MODERNIZING FARMING

Big data analysis has come to the farms in Taiwan. Such technological innovation that enables farmers to better tend their crops for greater productivity would certainly be a boon to Southeast Asian farmers.

SEARCA draws in Taiwan for ARD in Southeast Asia

TAIPEI, Taiwan—The Taiwan Council of Agriculture (COA) Executive Yuan, National Taiwan University (NTU), and the Taiwan-based Food and Fertilizer Technology Center discussed with a visiting high-level delegation from SEARCA led by Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr. areas of common interest and priority concerns that will be the basis for collaborations in research, graduate education and institutional development, and knowledge management initiatives.

COA is the authority on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, animal husbandry, and food affairs in Taiwan, and NTU is the most prestigious university in the country with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-Wen among its alumni.

SEARCA’s visit to these major agriculture-focused institutions in Taiwan was on the heels of separate visits of NTU and COA officials to the Center in 2017 as they sought to renew ties with SEARCA in light of the Taiwanese government’s New Southbound Policy, which seeks new regional partners to enhance economic cooperation, talent exchange, and resource sharing between Taiwan and 18 countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Australasia.

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In a planning workshop held on February 8-9, NTU and SEARCA agreed to support scholarships for MS and PhD in biotechnology tenable at NTU’s Institute of Biotechnology. Moreover, both institutions are interested in jointly developing and offering training courses, possibly on sustainable ecological environment, bio-fertilizers, plant factories, and biotechnology regulations and policymaking, with a view to draw in COA and FFTC into the collaboration.

COA and NTU are pivoting their expertise and resources to benefit developing countries in the Southeast Asian region in support of the New Southbound Policy. As such, they are looking at SEARCA as a major partner and a window to the region.

They were received by the NTU officials led by Dr. Huu-Sheng Lur, Dean and Professor at the Department of Agronomy under CBA (front, third from left).

The workshop aimed to develop the finer details of possible collaborative activities between SEARCA and NTU, particularly in the areas of research, capacity building, and knowledge management as well as student, faculty, and staff exchange programs. (EGPandanan)
TOKYO, Japan – At a symposium held here on 12 February 2018, SEARCA proposed to link two university consortia that share interests in agriculture and related sciences.

The Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC) launched by SEARCA in 1989 counts among its members nine leading agricultural universities in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Japan, Canada, and Germany.

On the other hand, 68 universities in ASEAN, Japan, Korea are participating in the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme led by the Bangkok-based Southeast Asian Regional Center for Higher Education (RIHED). Four of the nine UC members are among the 68 universities in the AIMS Programme.

SEARCA and RIHED are two of the 24 centers of excellence and network of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO).

At the Tokyo symposium on “Challenges for Campus to Campus, Establishment of Connectivity in Research and Education Beyond Borders,” SEARCA presented the merits of opening the prestigious UC Graduate Forum to the AIMS universities to enable students to attend as well as present their research results.

Of the 10 major study fields that AIMS focuses on, agriculture, biodiversity, environmental management and science, food science and technology, marine science, and economics align with SEARCA’s priority thrusts to promote inclusive and sustainable agricultural and rural development (ISARD).

“As such, SEARCA sees that drawing in AIMS scholars and researchers to the UC Graduate Forum can be an impetus for collaborations in new research among constituents of the UC and AIMS to boost agricultural and rural development,” said Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., SEARCA Director.

In addition to joining the UC Graduate Forum, Dr. Saguiguit noted that RIHED is also considering conducting Summer Schools and developing massive open online courses (MOOCs) for students who cannot go to other countries to do mobility.

Since the UC has been organizing Graduate Forums, Summer Schools and research collaborations and exchanges, Dr. Saguiguit said it would be seamless to tie up these activities to those of AIMS.

He added that Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and University of Tsukuba have expressed interest in supporting these collaborations by funding the participation not only of students, but also of university faculty and researchers. (LDDDomingo)

MS FSCC project takes stock of gains

Thirty-four participants from overseas partner institutions joined 19 local participants in a SEARCA-hosted review of the Master of Science in Food Security and Climate Change (MS FSCC) and workshop hosted by the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) on 19-24 March 2018.

The MS FSCC is a project initiated by the SEARCA-established Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC) and led by Kasetsart University (KU) in Thailand. It is partially supported by the ERASMUS + program of the European Union and counts 11 other partner institutions in Southeast Asia and Europe.

Part of the workshop outputs are detailed course analyses for the five MS FSCC program core courses and the required specialization courses for each of five training tracks.

On the other hand, the review meeting looked at the project accomplishments in the past year, the challenges encountered, and the status of project implementation. As a result, some adjustments were made in the succeeding project activities and budget. These include another workshop tentatively scheduled in July 2018 for the development of the course modules, teaching materials, and assessment tools for all required courses in the program to ensure the standardization of the course delivery across each of the UC members.

Staff from the non-UC partners in the region including Prince of Songkhla University and Chiang Mai University, both in Thailand; Royal University of Agriculture and University of Battambang, both in Cambodia; Nilai University in Malaysia; and Central Luzon State University in the Philippines will also be asked to participate in the Summer Schools to train them so they can conduct similar events in their respective institutions.

The UC members are UPLB, KU, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Institut Pertanian Bogor, and Universitas Gadjah Mada. The European partner institutions in the MS FSCC are Montpellier SupAgro and Agreenium in France, Gottingen University in Germany, BOKU in Austria, and the consortium Agrinatura based in the Czech Republic. (MCNCuaresma)
Social forestry proposals get ASRF grants

The ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SF) Strategic Response Fund (ASRF) managed by SEARCA received eight proposals for funding from seven ASEAN member states (AMS).

