

abc@work conference

Dhan Academy, Madurai India

9-13 July 2013



Unity for Diversity



Supported by the Agrobiodiversity@knowledge Programme

Introduction

The three-year Agrobiodiversity@knowledge Knowledge Programme (started in 2011) aims to break through the barriers that limit the scaling up, institutional embedding and horizontal extension of practices that build on agricultural biodiversity for improved livelihoods and resilient food systems. At the heart of the programme is a global knowledge and experience community of organizations working on agricultural biodiversity with millions of farmers worldwide, where evidence and insights are generated, shared and tested. The knowledge programme aims to synthesize knowledge from a local to a global scale, conduct research on approaches and analytical frameworks that provide new perspectives on agricultural biodiversity and its role in resilient socio-ecological food systems, and improve horizontal and vertical knowledge flows towards positive change and transformation.

Since the start of the Knowledge programme, there have been two meetings of the agricultural biodiversity community (abc). The first agricultural biodiversity meeting in Thika in October 2011 established the state of knowledge around agricultural biodiversity and identified knowledge gaps, common ground and support for the development of the abc. During the second abc meeting in Thailand in July 2012, strong foundations were laid for the community through the formulation of a shared vision and mission, identification of five strategic themes for action, the joint development of action plans to achieve the goals of the community and platforms for communication. Since then, abc members have joined forces at key international fora, shared knowledge and collaborated bilaterally as well as multilaterally to start breaking glasshouses all over the world. To keep the fire of the abc going and take the next steps towards implementation of joint initiatives and synthesis of accumulative knowledge, this third abc@work working conference will be held from 9-13 July in Madurai India.

The aim of the abc@work conference is to develop tangible knowledge products that are relevant to the abc and beyond and for participants to leave with (renewed) inspiration, a clear idea of what the abc means to their organizations and vice versa, insights into each other's successes and their underpinnings, concrete ideas for and commitment to future abc initiatives.

A varied group of around 35 people joined forces at the Dhan Academy in Madurai, India, to work, share, learn and enjoy together! Participants ranged from abc members of the first hour to new faces, from scientist to practitioners, farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk and came from Africa, Asia and Europe. The abc@work conference was facilitated by Frank Heckman and Maarten Bruns from the [Embassy of the Earth](#). In addition, the development of the knowledge products was supported by several experts with specific skills and experience (e.g. editor, communications expert, scientists with experience in good practice analysis and indicator development). Several (mainly female) farmers, livestock keepers and fisherfolk joined the conference.

Programme

The design team had worked hard to develop an exciting and varied programme to create an enabling environment for the development of knowledge products, sharing of experience and ideas, looking back and into the future and engaging our heads, hearts and hands. Rather than using a rigorous, fixed schedule, we focused on making sure we have the right people in the room; the right tools, methodologies and resources available; and sufficient time to address key elements. The programme below is a guiding framework for the conference [\[zie volledige programma in apart doc\]](#)

Day 1 Tue 9 th of July	- Arrival of participants during the day - Evening programme: shared history, expectations, programme explanation
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Day 2 Wed 10 th of July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction and planning workspace - Workspace session 1 – knowledge product development in parallel working groups - Shared space – music, storytelling, reflection, inspiration
Day 3 Thu 11 th of July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workspace session 2 - Workspace session 3 - Farmer participation and storytelling
Day 4 Fri 12 th of July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workspace session 4 - Presentation knowledge products - Looking ahead and sharing proposed abc initiatives
Day 5 (optional) Sat 13 th of July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Departure of participants; or - Field trip (to be advised); or - Farmer conference (organized by Dhan Foundation)

Expectations

- How can we as a community become strong enough to influence policies?
- How can we mobilize resources to support our smallscale producers?
- Identify synergies between researchers and practitioners
- Who is the abcommunity?
- Biodiversity in fisheries and livestock
- Best way to create markets for biodiverse products
- Best policy practices for conservation and use of agrobiodiversity
- Climate change adaptation as entry point
- Action plan for the abc
 - o Structure
 - o Action
 - o Strengthening network
- Products: communication materials on the 5 themes
- Aim: to influence policy
- Practical communication strategy:
 - o Take advantage of the year of the family farm
 - o Develop tools/products with this in mind (e.g. mobilizing celebrities to embrace agricultural biodiversity)
- Knowledge sharing that results in action
- Approaches that can contribute to policies that will protect our biodiversity
- Mainstreaming agrobiodiversity based farming at various levels (local to global)
- Mechanisms to effectively share knowledge and practices on agrobiodiversity
- Learn from others' experiences (create synergies of working together)
- Financial resources is key to sustain biodiversity agenda (joint proposal development)

