

## Agricultural Extensionists met in Bangkok to discuss issues on Market-Oriented Agricultural Extension



On 11-13 May 2010, a Workshop on Market -Oriented Agricultural Extension was held in Bangkok by FAO and AFMA. This gathered almost all agricultural extension officers in Asia together. It built up a good relationship between organizers and delegates from 15 countries; Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Thailand.

This workshop gave an understanding of the structure of agricultural extension in different countries. It is known that many governments in Asia are changing their perspective from one of food security to one of livelihoods. Market-oriented extension has been starting in many countries. However, the services available have not yet reached a satisfactory level. The workshop was a success in raising awareness of the work that FAO has done in market-oriented extension and introducing many training and extension materials which can support national extension agencies. Each country identified issues and priority needs. The meeting was also introduced to some extension materials that Government of Nepal and FAO had recently developed together in the Nepali language. In the last sessions of the workshop, participants were briefed on project formulation and were asked to prepare outline proposals for projects, covering the broad topic of market-oriented extension. With the exception of Thailand, Lao PDR and Myanmar, who prepared a sub-regional project to address cross-border supply-chain issues, related to bio-fuel development, all countries prepared national projects.

Several of the projects stressed Information and Communication Technology (ICT) issues. Although many participants were enthusiastic about the potential offered by ICT, It was noted that the track record of several of these countries using more traditional dissemination methods in the field of, for example, market information provision, had not been good, with the quality of information provided often being poor or irrelevant. There was thus a danger that ICTs would just enable farmers to get bad information more quickly.