An initiative under the ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASRFC), ASRF is designed to provide AMS leaders and focal points on social forestry with seed fund to enable them to respond to immediate needs or catalyze strategic actions that will address emerging issues and opportunities in selected AMS.

The ASRF promotes the inclusion of communities, women, and vulnerable groups in social forestry and climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

The proposals submitted are on the following topics: social forestry assessment and its contribution to livelihood (Cambodia), improvement of a training guide on Village Forestry Management Planning (Lao PDR), assessment and sustainable utilization of non-timber forest products (Myanmar and Thailand), a study of existing benefit-sharing mechanisms in community-based forest management (the Philippines), development of a community-based eco-tourism project (Malaysia), and an evaluation of the status of forest allocation policies (Vietnam).

SEARCA conducted a gap analysis on social forestry in the AMS—one of the considerations in evaluating proposals. The gap analysis ensures that activities for ASRF funding are within the bounds of the AWG-SF plan of action and the national priorities or agenda of the AMS.

SEARCA invited the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), Non-timber Forest Product Exchange Programme (NFTP-EP), and the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC)—all ASRFC partners—to serve as technical evaluators of the proposals. (XGBCapinha)

NEW ASRF-FUNDED PROJECTS

CAMBODIA
Community Forestry in Cambodia – A review of community forestry contribution to livelihoods after 25 years of development
Mr. Long Ratanakoma, Deputy Director, Department of Forest and Community Forestry, FA-MAFF

LAO PDR
Improvement of Training Guide on Village Forestry Management Planning (VFMP)
Dr. Oupakone Alounsavath, Director for Village Forestry Division of the Department of Forestry

MALAYSIA
Conservation and Consumption Goods and Nature-based Recreation: A Community-based Ecotourism Project in Malaysia
Dato’ Dr Abd Latif Bin Mohmod, Director General, Forest Research Institute Malaysia

MYANMAR
Assessment of non-timber forest products in mountainous regions of Myanmar towards community forestry development
Dr. Thaung Naing Oo, Director, Forest Research Institute (FRI), MONREC

PHILIPPINES
A Study on the Existing Benefit-Sharing Mechanisms in the Philippines Community-based Forest Management (CBFM)
Mr. Nonito M. Tamayo, Director, Forest Management Bureau, DENR

THAILAND
Assessing the Potential of Non-Timber Forest Products (MTFP) for Value Chain and Community Forestry Enterprises Development in Northern Thailand
Dr. Surin Onprom, Department of Forest Management, Kasetsart University

Assessing Forest Biodiversity and Utilization of Non-Timber Forest Products in Community Forest for Rural Livelihood and Conservation in Thailand
Ms. Siriluck Thammanu, PhD Student, Department of Forest Sciences, Seoul National University

VIETNAM
Review and Evaluation of Status of Forest Allocation Policies to Produce Recommendations to Policymakers
Mr. Dinh Van Tuyen, Officer, Forest Protection and Management Division, Forest Protection Department

Partnerships explored with German research group

SEARCA, the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), and the Technical University Berlin jointly organized the Microenergy Systems 2018 (MES18) Travelling Conference with the aim of establishing a platform for knowledge exchange and find potential collaborations between Germany and the Southeast Asian region.

Hosted by SEARCA on 26 February 2018, the conference was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

The knowledge event was the third and final leg in the series of workshops held in Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The Philippine workshop was attended by 39 participants from Elena International, Microenergy Systems (MES), SEARCA, TUB, and UPLB. The workshop aimed to establish a platform for knowledge exchange and find potential collaborations between Germany and the Southeast Asian region.

Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., SEARCA Director, welcomed the participants and stressed that one of the Center’s priority thrusts is on environmental sustainability with emphasis on climate change adaptation and resiliency and natural resource management including the adoption of more sustainable sources of energy.

The resource persons from Germany and their respective presentations were Dr. Sabine Auer and Ms. Christina Horn, both of Elena International, who presented the Challenges and Solutions for a Grid Stable Integration of Renewable Energies - moving from tier to tier; Mr. Henrik Beermer, Research Fellow, Fraunhofer Center for International Management and Knowledge Economy IMW, who presented the Sustainable Regional Development: The Case of Chiang Mai, Thailand; and Mr. Steffen Eyhorn, Co-Founder Ant.technologies, who presented the Multi-Tier Framework (MTF) and Nanogrids: Tier mobility through modularity?

Presentations on research and successful projects in the Philippines were given by Dr. Rex B. Demafelis of ULB, Status and Prospects of Philippine Biofuels; Engr. Viava Jane L. Africa of Solutions Using Renewable Energy (SURE), Inc., Developing Projects from Biomass Sources; and Engr. Kristel Mae Villasin of the UPLB Department of Electrical Engineering, Evolving Technology and Capital Investments in the Electricity Market.

The group workshops focused on understanding the Multi-Tier Framework (MTF) from the World Bank, which is used in conducting feasibility studies to gather data and assess the extent of needs for renewable energy of countries of interest.

The MES 2018 Travelling Conference concluded with a discussion of potential research agenda in the Southeast Asian region, specifically in the Philippines. (SGLQuirones)
SEARCA advocates inclusivity in value chain dev’t

Remaining upbeat in steering an inclusive and sustainable agricultural and rural economy, SEARCA brought to the fore the significance of value chain development in improving market system productivity with due attention to marginalized farmers’ inclusivity. This was the core of the Value Chain Development (VCD) Course held on 12-16 March 2018 at SEARCA.