SCRUM

The focus of this conference was on the development of knowledge products in parallel working groups of 7-10 people, using a method called 'Conference SCRUM' (CS). CS is a highly effective tool for self managed teams. In a CS someone has the role of 'product owner'. He or she assesses the 'wishes' or 'requirements' from the different stakeholders concerning the products to be delivered, and supports the team process by removing barriers where necessary and making sure most important things are being done first. The development process and the different components of the knowledge products were determined in a participatory way within the working groups.

[\[add more\]](#)

Knowledge Products

The three knowledge products that participants worked on in parallel were:

1. Good practice analysis of practices that support and enhance agricultural biodiversity or those that resist the drivers of agricultural biodiversity loss. Drawing on the good practice cases of participants and other abc members we will identify the underlying common dimensions for change and transformation across the five abc themes (markets and trade; seeds and technology; information networks; policy and governance; resilient communities). The good practice working group will be supported by the Stockholm Resilience Center and the Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research. [\[see separate report\]](#)
2. Develop focus and content for the special Agrobiodiversity@knowledge issue of Farming matters (early 2014). This special issue gives us the opportunity to showcase the work of the abcommunity and add insights and evidence to the debate. The Farming Matters working group will be supported by LEISA India. [\[see separate report\]](#)
3. Develop communication materials to demonstrate, explain and communicate to different sectors and actors the importance of agricultural biodiversity and the work of the abcommunity, using various communication tools. The communications working group will be supported by the Centre for Development Communication of Dhan Foundation.
 - a. Poster
 - b. Two videos (consumers and farmers?)
 - c. Four? flyers (policy makers, business, consumers, ??)

Abc initiatives

Seedmap – Faris (joined through skype)

Prosper – Ruzivo

Gender entrepreneurship and agricultural biodiversity

Breaking the glass house – moving women forward at two extremes – field and policy

1. Two extremes – continuums (local and global)
2. Local entrepreneurship development – gender lab on agricultural biodiversity vs commodity specific
3. National policy influencing and institutional reform. Premised on
 - a. Structure/decision making in Agricultural Ministries – leadership and gender mainstreaming
 - b. Capacities/skills to mainstream in field and decisions

- c. Evidence and knowledge generated to back institutional reform for gender representation
- 4. Gender lab with agrobiodiversity and entrepreneurship
 - a. Development of relevant tools
 - b. Entrepreneurship (biodiversity, agricultural crops, livestock, fisheries) and women empowerment

Maryleen –Pelum and ALIN

Restoring biodiversity and promotion of wheels of value chain for improved livelihoods in East Africa

1. Project is viable
2. Inclusion of scientist and key partners in the project
3. Inclusion of fisheries and livestock
4. Use of knowledge sharing platforms in various countries
5. Inclusion of seed certification bodies
6. Inclusion of scientists vs intellectuals on GMOs debate
7. Follow up – meeting on approaches and strategy of the project
 - a. Share concept note
 - b. Fundraise different aspects /components by partners involved

Patrick Mulvany

Agricultural biodiversity policies

1. CBD – programme of work on agricultural biodiversity
2. Sectoral e.g.
 - a. International seeds treaty Oman, September 2013
 - b. action plans: livestock diversity, forest genetic resources, aquatic (2016)
3. state of the world's biodiversity for food and agriculture
 - a. national focal points decided – November 2013
 - b. opportunity for CSOs/social movements to engage nationally and sub-nationally
 - c. regional: possible meetings and workshops including CSO
 - d. international – background papers /CSO submissions

To be useful the state of the world's biodiversity for food AG MUST include experiences, views , concerns of those who defend agricultural biodiversity: MUST involve small scale food providers' organisations

