

Workshop on Surveillance Strategy for Prevention of Invasive Species

20, 22-23 April 2008, Hanoi, Viet Nam

Welcome and Opening Address

by

Mr. Sarath Fernando

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Distinguished guests, Fellow colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

First of all, I would like to extend a warm welcome to each and every one assembled here for the opening of the Workshop on Surveillance Strategy of Invasive Species. This workshop, an activity of the Asia Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network, is organized by APAFRI with local support from the Forest Science Institute of Vietnam (FSIV), and with financial and technical support from the USDA Forest Service. As Chairman of APAFRI, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the above mentioned institutions and agencies for providing this opportunity for APAFRI to contribute to the field of forest invasive species in this region.

I understand that this workshop have attracted participants from many of the nations in the region, and would also benefit from contributions of resource persons from Australia and New Zealand. This workshop would therefore be a good opportunity to share and exchange information and experiences to combat the threat of invasive species from entering our individual countries, as well as contain and eradicate them preventing them from spreading to other countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In recent years, the rapid depletion of natural forests in many tropical Asian countries coupled with commitments towards sustainable forest management have prompted a very rapid expansion of forest plantations, particularly of fast-growing exotic species. Furthermore, the integration of timber trees with agriculture (agroforestry), very often as a major component of community forestry programmes, continues to gain importance in many of these countries. Many tropical Asian countries have embarked on large scale planting of imported species such as Eucalyptus, Acacia, Azadirachta, Teak, etc.

On the other hand, growing prosperity and rapid development have seemed increasing urbanization in many of the countries in the region; besides the growing demands for wood and non-wood forest products. Wealth however, also brings along increasing awareness of the needs to abate environmental pollution towards sustaining comfortable and healthy living surroundings. These are leading to growing trends in urban greening and beautification that often import exotic plants.

All these have contributed to a rapidly growing movement of planting materials including young seedlings. This has been accompanied by the emergence of previously unreported or unknown plant pests and diseases, further aggravate the threat that had multiplied by increased trade of wood and non-wood forest products.

Technical capacity in dealing with invasive species is either weak or difficult to find in the region. For example, there are very few personnel with the necessary training and knowledge to tackle tree disease problems in the tropics. Bureaucracies and departmentalization are further hampering the efficiency and effectiveness of tackling these problems. In view of these, this workshop, and the several others organized by APFISN with the involvement of APAFRI, have the same primary objective of providing a platform for the various stakeholders to share and exchange information and

experiences to prevent potential threats, and contain and eradicate outbreaks, of invasive species.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to say a few words about APAFRI. APAFRI, the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions, is an association established by a programme of FAO 10 years ago. Currently the association has 70 institutional and individual members; most of the national forestry research institutions and many of the forestry agencies and forestry schools in countries of the Asia-Pacific region are members of APAFRI. APAFRI has been actively involved in many of the forestry activities in the region, and has been increasingly recognized as the regional representative in many international fora.

APAFRI's involvement in the Asia Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN) began since the birth of the network during the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Conference in Kunming, China, August 2003. APAFRI, with USDA funding, had organized a series of APFISN workshops:

- a workshop on coconut beetles in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in February 2005,
 - a workshop in Kerala Forest Research Institute in February 2006
 - a workshop in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia in 2007
- and also a training course on tree health in 2006.
- an APFISN Taskforce Meeting in Beijing later the same year.

We are thankful to USDA Forest Service for these funds, which enable us to support all these events, including this one here this week.

Thank you.

On that note, I would like to officially declare open the workshop.....

Thank you