Research and development practitioners from Cambodia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam participated in the five-day training-workshop. The 28 course participants represented the academe, government institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and local government units in their respective countries.

In his message, Dr. Gil C. Saguiquit, Jr., SEARCA Director, noted that value chain development translates into action SEARCA’s priority thrusts, which is to strengthen social inclusion to promote greater participation and productivity of farmers and rural producers.

He further stressed that the training-workshop is a vital step towards developing a value chain framework that will facilitate the equitable integration of smallholder farmers and rural entrepreneurs in regionally integrated and borderless agribusiness markets.

Likewise, Professor Wilfredo B. Carada of the University of the Philippines Los Baños-College of Public Affairs and Development (UPLB-CPA) enjoined the participants to go beyond understanding the value chain process, and more importantly, to instigate an inclusive VCD that brings positive and desirable changes, particularly to marginalized players at the lowest link of the chain.

Professor Carada used the catchword “VCD4ISARD” as a call to action towards developing sound interventions for smallholders, small-scale businesses, landless laborers, and women, who participate in agricultural value chains as producers, traders, processors, laborers and retailers. He noted that the VCD4ISARD serves as an imperative tool to make these marginalized actors get a fair share in the value chain process.

“What we need to embrace is the inclusive definition of the value chain. This means we need to make the poor participate directly in economic activities, and make their participation translate into increased income and improved well-being. We must not merely rely on the “trickle down” process in aiming for sustainable development,” Professor Carada explained.

The five-day course was composed of three interactive workshops and nine lecture-discussion sessions. It combined the fundamental frameworks, principles, components and processes of the value chain system and their practical skills and application in five modules. These are VCD in the context of ISARD; sector and value chain selection; value chain analytics and mapping; VCD and intervention design thinking; and value chain system implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and sustainability.

The participants formed six workshop groups, each assigned with an agricultural sub-sector characterized to have the greatest potential and relevance to the ISARD. Identified sub-sectors were cocoa, rice, abaca, sugar, coconut, and swine. Each group developed and presented a value chain development plan for their respective sub-sector. Each plan included a sector situationer, value chain analysis, and mapping; value chain development strategy; organizational/institutional arrangements for VCD; and monitoring and evaluation plan.

They were also individually tasked to present and submit a re-entry action plan (REAP) of their chosen commodity. This will serve as their takeoff point for applying the learning gained from the VCD course. (MKRSerrano)

SEARCA joins adaptation global network forum

NADI, Fiji—SEARCA joined a Targeted Topics Forum (TTF) organized by the National Adaptation Plan Global Network and hosted by the Fiji government on 5-8 February 2018. The forum focused on communication strategies, monitoring and evaluation, sectoral and vertical integration, and gender issues.

Dr. Lope B. Santos III, Officer-in-Charge and Program Specialist at SEARCA’s Project Development and Technical Services, represented the agriculture sector, one of the major climate-sensitive sectors. He was part of the Philippine delegation that included representatives of the Philippine Climate Change Commission.

Policymakers and adaptation practitioners from 20 countries attended the forum, which tackled the challenges and best practice approaches related to the national adaptation planning process. Discussions focused on communication strategies, monitoring and evaluation, sectoral and vertical integration and gender issues.

The Philippine delegation shared the country’s experience on the national adaptation planning processes, including legislation and policy development, formulation of the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) and Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAP’s) and implementation of Climate Change Adaption (CCA) projects at the national, regional, and local levels.

The Philippine delegation also attended the Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting on 10 February 2018 in Nadi. The PSC is composed of representatives from International Institute for Sustainable Development (ISSD, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Canada, Columbia, Germany, Jamaica, Malawi, the Philippines, South Africa, Togo, US, and the United Kingdom. (LBSantosIII)
1st ATMI-ASEAN project meet in Cambodia held

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia—The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Cambodia’s focal agency for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-funded project Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration in the ASEAN Region: Responding to Food Security and Inclusiveness Concerns (ATMI-ASEAN project) led the conduct of the first National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) Meeting on 29 January 2018.

His Excellency Ty Sokhun, Secretary of State of MAFF and NPSC Chair, emphasized that the purpose of the meeting is to introduce the project to the members and familiarize them with its implementation in Cambodia.

He cited activities that MAFF had joined as these relate to the ATMI-ASEAN project, namely: the Regional Launch Workshop, the National Inception Workshop; and the back-to-back Focal Points and Researchers Meeting, and Training-Workshop on Rapid Value Chain Assessment held in Bangkok.

Ms. Bernice Anne C. Darvin, Project Associate of the ATMI-ASEAN Project, delivered the Participatory Remarks of Dr. Bessie M. Burgos, Head of the Research and Development Department of SEARCA. In her message read by Ms. Bernice Anne C. Darvin of the ATMI-ASEAN Project, Dr. Bessie M. Burgos, SEARCA Program Head for Research and Development, emphasized the crucial role the committee plays in relation to the conduct of the national-level project events, particularly the policy research in Cambodia. In this case, such policy research will focus on maize value chain.

Ms. Darvin also presented a short overview of ATMI-ASEAN, including its overall goal and objectives, components, activities, and expected outcomes.

