Date 18 October 2007
Press Release No. N/56/2007

UN-APCAEM Promotes Conservation Agriculture Techniques in Asia-Pacific

Bangkok (United Nations Information Services) -- A United Nations sponsored international seminar on promoting environmentally-sustainable conservation agricultural (CA) practices in Asia and the Pacific will be held in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, China from 24 to 26 October 2007.

Unlike conventional agriculture, CA techniques have the potential to prevent deterioration of soil quality and promote water conservation in agricultural production, and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector.

Around 150 policy makers, experts, researchers and CA specialists from more than 10 countries and international organizations will participate in the seminar.

The seminar is organized by United Nations Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (APCAEM), and co-sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture of China, China Agricultural University, with in-kind contributions from the Henan provincial

APCAEM is a subsidiary body of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP).

The objective of the seminar is to promote the extension of CA techniques and enhance the awareness of agronomic, economic and environmental benefits of new developments and progress of CA through interaction amongst agricultural experts, administrators/policy makers, advisor and farmers.

CA promotes sustainable and profitable agriculture through the application of minimal soil disturbance (zero or minimum tillage), permanent soil cover and crop rotations. Good agricultural practices in North and South America, Australia and other semi-arid areas of the world have shown that CA can bring significant benefits to the development of ecological agriculture and green technology.

In developing countries, however, few farmers actually practice it. There are various reasons, including a lack of transfer of technology and institutional support, and the fact that the immediate benefit to farmers are not apparent due to their differing environmental and economic situations. APCAEM has launched two studies to review the contributions of CA to input reduction, preservation of soil structure and stability, water conservation, energy efficiency and decrease in carbon dioxide emission. The studies also compare greenhouse gas emission impact of both traditional and conservation agricultural cropping systems, and of the use of nitrogen fertilizer.

Based on the two study reports, the seminar will discuss topics which include (i) CA, environmental protection, and sustainable development; (ii) CA techniques and machinery; (iii) Application and extension services of CA; (iv) Policy and strategy for the development of CA.

APCAEM, which is based in Beijing, pursues its mission and implements its mandates through information exchange and knowledge sharing/networking, policy research, technical assistance in capacity building and training, outreach/advocacy programmes, and by fostering partnerships.

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Headquartered in Bangkok, UNESCAP is the largest of the UN's five Regional Commissions in terms of its membership, population served and area covered. The only intergovernmental forum covering the entire Asia-Pacific region, UNESCAP works to promote economic and social progress. More information on UNESCAP is available from www.unescap.org