

SEMINAR ON GENETIC CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY IN TAEGU, KOREA

An **International Seminar on Genetic Conservation and Utilization of Biodiversity** was jointly organized by the Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology, Kyungpook National University, Taegu, Korea, and the Genetic Resources Center, Genetic Engineering Research Institute, Taejon, Korea, from October 13 to 15, 1994, at the Campus of Kyungpook National University. Over 100 scientists and even more students attended the seminar, which was organized by Dr. Young Goo Park, Professor of Forest Genetics in the Department of Forestry of Kyungpook National University, and his colleagues.

The seminar was attended by Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese, Filipino, and German scientists. The bilingual (Korean – English) seminar was divided into six sessions. In most sessions invited guest lectures were presented by one Korean and one non-Korean scientist.

During the first session on genetic erosion Professor S. Sakamoto of Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan, spoke on genetic erosion of cultivated plants and their wild relatives. He gave examples from his own expeditions to Ethiopia and mentioned losses of genetic resources of wild rice in Taiwan and Thailand. The Korean experience with the genetic erosion of crop species and the loss of land races was highlighted by Dr. W. S. Ahn, Suwon.

The role of international cooperation for the conservation of genetic resources was the topic of the second session. Dr. R. Finkeldey from a Regional UNDP/FAO Forest Tree Improvement Project based in the Philippines concentrated on forest genetic resources. Dr. Y.S. Kim, Yeungnam University, Korea, spoke on international activities in plant conservation with emphasis on the role of botanical gardens.

The importance of genetic diversity for agricultural crops was discussed by Dr. Y.-I. Sato, Shizuoka University, Japan, and Dr. Y. H. Park of the Genetic Engineering Research Institute, Taejon, Korea. Dr. Sato concentrated on the loss of genetic diversity in wild and cultivated rice in Thailand and Taiwan, Dr. Park explained the importance of national and international databases for the dissemination of information on genetic resources.

Genetic conservation of forest tree species was the topic of the fourth session. Dr. C. Yamamoto from the Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute in Ibaraki, Japan, outlined strategies for the *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation of forest genetic resources in Japan. Dr. Y. G. Park, Kyungpook National University, reviewed the potential of *in vitro* methods to conserve genetic resources *ex situ*.

Methods from the conservation and utilization of vegetable genetic resources were discussed by Dr. L. M. Engle, who introduced the work at the Asian Vegetable Research and Development Center in Taiwan.

Dr. S. Huang, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, emphasized the importance of population genetic inventories at gene marker loci for the genetic conservation and utilization of subtropical plants. He gave examples of research on mangrove trees and Taiwanese *Paulownia* spp. The last invited paper was presented by Dr. C. H. Park, Kangwon National University, Korea. He spoke on genetic conservation and utilization of herb resources in Korea.

A wide array of topics was discussed at the seminar by researchers working on various types of plant (grains, vegetables, forest trees, herbs). However, during the discussion several common features of meaningful conservation strategies emerged:

- an urgent need for action to conserve genetic resources of various plant species;
- the importance of proper inventory techniques to screen genetic diversity within species and the important role of modern biotechnologies in this context;
- the adoption of balanced view regarding *in situ* and *ex situ* genetic conservation, which are complementary methods in sound conservation programmes;
- the importance of international co-operation in genetic resources conservation of plants.

The proceedings of the meeting, which contain all invited papers in English, can be obtained from Dr. Y. G. Park, Department of Forestry, Kyungpook National University, Taegu 702-701, Korea (PARK, Y. G. and SAKAMOTO, S. (eds.), 1994. *Proceedings of the Seminar on Genetic Conservation and Biodiversity, October 13 to 15, Taegu*. Taegu, Korea: Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology, Kyungpook National University, 199 pp).

The proceedings are of interest to forest geneticists, since four out of the eleven papers specifically deal with forest genetic resources and the other chapters give comprehensive introductions to genetic resources research on other plant species. The "Asian view" on the discussed topics as well as a number of case studies in several papers, which were previously published in Asian languages only, add to the value of the proceedings.

Reiner Finkeldey, Laguna, Philippines