



India hosts the 51st APCC Session

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“On 2nd September 1969 in Colombo, Ceylon, six national flags rising slowly towards the sun bathed morning sky and a brief clapping of hands followed by the sharp rap of a gavel marked the beginning of a new concept in regional cooperation. The first session of the Asian Coconut Community was called to order. It was the first of its kind in the region and the first intergovernmental organization for a single commodity, the coconut”. This was the rise of an organisation committed for the cause of coconut industry in global sector. APCC came into existence for strengthening the regional cooperation among the coconut producing countries under the aegis of the erstwhile Economic Commission for Asia and Far East (ECAFE), the present Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP)

APCC came into being with a vision to improve the socio-economic conditions of the coconut growers, processors, traders and all those who depend on this crop and crop based industries in the member countries through proper promoting, collaborating and harmonizing of various coconut related activities.

Its mission is to assist the member countries to develop, provide or exchange technologies for the following mission made programs to make the coconut industry vibrant in the years to come.

- Increasing productivity
- Reducing cost of production

- Adopting integrated coconut based farming system
- Encouraging organic farming
- Promoting farm level processing
- Promoting product diversification/ value addition and by-product utilization
- Improving quality standards
- Increasing market promotional activities, market survey and market research
- Helping in trade related issues
- Developing human resource for effective transfer of technology

The mission encompasses implementation of projects relating to different aspects of the industry, provision of technical assistance, collection and dissemination of information on coconut and assistance in transfer of technology. APCC also brings together different segments of the industry to facilitate closer co-operation and collaboration among them.

India was one among the first three signatories. Indonesia, Philippines and India signed the Agreement on 12th December 1968. Ceylon, Thailand and Malaysia signed on 11th March, 26th June and 30th June 1969 respectively. Developing countries which are state members within the geographical limits of Asia and Pacific are eligible to become members of the Community. Its associate membership is open to any dependent territory within the Asia and Pacific region and to developing

countries out-side the geographical limits of Asia and Pacific. This regional grouping provides essential tools for coordination, growth and understanding across national boundaries. Its long history of cooperation and achievement has to its credit many incredible contributions to the coconut industry.

The Community is now composed of eighteen members namely; Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kiribati, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Vietnam. Jamaica is an associate member of the APCC. These countries account for more than 90 per cent of the world production and export of coconut products. APCC member countries produces more than 55 billion nuts a year and export more than 33 million metric tonnes of coconut products including coir.

All coconut growing countries celebrate September 2nd of every year as World Coconut Day to commemorate the formation day of APCC. The 1st Coconut Day was observed on 2nd September, 1999. This marked the beginning of the celebration of World Coconut Day by all member countries of APCC. India got the chance to host the first World Coconut Day. The timely decision of APCC to devote one day for this crop by all countries led to co-coordinated efforts by all member countries for the betterment of the crop at global level.

APCC Session and COCOTECH

APCC Session is the policy making body of the community. The session is held once in each calendar year and the member states are represented by plenipotentiary representatives. Important policy decisions of APCC are taken in the Session meeting. During its 13th Session the nomenclature of the community changed to Asian and Pacific Coconut Community from the erstwhile Asian Coconut Community. It was in the 35th Session held in November 1998 in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam APCC decided that September 2nd, the day on which the community was established 30 years ago, be designated as the 'World Coconut Day' by the member countries.

The technical arm of the community is COCOTECH which is the Permanent Panel on Coconut Technology. It meets once in two year and sets the guidelines for the community's work programme. Cocotech serves as an open forum for researchers, processors, traders and policy makers to meet and exchange information relating to coconut industry. The APCC session of Plenipotentiary members in its annual meetings approves the theme and venue of the COCOTECH meeting for the succeeding year. The erstwhile Ceylon was the platform for the first Session of APCC which was held at Platers Association of Ceylon Building, Colombo, Ceylon from 2nd to 8th September, 1969 while the formation of APCC took place on 2nd September, 1968.

So far 47 Cocotech meetings and 51 Sessions have been completed by APCC. Last Cocotech was in Sri Lanka which concluded on 11th July, 2015. Chronology of APCC sessions could be seen in Table 1.

Administration

Chairmanship of the community is held in rotation by representatives of full member states in their alphabetical order and the chairmanship is valid for one year. Vice Chairmanship too goes on the same pattern.