Mr. Sorn Vichet, Chief of Planning and Statistics Office at MAFF’s General Directorate of Agriculture (GDA), discussed the memorandum of agreement between SEARCA and MAFF as well as the plan of study for the Value Chain Analysis of Maize in Cambodia.

On the other hand, Mr. Prak Cheattho, GDA Deputy General Director, explained the rationale in selecting maize as Cambodia’s priority commodity instead of rice or cassava. He said there is already a number of existing policies covering rice in the country and the Ministry of Commerce and another international organization are already working on cassava. He said maize is an important source of animal feed for the country and involves many small-scale rural producers.

Representatives from different government agencies, farmer’s organization, and academe, including Dr. Seng Mom of the Royal University of Agriculture (RUA) who is the Country Representative of Cambodia to the SEARCA Governing Board, attended the meeting and participated in the open discussion regarding the MOA and the plan of study.

The committee agreed to conduct a value chain study on the maize industry of Cambodia, but suggested to further strengthen the team’s research capacity by adding more members from GDA, Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), and Prek Leap National College of Agriculture. (BACDarvin)

IPSARD leads ATMI-ASEAN project meet in Vietnam

HANOI, Vietnam—The Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD), the focal agency of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-funded project Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration in the ASEAN Region: Responding to Food Security and Inclusiveness Concerns (ATMI-ASEAN project) in Vietnam, hosted the first National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) Meeting held 26 January 2018.

Dr. Tran Cong Thang, IPSARD Vice Director General, facilitated the meeting. He gave a short overview of the project, highlighting its objectives, components, expected outcomes, and beneficiaries. He also gave updates on what has been done so far and other activities are lined up for the project in Vietnam.

Dr. Thang presented Vietnam’s proposal and plan of study for its national-level policy research under ATMI-ASEAN titled “Pig value chain analysis in Hanoi City and Thai Binh Province:
ISST, SEARCA to partner in 2 int’l farm tourism meets

SEARCA is set to formalize ties with the International School of Sustainable Tourism (ISST) to jointly organize two landmark international conferences on farm tourism.

Farm tourism or agritourism is the business of attracting visitors and travelers to farm areas for recreational or educational purposes that encourages economic activity and can provide both farm and community income.

Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., SEARCA Director, asserts that “agritourism is an innovative pathway to ISARD.”

He added that in addition to advocating agritourism to diversify farmers’ sources of income and livelihood, SEARCA sees it as a way to promote sustainable agriculture with community involvement and participation.

On the other hand, the non-profit ISST, headed by former Philippine Tourism Secretary, Dr. Mina T. Gabor, provides education and technical training to develop, promote, and viably operate sustainable tourism in the Philippines and other ASEAN countries.

SEARCA and ISST will thus attempt to jointly shine a spotlight on farm tourism through a Global Farm Tourism Summit in July 2018 and an Asia Women Leaders Meet in December 2018. Experts, practitioners, and stakeholders in the industry worldwide are expected to attend and participate.

Meanwhile, the Asia Women Leaders Meet is planned as an annual event that will have a different theme each year. The first of the series will be held on 4-6 December 2018 with the theme “The Role of Women in Community-based Tourism.”

SEARCA and ISST welcome the support of other international development organizations, government agencies, and private entities to these important conferences. (LLDDomingo)

SEARCA project develops rural transformation typology for Phl

LOS BAÑOS, Philippines—SEARCA hosted on 16-17 February 2018 a meeting-workshop of the Philippine team of the project titled Rural Regional Transformation: Pathways, Policy Sequencing, and Development Outcomes in China, the Philippines, and Vietnam (RRT).

SEARCA is the implementing partner of the Philippine component of the project, which is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

At the workshop, the team discussed the activities for developing a typology of the Philippine rural transformation—one of the key expected outputs of the RRT project.

They identified the key indicators of rural transformation and its development outcomes and select the priority indicators of the major driving forces of rural transformation: Institutions, Policies, and Investments (IPIs).

IPIs are essential to understanding the drivers of rural transformation and its development outcomes.

Part of the meeting was to plan the specific activities for delivering the expected outputs. The timetable was set for the following activities: completion of the data set of indicators, data analysis, writing the typology paper, and conduct of stakeholders’ validation and consultation workshop.

Present at the meeting were Dr. Bessie M. Burgos, SEARCA Program Head for Research and Development; Dr. Mercedita A. Sombilla, Project Adviser/Coordinator; Dr. Pedro A. Alviola IV, Project Team Leader; Assistant Prof. Karen P. Quilloy, Co-Project Team Leader; and Ms. Anieluz C. Pastolero, Project Assistant. (ACPastolero/ KPQuilloy/PAAlviolaIV)

IPSARD leads/ from page 6

Recommendations for improvement and inclusiveness.”

He discussed the current state of the swine industry in Vietnam, especially in the context of agricultural transformation and market integration. He also provided a brief analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the smallholder swine industry in relation to its potential integration into the national and regional agri-food value chains.

Representatives from Vietnam’s agriculture-related agencies and farmers’ organization attended the meeting and provided inputs in the policy study to be conducted in Vietnam.

The NPSC unanimously agreed that swine is the commodity that should be subjected to the value chain study in Vietnam, given the increasing demand for pork in the country. In fact, pork currently accounts for 60% of the average daily meat consumption in Hanoi, which is approximately 500 tons/day.

