

Networking and Linkages

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Introduction

While some valuable work has been done for a number of years on alternative agriculture/natural farming, solid information on it and the impact on agricultural economies is not well-documented and disseminated in most countries. It is important for researchers, extension workers, educators, and farmers, as well as planners and administrators to be aware of newer practices and emerging techniques, so as to avoid duplication of effort and wasted motion and resources. It is also highly desirable to coordinate activities and plan collaborative efforts.

Therefore, the First International Conference on Kyusei Nature Farming recommends that suitable linkages be developed and networks set up at the national, regional, and international levels. Four main categories of concern were:

- 1) Levels of networking/linkages,
- 2) Participation at different levels,
- 3) Modes of operation, and
- 4) Financing.

Levels of Networking/Linkages

National Level

Establishment of a national level organization on natural farming/alternative agriculture is recommended by the working group. Efforts should be made to keep the national organization as broad-based as possible. Conditions differ from country to country and, hence, flexibility is needed. In developing countries, for instance, support from official agencies would be necessary. The assistance of nongovernmental and private, voluntary organizations would also be vital.

It would be desirable if information, in addition to Proceedings of this Conference, is supplied to all the participants, regarding:

- 1) Details of work done by the International Promotion Committee of Kyusei Nature Farming; and
- 2) Details of work done by similar groups in other countries where available.

Regional Level

Regions can be categorized according to broad similarities in agroclimatic conditions, commonality in problems and issues, and other relevant criteria. For example, Asia and the Pacific can be one region. Close cooperation of governmental and nongovernmental organizations from different regions should be solicited, e.g., from ESCAP, FAO Regional Offices, ASEAN, SAARC, etc.

International Level

This First International Conference on Natural Farming took place because of the efforts of the International Promotion Committee of Kyusei Nature Farming, Japan, and Khon Kaeu University, Thailand. The Conference has been very successful, with plans to hold a second international meeting in 1991, again under the sponsorship of the International Promotion Committee of Kyusei Nature Farming, Japan.

After this significant initial thrust, it is important to continue this worthwhile activity. The structure of future conferences can be developed and fine-tuned as we go along. Of course, at the international level, the help of intergovernmental and private individuals would be highly desirable.

Participation at Different Levels

Researchers, extension workers, educators, farmers, and planner/administrators participate at different levels. The degree of participation by people in each group will differ from country to country depending upon interest, the level of sophistication in terms of knowledge and their assigned responsibilities, if any, and on the capacity (financial and otherwise) to take part in proposed deliberations at the various levels.

Modes of Operation

To achieve the aims of natural farming, a number of things will have to be done including:

- 1) Obtaining grants for research and other activities;
- 2) Imparting training in practical techniques and philosophy of natural farming;
- 3) Organizing conferences, seminars, workshops, etc.;
- 4) Publishing reports, periodicals, journals, newsletters, etc.; and
- 5) Public relations/lobbying.

Financing of Various Activities

The following sources should be tapped:

- 1) Government funds-such allocation of money would be imperative in most, if not all, developing countries;
- 2) International funding organizations-official agencies, e.g., UNDP, FAO, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and nongovernmental organizations;
- 3) Private organizations, e.g., the International Promotion Committee of Kyusei Nature Farming;
- 4) Foundations, e.g., Winrock International of the United States; and
- 5) Charitable groups.