The secretariat of the community is located in Jakarta, Indonesia. Government of Indonesia provides host facilities to the secretariat under an agreement signed by the Government and APCC. Secretariat serves as a global centre and assists in collecting, organizing and exchanging information relating to all aspects of the coconut industry and



Mr. Uron N. Salum

disseminate it through journals, proceedings of meetings, country studies, technological sheets, directories, statistical year books and video documentaries. The national information centres, in turn, through their participating agencies, disseminate information to end-users in their respective countries.

The coordination of activities of the community with the member states is through a network of National Liaison Officers (NLOs) drawn from government agencies which are responsible for the coconut industry in the member countries. NLOs liaise with all stakeholders. India's present NLO is Shri. Sanjeev



Mr. Sanjeev Chopra IAS

Chopra IAS, Joint Secretary (NHM), Government of India. Shri. T.K. Jose IAS, Chairman, Coconut Development Board, Government of India is present alternate NLO.

Executive Director (ED) heads the Secretariat. The ED is elected by the session for a period of 3 years which can be extended to one more term if the session desires. The Executive Director is assisted by Assistant



Mr. T.K. Jose IAS

Director who is also selected by the session. Executive Director appoints its other skeleton staff as desired by the session. The office of the Executive Director is presently occupied by Uron N. Salum

The major source of funding for the Secretariat is from the member

countries through contributions and special funds from outside funding agencies for taking up collaborative projects. Many useful projects with the assistance from donor organizations have been undertaken with a view to strengthen coconut industry in the region. Important studies undertaken in India with the funding of APCC as well as other donor Agencies like BUROTROP and COGENT include 'Assessment of Performance of Hybrid coconut varieties', 'Developing sustainable coconut based income generating technologies' etc.

India and its association with APCC

India was one among the first signatories of the APCC. The country so far hosted three sessions i.e., 4th APCC during 12-16 April 1971 at New Delhi, 25th session during 28th Nov – 2nd Dec 1998 at Cochin and 38th session during 5 – 8 Nov 2001 at Bangalore. India was the host country for four COCOTECH meetings. Viz. 4th Cocotech during 12-16 April 1971 (along with 4th APCC session), 25th COCOTECH during 23rd Nov – 2nd Dec 1998 at Cochin and 37th COCOTECH during 24 – 28 July 2000 and the 47th Cocotech at Kochi during 7-11 July 2012. This is the first time an Assistant Director position has come to India. The present Assistant Director Mrs. Deepti Nair is an officer of the Board on deputation to APCC.

India held the Chairmanship thrice including the current one and Executive Directorship once since its formation. Mr. M R Sivaraman IAS, the then Joint Secretary to Government of India was the Chairman of APCC in 1998, Dr. H P Singh, Horticulture Commissioner, Government of India and the former Chairman of the Coconut Development Board was its Chairman in 2001 and Shri. Sanjeev Chopra IAS, Joint Secretary (MIDH) for 2014. Dr. P Rethinam, former Chairman of the Board was the

Executive Director of APCC during 2002-2006.

APCC has been instrumental for the perceptible growth of coconut sector in India. Now many countries look towards examples set by India to learn and improve their position on managing the negative environmental and biological impacts on coconut caused by pests, diseases and also due to adverse climate changes.

The clinical study sponsored by CDB through Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Kochi has set an example for the initiation of the country to wipe out the misconception on the use of coconut oil correlating as a casual factor for coronary artery disease. This has attracted the attention of global researchers and look forward for international collaboration on some important clinical studies on the health benefits of coconut. Hopefully Amrita will be the platform for conducting the study.

Widening the ambit of APCC

The APCC region has recorded perceptible improvement in area, production and productivity of coconut during the span of the previous four decades. The area and production grew from 6.547 million ha to 12.44 m. ha. and production from 4691 m. nuts to 71299 m. nuts during this period recording a growth rate of 1.66 % in area and 7.23% in production.

APCC has reportedly started initiatives to widen the ambit of its jurisdiction. Communication and dialogue for new membership within the Asia Pacific region has been started with the Governments of Maldives, Timor Leste, China, Cambodia and Myanmar in Asia and Nauru, Tuvalu and Cook Islands in the Pacific. Trinidad & Tobago, Brazil and Mexico in South America and with Tanzania, Mozambique and

'Cote D'ivoire in Africa can be the new associate members. APCC will continue to work productively to meet the future challenges in the member countries to make the coconut industry vibrant. When we unite in our efforts the burden of our challenges becomes manageable and our objectives and out puts are achievable.