SEARCA and IFAD participated in the meeting as observers. IFAD was represented by Mr. Thomas Rath, Country Director, and Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tung, Country Presence Officer for Vietnam, while SEARCA was represented by Ms. Bernice Anne Darvin, Project Associate, ATMI-ASEAN project. (BACDarvin)
SEARCA shares experience in 3 IFAD-funded projects

MANOLO FORTICH, Philippines—SEARCA shared its experience in three ongoing projects funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) at IFAD’s 10th Annual Country Programme Review (ACPoR) for the Philippines held here from 30 January to 1 February 2018.

Themed “Investments and Partnerships under the Approved IFAD Country Strategy,” this year’s ACPoR focused on sharing of experiences, innovations, and good practices as well as identifying policy and operational constraints from the implementation of the IFAD-assisted loan and grant programs and projects.

A presentation on the Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration in the ASEAN Region: Responding to Food Security and Inclusiveness Concerns (ATMI-ASEAN) was given by Dr. Bessie M. Burgos, SEARCA Program Head for Research and Development, and Mr. Jimmy B. Williams, Project Support Unit Coordinator for ATMI-ASEAN.

Dr. Lope B. Santos III, SEARCA Unit Head for Project Development and Technical Services, talked about the project titled Supporting Smallholder Farmers in Asia and the Pacific Islands Region through Strengthened Agricultural Advisory Services (SAAS).

Progress of the Rural Regional Transformation: Pathways, Policy Sequencing, and Development Outcomes in China, the Philippines, and Vietnam (RRT) project was reported by Ms. Karen P. Quilloy, co-Project Leader for the RRT Philippine component.

The annual review included presentation of IFAD country programme report as strategy, loan and grant project reports; interaction with government oversight agencies; group strategic workshops; and a cooperative and farm visit.

About 65 participants from different IFAD implementing partner institutions/organizations and government agencies attended the 10th ACPoR, which was hosted by the Department of Agrarian Reform under its IFAD-assisted project titled Convergence on Value Chain-Enhancement for Rural Growth and Empowerment (ConVERGE).

At the end of the review, participants were able come up with concrete actions to improve the performance of individual programs and projects and the overall IFAD country strategy for the Philippines. (BM/Burgos)

IFAD reviews SEARCA project on agri transformation in ASEAN

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has reviewed on 17-30 January 2018 the progress of the SEARCA project titled Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration in the ASEAN Region: Responding to Food Security and Inclusiveness Concerns.

The supervision mission was carried out by Dr. Fabrizio Bresciani, Regional Economist at IFAD-Asia and the Pacific Division, through meetings with the project implementers led by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and SEARCA as implementing partner.

Dr. Bresciani reviewed the project’s progress, its plans for the year, and overall program management.

Dr. Bessie M. Burgos, SEARCA Program Head for Research and Development, presented the accomplishments and the 2018 work plan of the ATMI-ASEAN Project.

Dr. Bresciani’s visit to SEARCA is the second part of his supervision mission. He conducted the first leg of the mission in New Delhi on 17 January 2018 with Dr. Pramod Kumar Joshi, IFPRI Project Director, and members of the project coordination team. His mission concludes after the Annual Country Programme Review of the Philippine Office of IFAD on 30 January-1 February 2018 in Bukidnon, Philippines. (Report from LACarandang)
SEARCA project sets goals of Asia-Pacific rural advisory services network

JAKARTA, Indonesia – SEARCA organized the Workshop on the Governance Structure and Processes for the Asia Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services (APIRAS) Network held here on 22 January 2018.

Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., SEARCA Director, and Dr. Tom Anyonge, Lead Technical Specialist of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-Rome, set the tone of the workshop which is under the IFAD-funded project “Supporting Smallholder Farmers in Asia and the Pacific Islands Region through Strengthened Agricultural Advisory Services” implemented by SEARCA through its Project Development and Technical Services.

The workshop brought together stakeholders from the Asia-Pacific region to revisit and set the goals and roles of APIRAS and its members as well as craft the short- and medium-term roadmap for APIRAS.

Covering the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Fiji, the project aims to empower poor smallholder farmers and producer organizations in Asia-Pacific region through access to improved, more effective, and demand-driven agricultural advisory services (AAS).

The three components of the project are strengthening capacities of AAS to effectively serve the accessibility needs of smallholder farmers, knowledge sharing of best-fit practices and evidence in AAS, and evidence-based policy advocacy for AAS.

Stated in June 2016, the project is expected to run until December 2019. (LLDDomingo)

SEARCA visits Fiji partners in agri advisory services project

SUVA, Fiji—Dr. Lope B. Santos III of SEARCA visited the Fiji Secretariat of Pacific Community and the Ministry of Agriculture headquartered here on 9 February 2018. Both institutions are partners of SEARCA in the project “Supporting Smallholder Farmers in Asia and the Pacific Islands Region through Strengthened Agricultural Advisory Services.”

Dr. Santos visited the Land Resources Division of the Secretariat of Pacific Community (SPC) and the Crops Extension Division of the Ministry of Agriculture. He reviewed the progress of the SAAS project and discussed support for the immediate activities in the first semester of 2018.

Composed of 22 member countries in the Pacific, the SPC facilitates the project’s sub-regional activities of the Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services (PIRAS) and country-level actions in Fiji in partnership with the Crops Extension Division of the Ministry of Agriculture. Project activities include capacity development, knowledge sharing, policy dialogues, and learning events in promoting agricultural extension and rural advisory services.

Mr. Gibson Susumu, Extension Officer of SPC and SAAS focal person, provided an update on the current priorities including the development of training curriculum based on the New Extension Learning Kit (NELK) and convening of the Governing Board of PIRAS.

