

## Third country visit in Egypt

### To link agricultural extension and research

AAI conducted a third country visit (TCV) in Egypt with the assistance of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) under the JICA technical cooperation project for capacity development of agricultural extension services in Balochistan (the project). The objectives of the TCV is to improve knowledge and capacity to use new techniques of water-saving irrigation, water management, and agricultural extension for project counterparts (CPs). A total of the six CPs were selected from the Directorate of Agriculture Extension (the extension) and Agricultural Research Institute (the research). They participated in technical sessions given by ICARDA lecturers and technicians from the Agricultural Research Center (ARC) in Egypt, and also visited farms and companies in and around Cairo.

The orientation was conducted before departure from Pakistan. After the orientation, discussions started on how to utilize extension officers who were trained in the project after the completion of the project, and how the research links up with their extension activities. The discussions were scheduled to take place on the last day of TCV, which surprised us at their high motivation and made us feel that the TCV would be meaningful for the members.

The TCV lecture contents on the first day were irrigated agriculture technologies, irrigation system management, and ICT-based monitoring, all of which were of strong interest to the CPs. Lecture contents of the second day were olive and cactus cultivation in Egypt. It was interesting that wild olive trees seem to be widely distributed in Balochistan, and opinions were raised that potential for olive cultivation in Balochistan may be more than that of Egypt. Cactus cultivation seemed to be a new idea, and some CPs suggested the possibility of growing cactus in areas of Balochistan with poor soil conditions such as coastal areas. Demonstration farm visits were conducted during the latter part of the TCV program and included a visit to an olive orchard with drip irrigation, a date palm seedling nursery, and an agricultural material company.

After those visits, some CPs even made personal appointments to meet with the officials from the farms

and companies we visited, setting up further meetings at our hotel to exchange opinions. Their enthusiasm for obtaining knowledge and seeking possibilities



**Group photo of visited farm**

of partnerships in their work in as much time allowed was remarkable. Other programs were presented by ICARDA and farm officials, explaining the public agricultural extension system in Egypt, which began to be weakened more than a decade ago. Political factors seemed to be behind the weakening and the CPs were keenly interested in the lessons learned from the transition of the country's agricultural extension system.

As many technology dissemination activities were presented by the ARC technicians, discussions with the lecturers of ICARDA on the last day highlighted the issue that useful knowledge and technologies from the research may not have been fully disseminated to farmers. Proposed activities to address the issue were discussed, including the utilization of ongoing JICA project for training opportunities, a review of past extension activities and actions to improve linkages with the research, as well as promoting cooperation between the extension and research in the future. In particular, it was suggested that the extension officers and university staffs to be invited to participate in the "Rabi (dry season, October-April) and Kharif (rainy season, April-September) meetings" which are regularly conducted by the research twice a year, in order to share important technical and regional issues for promoting cooperation among them. It was also one of the outcomes of the TCV that a proposal was raised to jointly share facilities and human resources between the extension and research to address field issues.

The CPs were able to communicate in English with the technicians and lectures involved in the TCV, which enabled them to have fruitful discussions in a limited time of just seven days. AAI will keep an eye on new actions of the CPs in the near future, and would like to make use of the solidarity strengthened through the TCV to further our project activities.