The coconut sector is growing in many ways at national and international level through APCC network. The sector therefore making genuine efforts in addressing the key challenges that include:

- Emerging pests and disease seriously affecting coconut production and productivity;
- Drastic effects of climate change on coconut.
- Declining production of coconuts due to senility of palms.
- Availability of planting material of high quality seed nuts and seedlings.

We have work to transform the life under a coconut tree an increasingly exciting, healthy and profitable one. This life needs to attract our young generation to go back to the farms not only as a viable business proposition but a better way of life, as Executive Director, APCC once wrote. Yes, the future of coconut is promising, progressive and positive.

References:

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Table 1 APCC Sessions

Session	Venue	Date
Session 1	Ceylon Building, Ceylon	2-8 September 1969
Session 2	Bangkok, Thailand	14-27 April 1970
Session 3	Quezon City, Philippines	29 September 1970
Session 4	New Delhi, India	12-16 April 1971
Session 5	Jakarta, Indonesia	16-21 December 1971
Session 6	Jakarta, Indonesia	25-29 July 1972
Session 7	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	11-16 December 1972
Session 9	Jakarta, Indonesia	3-6 July 1973
Session 9	Manila, Philippines	11-15 December 1973
Session 10	Apia Western Samoa	23-27 July 1974
Session 11	Quezon City, Philippines	11-14 December 1974
Session 12	Bangkok, Thailand	28-31 July 1975
Session 13	Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia	17-20 December 1974/5
Session 14	Davao City, Philippines	27-31 July 1976
Session 15	Bangkok, Thailand	26-30 July 1977
Session 16	Yogyakarta, Indonesia	19-22 September 1978
Session 17	Colombo, Sri Lanka	10-14 September 1979
Session 18	Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea	26-30 August 1980
Session 19	Manila, Philippines	29 Sept – 2 Oct 1981
Session 20	Honiara, Solomon Islands	28 Sept – 2 Oct 1982
Session 21	Manila, Philippines	23-26 October 1984
Session 22	Bangkok, Thailand	21-25 October 1985
Session 23	Port Vila, Vanuatu	20-24 October 1986
Session 24	Apia, Western Samoa	2-6 November 1987
Session 25	Cochin, India	23 Nov - 2 Dec. 1988
Session 26	Manado, Indonesia	1-4 November 1987
Session 27	Penang, Malaysia	21-24 November 1990
Session 28	Rabaul, Papua, New Guinea	30 Oct – 01 Nov. 1991
Session 29	Manila, Philippines	17-20 November 1992
Session 30	Honiara, Solomon Islands	1-5 November 1993
Session 31	Colombo, Sri Lanka	3-7 October 1994
Session 32	Chiangrai, Thailand	14-17 November 1995
Session 33	Port Vila, Vanuatu	28-31 October 1996
Session 34	Samoa	3-6 November 1997
Session 35	Ho Chi Minh City	3-6 November 1998
Session 36	Pohnpei, Fed. States of Micronesia	27 Sept – 01 Oct 1999
Session 37	Nadi, Fiji	14-17 November 2000
Session 38	Bangalore, India	5-7 November 2001
Session 39	Manado, Indonesia	21st to 24th January, 2003
Session 40	Kualalumpur, Malaysia	2nd to 5th December, 2003
Session 41	Tarawa, Kiribati	19th to 22nd October, 2004
Session 42	Majuro, Marshall Islands	15th to 18th November, 2005
Session 43	Madang, Papua New Guinea	7th to 10th November, 2006
Session 44	Manila, Philippines	6th to 9th November, 2007
Session 45	Colombo, Sri Lanka	2nd to 5th December, 2008
Session 46	Apia, Samoa	2nd to 5th February, 2010
Session 47	Bangkok, Thailand	25th to 28th January, 2011
Session 48	Honiara, Solomon Islands	28th November to 1st December, 2011
Session 49	Nadi, Fiji	28th to 31st January, 2013
Session 50	Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia	11th to 14th February, 2014
Session 51	Kochi, Kerala, India	2nd to 5th February, 2015