Mr. Jone Sovala, Director of Crops Extension Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, added that the Ministry of Agriculture will organize a national conference of agricultural extension professionals this year.

Dr. Santos also visited some farming communities in Suva that are in need of agricultural and extension services for smallholder farmers but with huge potential for agricultural production. (LB.SantosIII)
ILAR TACKLES GOVERNANCE OF RICE-BASED COMMUNITY INTERVENTION

The governance of a rice-based community intervention (RBCI) in the Philippines as part of the government’s initiatives for agriculture and rural development (ARD) and how this adheres to the community-based development (CBD) concept was tackled by Mr. Glenn Y. Ilar, SEARCA PhD Research Scholar, when he presented the results of his dissertation at the SEARCA Special Graduate Seminar on 24 January 2018.

Titled “Developing a Community-Based Development Framework for Agriculture and Rural Development,” his dissertation recommends a CBD framework for ARD that addresses the gaps identified in the project design and governance of the RBCI.

The framework uses the bottom-up approach where participation of the local people in governance is given prime importance. Moreover, the framework recognizes and addresses the real needs and problems of farmers—that is, they are given the opportunity to create their own solutions for their problems, thus making them lead actors in the development process.

As the first graduate of the PhD in Development Studies program of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), Mr. Ilar received enthusiastic feedback from his fellow students in the program.

Upon completion of his studies, Mr. Ilar resumed his position as Supervising Science Research Specialist at the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) where he contributes to the development of farmer communities through rice science.

SEARCA continues to support its graduate scholars who are seen to play key roles in the development of agriculture in the Southeast Asian region.

SEARCA ALUMNI CONVENE TO DEVELOP JOINT PROJECTS ON ISARD

The officers of the Regional SEARCA Alumni Association from seven countries met at SEARCA on 8-9 January 2018 for a workshop to develop collaborative projects on inclusive and sustainable agricultural and rural development (ISARD).

The workshop was partially funded by the Food Security Center (FSC) of Germany’s University of Hohenheim and brought together alumni officers from Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Timor Leste, and Vietnam.

SEARCA is a strategic partner of the FSC, one of five EXCEED Centers funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Since 1968, SEARCA has been awarding MS and PhD scholarships to Southeast Asian nationals and has more than 1,300 alumni spread in the 11-member countries of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). Many of these alumni have occupied positions of influence in their respective institutions and countries, as university deans, presidents, and state ministers.

In his message at the opening program, Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., SEARCA Director, said the Center sees the RSAA as “a valuable pool of human resources, whom we can call on to support us in our development agenda in the individual countries and the region we mutually serve. You, the alumni, are therefore our best resource and partners, especially in areas in this part of the world where SEARCA’s limited capacities and resources can no longer reach.”

The two-day workshop identified priority areas for collaborative projects in research and capacity building activities including exchange of human resources to serve as resource persons or visiting professors, development of online platform for publications, strategies for engaging the youth in agriculture, utilization of modern technologies to enhance agriculture production, and contributing to SEARCA’s AgriMuseum project.

The RSAA is expected to draw up the detailed proposals for each of these projects by February 2018, with specific individuals or country association assigned to lead in specific tasks.

Formerly called the Regional SEARCA Fellows Association, the RSAA was organized in 1992 to lead in regionalized and integrated efforts of the alumni towards addressing the priority concerns of the region, facilitate the development of linkages among in-country associations of SEARCA alumni, and foster collaborative research and development efforts in the region.

Dr. Saguiguit (sixth from left) and Dr. Maria Cristeta N. Cuaresma (fifth from left), SEARCA Program Head for Graduate Education and Institutional Development, with (from left) Ms. Kamziah Binti Abd Kudus, MASFA President; Dr. Cecilia N. Gascon, SFAP President; Dr. Agustar Asdi, RSAA Vice-President; Dr. Josefina T. Dizon, RSAA President; Dr. Trinh Dinh Thau, Vietnamese SEARCA Alumni Association (VSAA) North Vietnam President; Mr. Nov Vatthanak representing Dr. Kim Vothana, Cambodian SEARCA Scholarship Alumni Association President; Mr. Agustinho Ximenes, SEARCA Alumni Association of Timor-Leste President; Dr. Ricardo Baggarinao, RSAA Executive Director; Dr. Chantaphone Phon-Asa representing Dr. Oudom Phonekampheng, Lao PDR Association President; and Dr. Nguyen Tat Toan representing Dr. Duong Duy Dong, VSAA South Vietnam President.
DILI, Timor-Leste – H. E. Estanislau Aleixo da Silva, Timor-Leste’s Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, welcomed 44 participants and observers to the three-day Executive Forum on Food Security: Leaders in ASEAN Agriculture and Development in Timor-Leste, which kicked off here on 28 February 2018.

The forum participants included middle managers and senior leaders in 12 national agriculture, fisheries, and rural development agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and key faculty members and officials of higher education institutions (HEIs) in agriculture and related fields.

SEARCA organized the forum with the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosae (UNTL), Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), and the SEARCA Alumni Association of Timor-Leste (SAAT) as hosts and co-organizers.

In his message, Minister da Silva underscored the importance of food security for Timor-Leste. He noted that the country needs to invest more in agriculture, citing that food production is not only about agricultural technology but more about empowering the farmers with knowledge in agriculture.

