B-32 : EXPLORATION AND COLLECTION OF MILLET GERMPLASM IN SRI LANKA

W L G Samarasinghe, C B Hindagala, K Nishimaki, K. Oikawa**, S K Senevirathne, Plant Genetic Resources Centre, Gannoruwa, *Dept. of Upland Crop Breeding, Nagano Chushin, Agric. Expt. Station, Japan, **Iwwate Pref Agric. Expt. Station, Japan.*

Millets are a component of the diet of the rural population in Sri Lanka. Finger millet (*Eleusine coracana* (L.) Gaertn.) is the predominantly grown millet, while Foxtail millet (*Setaria italica* (L.) Beauv.), Proso millet (*Panicum miliaceum* L.) and Little millet (*Panicum sumatrense* L.) are cultivated to restricted extents mainly in the Dry and Intermediate zones in the country. The once genetic diversity of millets has been subjected to considerable genetic erosion during the recent years. Hence collection and conservation of millets are important for crop improvement research before further genetic erosion takes place. A joint exploration was carried out in January 1992 by the Plant Genetic Resources Centre, Gannoruwa and the Gene Bank Project, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Japan. During this programme, 25 sites representing diverse (9) agro-ecological regions (in 8 administrative districts) were visited. A total of 90 seed samples including those of Finger millet, Foxtail millet, Proso millet and related species were collected. Finger millet germplasm collected showed a wide variation for days to maturity (75 - 120 days). A few accessions did not show any symptoms of blast disease, which is an important disease of the crop.