Regis CTD

Incentive Group

1. There is need for support – in situ conservation, seed exchange (currently no support schemes for agricultural biodiversity)
 2. Support mechanisms should be bottom up
- Biodiversity database?
 Recognised conserves?
 Handful of crops/varieties by NGOs – only few one promoted
 Government schemes support cannot be resisted
 (one way – mainstream kills agrobiodiversity)

Sarah Doornbos (KP agrobiodiversity@knowledged)

Barometer

- Markets, trade and consumers – nutrition
- Use good practice analysis outcomes to feed into this project
- Resilient communities theme is important and interlinked with other themes – in this 'chapter' highlight the community engagement programs/initiatives

- Collaborate with seed map.org
- Engage ABC members with livestock (ecological services rendered by livestock to farmers) and fisheries expertise
- See report Ramoo for India cases

Karthikayan – Dhan foundation

Agricultural biodiversity immersion programme for policy makers

Why? Breaking the glasshouse is possible only if policy makers are favourably disposed towards AB.

So, creating such situation is important

How? Mixed methods including

- Road shows to success cases for various types includingcases (breaking glasshouse?)
- Class room sessions on basics
- Interaction with pioneering policy makers who have been instrumental in glass breaking earlier.

Sara – SWEDBIO

Resilience assessment, resilience alliance

- Applying resilience theory to practice
- Developing assessment methodology
- How to use the framework
 - o Developing countries perspectives could be strengthened as well as power analysis
- Assessment methodology

Likes to get from ABC

- Is there an interest?
- Tools?
- Test tools?

And: How can this assessment be used and ensure usefulness. Improve and further develop the theory and framework

Bring to ABC

- Analytical tools

Elizabeth Katushabe – Uganda

Advocacy for the protection of ANKOLE Long horn cattle to reduce biodiversity loss

- Use the Life Method to document the breed from community perspective and use this for campaign and sharing information of values and importance for Ankole cattle
- Creating unique (niche) market for Ankole long horn cattle

Fortunate - Zoppa

Zimbabwe organic producers and promoters association

Organic production against the conventional agricultural policy

- Awareness raising – consumer
- Standardisation
- Standards application of compliance
- Labelling
- Need to develop market and linkages and market demand raised
- Research to increase productivity
 - o Learn from Ethiopian institute for sustainable development (ISD)
 - o Learn from FIBL research
 - o More learning from Greenet on marketing

Maede – CENESTA

Evolutionary plant breeding

- As a dynamic strategy to cope with climate
- Natural selection
- Farmer selection (spikes)
- Sustainable yield
- Resistant to diseases and pests
- Resistant to weeds
- Resistant to drought
- Spread very rapidly by farmers to other farmers
- Collaboration of farmers, NGOs, Ministry officials and researcher

Story telling

[to add]

Reflections

What is your role in the abc?

- Esperance: connect with others and share information
- Lwin: Share knowledge from the abc with others
- Pratap: connect with people, how do we keep together?
- Patrick: contribute to the listserv (Dgroup), use knowledge products to educate others beyond the abc
- Krishnamurthi: communicate information
- Michael: Share expertise and inspiration and collaborate bilaterally
- Elizabeth: I feel strengthened and encouraged by the abc, share ideas
- Vasi: contribute, build ownership of abc, agenda setting, share social capital expertise, work with the mainstream
- Namadoa: open up abc for fisheries sector
- Prosper: contribute to knowledge (I am a writer), engage in policy processes, share and learn
- Sonali: get to know like-minded people, become actively involved
- Ali: Share experience, good to be acknowledged as a fisherfolk in the abc
- Maryleen: being on the abc council has helped me grow, share info from abc in PELUM network and vice versa, good that farmers get acknowledged
- Esther: ALIN facilitates knowledge sharing – abc is very valuable in that regard, joint fundraising and building partnerships
- Nancy: I feel strengthened by the abc, get help from others, share ideas from abc with farmers
- Willy: contribute to strategic goal setting and development of products
- Gine: bringing the inside out and the outside in, initiate new ideas
- Maarten: facilitate, support communication process, share methodologies, share abc insights with Dutch consumers
- Ramoo: abc has enriched my understanding of ab, it provides different perspectives and experiences, bilateral collaboration, my role is to help develop the framework for scaling up good practices, share expertise with abc on open source seed system, GM and biosafety and pest management.
- Dunja: Madurai was an inspiring conference, I would like to stay in touch

- Regis: influence policy
- Maede: need to consult with CENESTA on involvement with abc
- Fortunate: work with farmers, share their voice
- Aadhi: incorporate ab in my teaching
- Thomas: ?