Minister da Silva cited several problems in agricultural and rural development in Timor-Leste. He said government investment in agriculture has been small and thus, more investment is needed in agriculture focused on food production. Almost half of the country’s population is young and the challenge is how to entice these young people to go into agriculture and farming, and make them see agriculture as an enterprise. The key is to provide them with knowledge and opportunities in agriculture. In terms of policy, Timor-Leste has put in place an agriculture and food security policy but a concrete plan to tackle nutrition deficiency is still lacking.

He added that the government is now working on establishing irrigation systems across the country to improve food production, especially on increasing rice harvests. It also launched programs on crop protection, maize production, livestock improvement, and tilapia aquaculture.

The primary need at present, Minister da Silva said, is the provision of training and technical assistance to farmers. He noted that the forum on food security is one step toward improving the knowledge of the participants, who work with the farmers in the country.

He thanked SEARCA, UNTL, and SAAT for their hard work in ensuring that the forum will be organized and implemented smoothly in his country.

Meanwhile, Dr. Francisco Miguel Martins, UNTL Rector, welcomed the participants and lauded the efforts made by the teams from SEARCA and UNTL to organize the forum, which promotes the sharing of knowledge and points of view on agriculture and development, food security, and climate change. These topics, he said, are also the focus of UNTL, the only public university of agriculture in Timor-Leste.

Dr. Martins noted that cooperation has been one of UNTL’s main directions, demonstrated through the implementation of numerous national and international initiatives, in accordance with the University’s strategic plan.

He said such variety of collaborative linkages aim to promote partnerships towards capacity building among the university’s students, faculty members, and administrative staff, with the overall objective of ensuring high quality public higher education, and joint research and scientific production in areas that have been identified as strategic for the university.

He recalled that UNTL and SEARCA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in November 2015 to promote cooperation initiatives in agriculture and development, such as this executive forum. On behalf of UNTL, he thanked SEARCA for its assistance, which began prior to the forum to organize the forum, by providing graduate scholarships and through joint research projects. He stressed that this support for the university’s capital development is key to the stable and sustainable development of his country.

Pathways toward food security are constantly faced by challenges of an ever-increasing population, dwindling natural resource base, and worsening climatic conditions that negatively affect the region’s agriculture sector, and that these challenges demand leaders and executives like the participants to rise above the occasion and make appropriate multilateral decisions and actions, said Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., SEARCA Director, in his message delivered by Dr. Maria Celeste H. Cadiz, Program Head for Knowledge Management.

Dr. Saguiguit thus stressed that the goal of the forum is to develop a cadre of highly competent leaders who are poised to spur agricultural development in Timor-Leste through their respective programs and organizations.

He added that the forum is part of the offerings of SEARCA’s Short-term Training Program under Knowledge Management. It has been tailored to Timor-Leste’s specific context and needs from what SEARCA has been offering since 2013 as a regional course.

The Timor-Leste edition of the forum was led by Dr. Paul S. Teng, a SEARCA Senior Fellow and Managing Director of the National Institute of Education International Pte. Ltd with the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

Other resource persons include Dr. Andrew D. Powell, CEO of Singapore-based Asia Biobusiness; Dr. Nerlita M. Manalili, CEO of Nexus Agribusiness Solutions based in the Philippines; Engr. Samuel M. Contreras, Head for Soil Conservation at the Bureau of Soils and Water Management, Philippine Department of Agriculture; and Mr. Adao Soares Barbosa, UNFCC Focal Point and Director of Climate Change and Biodiversity at UNTL.

Forum management is provided by Dr. Cadiz and Ms. Nova A. Ramos, SEARCA Program Specialist; with UNTL counterparts led by Dr. Eduardo Aniceto Serrão, Vice Rector for International Cooperation and Ms. Ilona Hamilton, Assistant to the Vice Rector; and SAAT counterpart led by its President Mr. Agustinho da Costa Ximenes, Agriculture Program Manager, Catholic Relief Services. (NARamos)
CALAMBA CITY, Philippines—Information officers from Department of Agriculture-Regional Fields Offices honed skills on communicating results of agricultural research at the second Face-to-Face Session held on 9-12 January 2018 under the Information and Knowledge Management (IKM) Mentorship Program: Communicating Agriculture and Fisheries Research for Inclusive and Sustainable Development (CAFRISD) implemented by SEARCA.

The four-day session focused on strengthening the skills of the learner-participants in terms of disseminating and communicating agricultural research results through photography and videography.

Module discussions were conducted in the first two days. Prof. Pamela Joyce M. Eleazar, Mentor on Online and Publications Writing and Production, briefly discussed Module 2: Writing for Dissemination of Agriculture Technology and Research Results, while Prof. Edmund G. Centeno, Mentor on Photography and Audio-visual Writing, tackled some of the topics under Module 3: Photography and Videography in Communicating Agriculture Technology and Research Results. The detailed lessons for said modules were posted on the online sessions.

Exposure visits of the participants included trips to the DA-Agricultural Training Institute (DA-ATI) in Quezon City, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Future Rice Farm and other facilities of the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) in Nueva Ecija.

The activity was spearheaded by the SEARCA Project Development and Technical Services (PDTS) led by Dr. Lope B. Santos III, Unit Head; Ms. Nancy M. Landicho, Program Specialist; and Ms. Imelda L. Batangantang, Program Associate. (MFABangabang)

SEARCA distributes dairy farm equipment to PH cooperatives

Through the Building Capacity and Strengthening Partnership through Carabao Development Program funded by the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC) and implemented by SEARCA, the Center provided cooperatives in the Philippine provinces of Batangas, Cavite, and Bohol with interventions that included dairy production equipment.

