1990. Networking in international agricultural research. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, USA