Future of abc

SCRUM II – pathways to the future

Until 31 December 2013 the group will further work on its tasks which are

WHAT?

- a. Bringing out a special issue of Farming Matters on agricultural biodiversity
- b. Develop a framework for good practices that break the glass house
- c. Develop communication material for each different stakeholder group

HOW?

- Grab opportunities for face to face meetings to discuss progress on the tasks. Through the dgroup a request will be send out for people to identify themselves when planning to go.

Global meetings:

1. CFS meeting in October 2013 Rome
WHO will participate: Searice, USC, Patrick, ETC, CENESTA
WHAT? Seedmap USC, update Farming Matters, 1st draft Barometer
2. Neglected and underutilized species Conference, Ghana
WHO?
3. Global Food Security conference in Netherlands (28 Sept – 2 October)
WHO? PAR?, Oxfam Novib (Gine/Sarah), SRC?
4.

Regional meetings

1. Organic agriculture conference, mid-August 2013 Nairobi
WHO?
2.

- Create opportunities by making sure a group sets aside time to communicate.

Future of abc

On the last morning of the abc@work conference in Madurai, a general discussion was held with a select group of interested participants, around the current status of the abc, challenges, opportunities and future directions. This is a summary of the discussion and points raised by Michael and Prosper after the meeting.

Purpose

The purpose of the abc needs to be clearly defined to facilitate a discussion about its future. In this regard it is important to distinguish between the Dgroup (a listserve), abc activities (such as the abc meetings) and the Agrobiodiversity@knowledged programme. Exchanging information on international meetings, good practices and what the changes, challenges and opportunities are in agricultural biodiversity conservation and use is a clear purpose of the abc that is enabled through

the Dgroup. In addition to information exchange, there is an opportunity with the abc for collaboration on specific projects or activities. These could for instance be the development of open source tools that members can build and use collaboratively (e.g. the way Linux was developed). While the Agrobiodiversity@knowledged programme initiated the abc, the abc is one component in a broader programme.

Membership

Membership of the abc and what it means to be a member is not clearly defined at present. Joining the Dgroup is a very informal process and people/organizations that show an interest in agricultural biodiversity are regularly added. A subset of the people/organizations on the Dgroup are more invested in abc through the effort, time, and contribution towards costs to join and contribute in the meetings in Thika, Thailand and Madurai. The discussion we had in Madurai where participants described their role in abc, could be a good starting point to get a feel for the level of involvement that members see for themselves.

Although the decision to participate in abc meetings and to collaborate on abc activities has been and could remain opportunistic, it needs to be clear to people what they are investing in. One option is to make a formal distinction between subscribers to the listserve and formal members of abc, with their respective rights and responsibilities. Another option is to have a more inclusive and opportunistic arrangement, where we broadly define the contours of the community and let it evolve over time – at each abc meeting we could redefine ourselves. As a first step, an abc mission statement should be developed with a very specific focus on agricultural biodiversity across the five abc themes, that members to the listserve and/or the community should ascribe to.

Positioning and branding

The definition of membership has direct implications for how we position and brand ourselves as the abc. The abc logo, various communication platforms, as well as the materials developed in Madurai provide good opportunities to brand and position ourselves as a community, which could have clear benefits for our work (e.g. for influencing policy). However, concern was raised that with current unclarity around abc membership and the lack of a formally accepted mission statement, branding of abc could raise issues. Until there is a common understanding and consensus among abc members around membership and what that entails, we should be careful with branding (e.g. the knowledge products developed in Madurai are there for the abc to use and adapt to their needs without being branded as abc materials).

