

Official Invitation to attend 4th World Congress on Rural and Agricultural Congress

Official invitation letter for the 4th World Congress on Rural and Agricultural Finance to be held at the Meridien Etoile Hotel in Paris, France on 26-28 September 2013 was sent to APRACA members by the APRACA Secretariat on 31 May. The host organizations of the Congress, Crédit Agricole SA, France and the Confédération Internationale du Crédit Agricole SA (CICA) finalized the provisional program of the Congress and sent it to RACAs for circulation to their members. Five APRACA delegates including Mr. Shitangshu Kumar Sur Chowdhury, APRACA Vice-Chairman and Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank, have finally been chosen as the speakers of the Congress.

The Congress is being organized in collaboration with five Regional Agricultural Credit Associations (RACAs) in the world including the African Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (AFRACA), the Asociacion Latinoamericana de Instituciones Financieras de Desarrollo (ALIDE), the Asia Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA), the Near East-North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA) and CICA, the local host.

APRACA members are requested to submit the registration form for the participation to CICA Secretariat directly with a copy to APRACA (thanawan@apraca.org). The deadline for submitting the registration is 20 August 2013. The hotel reservation shall be made directly by the participating institutions.

The 63rd Executive Committee meeting of APRACA will also be held on Friday, 27 September 2013 at the Meridien Etoile Hotel in Paris in conjunction with the World Congress. All the APRACA members other than those of Executive Committee are also invited to attend the Executive Committee meeting as observers.

Collaboration with International Partners

- *IFAD-APRACA Meeting*

IFAD Asia-Pacific Division Mission Team led by its director Ms. Hoonae Kim visited Bangkok, Thailand, on 21-23 May 2013 to discuss strategies on improving the implementation of the IFAD-grant APRACA Project – FinServAccess and to get acquainted with APRACA's programs and services. The visit of Ms. Kim, the newly appointed director for IFAD's Asia and the Pacific Division (APR), was an honor to the APRACA Secretariat. Sharing her ideas and thoughts on rural financing and agricultural development gave new challenges and in-depth focus on rural finance in the region.

Furthermore, the meeting assured member institutions and partners of the integrated and holistic interventions necessary for the development of competencies of regional rural finance stakeholders through best practices and innovations. Also, dynamic inter-country knowledge sharing becomes a priority to address gaps encountered by rural people and communities, especially in the areas of value chain financing, risk management and development work.

- *AgriFin Network*

The upcoming Global Agricultural Finance Forum sponsored by the AgriFin Program of the World Bank on 21-23 August 2013 in Sri Lanka gave APRACA Secretariat an opportunity to share international experiences in developing and executing corporate strategies in financing agriculture.

Invited as one of the technical speakers, APRACA Secretary General will discuss supporting services relevant to the rural people and communities with emphasis on farmers, traders, women and interest groups.

The Agriculture Finance Support Facility (AgriFin) is an initiative funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation with a view to supporting financial institutions in Africa and Asia in the development of scalable models of agriculture finance that benefit a larger number of smallholder farmers by capacity building grants to these institutions. The APRACA Secretariat has provided AgriFin with a list of selected APRACA members, which consisted mostly of commercial bank members, for the invitation to the Forum.

- *FAO-RAP on Agricultural Finance*

APRACA's collaborative work with FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific showed a new dimension of stronger relationship. At a meeting with the APRACA Secretary General on 23 May 2013 at the FAO-RAP, Bangkok, Mr. Ralph Houtman, Regional Marketing and Rural finance Officer, FAO-RAP, expressed their strong support to APRACA on rural financing, which would enable both organizations to work together for rural people and communities on value chain financing, organic supply chain finance and agricultural development. Mr. Houtman and the APRACA Secretary General reached an agreement that the two organizations would jointly strengthen and complement activities of the FinServAccess Project in Cambodia and Myanmar in particular as well as other countries of the region in general. Other APRACA member institutions whose efforts are directed towards capacity building and knowledge sharing will be assured of the access of rural finance by agricultural stakeholders particularly the farmers and fisherfolks as well as women and youth.

Mr. Houtman proposed that APRACA organize a regional symposium on organic supply chain in early December 2013 in Thailand in collaboration with a few other organizations such as International Foundation for Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM) and Agriculture and Food Marketing Association of Asia and the Pacific (AFMA). In addition, he agreed to positively review the support to a number of FinServAccess activities of APRACA, such as the Value Chain Finance Training Course to be held in July 2013 in Thailand.

- *APRACA in World Milk Day Celebration*

APRACA's participation in this year's World Milk Day Celebration with the theme, **"A Healthy and Prosperous Southeast Asia: Where Fits Dairy?"** on 1 June 2013 at the Novotel Siam Square Hotel Bangkok and the Siam Discovery Plaza in Bangkok, Thailand, enhanced its capacity addressing viable programs on food and milk sufficiency and sustainability through rural financing of dairy stakeholders.

This year is very appropriate for the Asian Economic Community whose efforts are focused on innovative socio-economic development. Milk and dairy products considered as important dietary requirements of most individuals are given a boost globally, especially within the Asia-Pacific Region.

The celebration was attended by international and national organizations both in the private and public sectors from eight countries in the region. These included Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam as well as representatives from the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Asia Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA), International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Fonterra Cooperative Group Ltd, FAO's Smallholder Dairy Development Programme and Animal Production and Health Commission

for Asia and the Pacific (APHCA), Thailand's Department of Livestock Development and the Dairy Farming Promotion Organization, and CP-Meiji Corporation and other dairy manufacturers and processors from Thailand.

Dr. Yukol Limlamthong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives, Government of Thailand and Mr. Vili Fuavao, Deputy Regional Representatives of FAO for Asia and the Pacific graced the occasion and emphasized the importance of milk on health and nutrition in the Asian community. With other officials and APRACA's Secretary General and Project Manager, Dr. Marlowe U. Aquino, they identified opportunities to integrate complementary activities especially on the value chain aspect of milk production where the producers and consumers are the prime movers of rural finance and agricultural development.

Noting the importance of dairy producers and stakeholders, APRACA's role in rural finance and agricultural development could be vital in improving also the conditions of dairy farmers and rural folks for more productive and profitable endeavour combined with proven and viable technologies in livestock and dairy production, processing and marketing.