

Producing healthy vegetable seedlings in Pakistan



Iftikhar Ahmed (left, in grey suit), Pakistan Agricultural Research Council Chairman meets with **Warwick Easdown** (right), AVRDC South Asia Regional Director; **Ram Nair**, Legume Breeder; and **Mansab Ali** (second and third from right), AVRDC Project Manager at Pakistan Agricultural Research Council headquarters.

Vegetable growers from various districts of Pothwar (Islamabad Capital Territory, Harripur, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Attock, Pindi Ghaib, Taxila, Kahutta and Chakwal) received comprehensive training in healthy seedling production during a four-day training course from 10-13 February 2014 organized by AVRDC – The World Vegetable Center in Islamabad, Pakistan in collaboration with US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC).

“The training for small farmers will help enhance agriculture production for food security in the country,” said PARC Chairman, **Iftikhar Ahmed**, in an address to workshop participants.

The vegetable farmers trained in the workshop will share their

knowledge and experience with other farmers in their communities to promote healthy vegetable seed production and establish modern seedling nurseries. Dr. Iftikhar said the Agricultural Innovation Program (AIP) for Pakistan funded by USAID has created a platform for public and private sector institutions to share innovations and knowledge to promote agriculture in the country.

He stressed the need for practical implementation of healthy nurseries, proper preparation and sterilization of compost, and proper management of insect and diseases at the farm level. He also underlined the importance of coordination between the PARC Vegetable Program and the master trainers for future targeted areas. Speaking at the concluding sessions, AVRDC Project Manager **Mansab Ali**, PARC’s **Khalid**

Qureshi, Senior Director (Horticulture), **Ghulam Jellani**, Program Leader (Vegetables), and other scientists highlighted the importance of healthy seed and seedling production to ensure quality vegetable crops in the country. They observed that increasing vegetable production would help satisfy domestic demand and also save foreign exchange currently being spent on importing vegetables from other countries.