Governance

Any common body requires some level of common management, and while much can be done by members, some glue is still needed. As the initiators of the abc, the Agrobiodiversity@knowledged programme has taken on the role to facilitate and coordinate the abc with strategic support from the abc council. There was general consensus during the discussion that governance of the abc, while anchored at the Agrobiodiversity@knowledged programme, should be flexible, activity based and opportunistic. The council will be reconfigured into a think-tank of around 7 people, based on the former council members and the attendees to the 'Future of abc' discussion in Madurai, to take the strategic discussions forward. Although little progress has been made with the abc thematic action

plans developed in Thailand, the five themes are seen to continue to provide a useful framework. To reinvigorate the thematic areas, it was suggested to define thematic or regional “centres of evolution” to coordinate action. The think tank should have virtual meetings on a regular (e.g. bi-monthly) basis, planned well in advance. The Agrobiodiversity@knowledged programme, through Sarah, will coordinate these meetings.

Abc conferences

It became clear again in Madurai that abc members look forward to the abc conferences and it seems worthwhile to continue these meetings on a yearly basis. The abc conferences provide a good opportunity for this evolving community to keep redefining ourselves and our work, and they generate a lot of energy. It is important to build on this momentum in the periods between meetings. To attract the general calibre of participants of previous abc meetings and ensure some continuity, we would need to plan a next conference well in advance (e.g. 6 months), so people can plan around this. If a next conference is planned, it would seem logical to move out of Asia, and Cairo could provide for a central and easily accessible option.

Feedback

Fortunate: Thank you very much Gine. I appreciate all the work you put this in to make the conference a reality. We have learnt so much and will incorporate a lot in our work. Yes, definitely the SCRUM methodology, I would really want to pursue it further in my organisation. And yes very much appreciation to Dhan Foundation; they were amazing!

Regis: Thank you very much for the spirit of hard work you have shown to us all. Am really grateful also to the Dhan Academy for hosting us and making us feel comfortable. Back at work and will try to implement some of the things we learnt during our meeting.

Elizabeth: Thank you so much for this information and for the great work you and your colleagues did to bring the wonderful people together for the abc conference.

I also wish to thank the Dhan Foundation for the planning and hospitality.

Our facilitators, you were special!

The rest of you wonderful participants, it was a pleasure to meet you and to work with you in order to achieve all the success we did. I look forward to collaborating with the abc.

Prosper: It was a pleasure to be in Madurai and thanks to you and colleagues for a well organized workshop that deepens each time we meet. There certainly was a great output, but also pointers of what we need to be doing practically in our own spaces and networks, which I am sure will give us impetus to rebound to the community and share. The Dhan foundation was exceptional in making our stay very comfortable, in a real serene and tranquil environment. I thank the efforts of all their staff members for a job well done. The two tag-team of facilitators, were superb as usual, and thanks to them for their deeper commitment to the cause and to this group of wonderful people.

I look forward to the future engagements after this workshop with much anticipation, given the amazing range of experiences, skills and will power that is always exhibited in this group.

Faris: I just wanted to express my thanks for allowing us to join you from afar, and presenting the seedmap.org project. It sounds like you had a very productive meeting, and left with deep commitments and strong relationships. I enjoyed going through some of the materials you have generated and the video gave me a great sense of the proceedings.

Look forward to hearing more, and to continuing our work together.

Sonali: It has been a great experience to be a part of and work with the abc community. I need to get on with the follow up work as does everybody else.

Namadoa: Thanks Gine for the update; actually the Madurai conference was a rich-filled experience for us all, and do hope we will utilise this knowledge optimally. And above all, we are happy to be part of the Abc community.

?: I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the great achievements realised in Madurai. Thanks for the excellent planning that made everything possible from the workshop itself, food, accommodation transport and logistics. And thanks to Dhan foundation for their hospitality and great organising skills.

Maryleen: Thank you for this feedback and the well-organized process in Madurai. We always enjoy working with Frank and Maarten too they make the process quite involving and participatory.

We will be keen to follow the process, implement proposed actions and the materials developed are going to be really useful in communicating our messages to different stakeholders in the AB sectors.

DHAN Academy were extremely kind to us; we made friends within three short days! They have a big heart for everyone!

[zie ook feedback in filmpje]