Trip Report: Nepal
18-30 March 2013

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Purpose:
1. Organize and co-host the international conference “Frontiers in Conservation Agriculture in South Asia and Beyond (F-CASA)”;
2. Discuss recent and future project activities with project partners from both Nepal and India; and
3. View on-farm project sites, on-station experimental sites, and update weather station equipment and collect data.

Sites Visited:
LI-BIRD headquarters, Pokhara; LI-BIRD site office, Majimtar, and Thumka (project implementation village), Gorkha Province; TU/IAAS University and Fellows field sites, Chitwan; and USAID Nepal headquarters, US Embassy, Kathmandu.

Description of Activities
The international conference “Frontiers in Conservation Agriculture in South Asia and Beyond (F-CASA)” was held on March 26, 2013 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The conference was primarily organized by both the University of Hawaii and LI-BIRD, and was co-sponsored by SANREM-CRSP, University of Hawaii, and LI-BIRD. Fifty-nine participants from the region attended the conference, including attendees from Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Australia, and the US. Six guest speakers opened the conference, representing LI-BIRD (Dr. Pashupati Chaudhary, Program Director), Feed the Future Food Security Innovation Lab: Collaborative Research on Sustainable Agriculture & Natural Resource Management (Dr. Adrian Ares, Director), Cereal
Systems Initiative for South Asia in Nepal (Dr. Dil Sherchan, Hub Manager), CIMMYT India (Dr. M.L. Jat, Senior Agronomist), Nepal’s Ministry of Agriculture, and the University of Hawaii (Dr. Chittaranjan Ray). A total of 23 research papers were presented, along with 12 posters. Presentations covered four main topic areas: 1) conservation agriculture production technologies; 2) the economics of conservation agriculture; 3) soil effects of conservation agriculture; and 4) gender, food security, and other issues in conservation agriculture. In addition, the conference contributed to capacity building with the participation of 22 students from Nepal, India, and Hawaii.

A SANREM team meeting was held among members of the University of Hawaii (US), Orissa University of Agriculture & Technology (India), LI-BIRD (Nepal), and the Institute of Agriculture & Animal Science (Nepal). During this meeting, recent project activities, accomplishments, as well as challenges were discussed. The meeting further engaged the project partners in development of the report writing process by providing contributions to the SANREM semi-annual report.

Members of the UH, OUAT, LI-BIRD, and IAAS teams visited one of the project implementation villages, Thumka. Although the trip did not occur during the active cropping season, the visit provided team members with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the local farming environment, soil and weather conditions, and cultural context of the SANREM project in Nepal. Also during the visit, recent data from the weather station was collected and damaged sensors were replaced.

Additionally, the team visited the IAAS campus in Chitwan to view the on-station cover crop trials. This research is being conducted as a part of a Master’s thesis of a project fellow at IAAS. The cover crop trial is testing the percent soil cover, biomass production, yield, and soil effects of 7 potential cover crops: chickpea (*Cicer arietinum*), berseem (*Trifolium alexandrinum*), garden pea and field pea (*Pisum sativum*), lentil (*Lens culinaris*), grass pea (*Lathyrus sativus*), and the common bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*). Maize (*Zea mays*) is used as a control. The experiment was visited close to the time of harvest and visual inspection showed a wide range of cover, biomass production, and crop yield. The results from this research will be used to recommend cover crop varieties for further on-farm trials in the next cropping season.

Finally, a visit was made to the Nepal USAID office in Kathmandu to provide an update on project activities and the F-CASA conference. The SANREM team members included Dr. Catherine Chan-Halbrendt, Dr. Travis Idol, Dr. Chittaranjan Ray, Jacqueline Halbrendt and Bikash Paudel from the University of Hawaii; Keshab Thapa of LI-BIRD; Dr. Keshab Pande from IAAS; Dr. Pravat Roul from OUAT; and Dr. Adrian Ares from SANREM. USAID mission staff from the General Development Office included Navin Hada (Project Development Specialist), Evan Meyer (Agricultural Officer), and John Stamm (Director). The University of Hawaii team and SANREM explained the recent project activities and the impact of the conference, as well as mentioned planned activities for the future. LI-BIRD and IAAS presented some of their recent project accomplishments and ongoing research. Overall, the meeting provided valuable information for developing a network with other organizations working towards the Feed the Future agricultural goals.
Suggestions and Recommendations

1. Consider introducing multi-purpose trees and perennial cash crops to Thumka Village to secure terrace boundaries, as a substitute for production of cereals in steeply sloping shifting cultivation plots, to provide a source of fodder for animals and green manure for crops, and to diversify and increase income.

2. Introduce selected cover crops to Thumka Village as farmer trials, outside main SANREM experimental plots.

3. Explore partnerships with Winrock and other NGOs who have received Feed the Future funding from the USAID mission in Nepal. (John Stamm was asking his staff to furnish UH team with the contact information for Winrock project manager in Nepal.)

Training Activities Conducted:

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<tr>
<th>Program type (workshop, seminar, field day, short course, etc.)</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Training Provider (US University, host country institution, etc.)</th>
<th>Training Objective</th>
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| Conference                                                      | 26 March 2013 | Researchers, NGO staff, government, students | 45 14                  | Virginia Tech; University of Hawaii, USA; LI-BIRD, Nepal         | - To share the research activities and development status of CAPS in South Asia  
|                                                                 |            |                                 |                        |                                                                  | - To present recent CAPS research in the fields of: agronomy, economics, soil, gender, and food security  
|                                                                 |            |                                 |                        |                                                                  | - To build capacity and strengthen networks of researchers, government, and NGOs working with CAPS |

List of Contacts Made:

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Organization</th>
<th>Contact Info (Address, phone, email)</th>
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