The Enterprise Development component of the project aims to provide relevant interventions identified in the recommendations of the Value Chain Analysis Study conducted by SEARCA for PCC covering carabao-based enterprises across the country. The interventions range from knowledge sharing to provision of support services and resources to the cooperative beneficiaries identified by the PCC National Headquarters.

Batangas and Cavite cooperatives

On 13 February 2018, the Board Members of Rosario Dairy Raisers’ Association (RODRA) in Batangas and General Trias Dairy Raisers’ Multi-Purpose Cooperative (GENTRI) in Cavite signed the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) at SEARCA Residence Hotel in Los Baños, Laguna.

The MOA details the responsibilities of SEARCA, PCC, and cooperative beneficiaries. It also specified clauses about the equipment, supplies, tools, and vehicles that the cooperatives will receive as assistance to the enterprise development project titled Forage Conservation and Milk Handling Support for Resilient Carabao-Based Dairy Enterprise in Region IV-A.

The project aims to have available quality feeds throughout the year to improve the reproductive condition of the animals for consistent production and supply of raw milk and to ensure quality level of milk production, collection, and distribution to install a quality-based pricing scheme.

To address the need, RODRA and GENTRI, which has a total of 500 farmer-members, will receive provided with motorcycles with sidecars and milk analyzers, was on 23 February 2018.

Bohol cooperative

Bohol Dairy Cooperative (BODACO) signed the MOA with SEARCA and PCC on 9 November 2017 for the project titled Provision of Equipment and Materials to Bohol Dairy Outlet (The Dairy Box-Bohol), which aims to provide the growing market demand for milk at the Chocolate Hills Tourism Highway.

On 15 February 2018, BODACO received at The Dairy Box-Bohol the initial items, which included one stainless table, four tables, two side tables and chairs, two upright chillers, two chest type freezers, one unit of an 18-plate capacity oven, 48 stainless plates, and one air conditioning unit. The remaining items, such as gelato ice cream maker, soft ice cream machine, heavy duty mixer and teller machine, will be handed over in April 2018.
20 SEARCA scholars complete experimental design training

SEARCA scholars enrolled at universities in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand participated in the Training Workshop on Experimental Designs and Data Analysis for Researches in Agriculture held at SEARCA last 8-12 January 2018.

The training workshop was partially funded by the Food Security Center (FSC), based at the University of Hohenheim in Stuttgart, Germany.

The training provided the students an overview of the various experiment designs, surveys, and appropriate statistical analyses of data. The scholars experienced a holistic learning experience through a mix of lectures, exercises, and field visit to the Institute of Plant Breeding’s Experimental Farm inside the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB).

Knowledge gained from the training is expected to help the scholars develop a framework of their research with main focus on their objectives/hypotheses and with keen knowledge of the situations/conditions under which they are to conduct their research.

At the end of the training, the scholars expressed their gratitude to SEARCA as the training would definitely help them in their current and future research endeavors.

Lecturers came from a team of experts from the UPLB Institute of Statistics under the College of Arts and Sciences, while facilitators and coordinators came from the UPLB Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Extension.

SEARCA is a strategic partner of FSC, one of five EXCEED Centers funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Access to published agri papers on Asia expanded online

SEARCA continues to expand the reach of its key knowledge resources in Asian agriculture and development through globally recognized academic databases online.

These databases or search engines share an illustrious history of providing library resources, mainly to academic institutions. However, the increasing availability of the internet over the years enabled these resources to be directly available to individual internet users. The world’s countless researches and other academic collections are now available online by subscription or for free through these database services.

Similarly, SEARCA’s select academic publications have been made available through online database services over the years to make knowledge resources on Asia easily accessible to wider audiences. Papers published in the Asian Journal of Agriculture and Development (AJAD), SEARCA’s international refereed journal, and other SEARCA publications can be accessed online through AgEcon Search (ageconsearch.umn.edu), Research Papers in Economics (RePec) (repec.org), the Emerging Sources Citation Index of the Web of Science (ESCI WoS) (clarivate.com), and recently, EBSCO Information Services (ebsco.com).

AJAD publishes papers reviewed by globally renowned experts. It provides information and analysis on topics within the broad scope of agriculture and development. Published twice a year in June and December, AJAD promotes greater awareness on the latest findings in research, state-of-the-art technologies, new methodologies, and policy concerns in inclusive and sustainable agricultural and rural development.

Articles published in AJAD result from empirical, policy-oriented, or institutional development studies, as well as articles of perspectives on agriculture and development, political economy of agricultural development, and trade issues.

Since 2004, all AJAD articles have been open access from the AJAD website. Those interested to publish in AJAD may find the submission guidelines and submit their articles in ajad.searca.org.

Also indexed in the academic databases are SEARCA’s Discussion Papers, a series of scholarly articles aimed to disseminate information on current trends or researches and inspire discussion between the authors and other stakeholders in the same field of interest. SEARCA’s Discussion Paper Series and the rest of its publications may be accessed from the SEARCA website.

SEARCA publications are a part of its broader Knowledge Management (KM) Program that promotes a learning culture, knowledge creation, and knowledge sharing and use among key actors in agricultural and rural development in Southeast Asia. The current KM Program aims to link science, practice, and policy toward food and nutrition security and rural poverty reduction in the region. (MBCadiz)
Value adding revives town’s wasting calamansi industry

The large contribution of Oriental Mindoro province to calamansi production in the Philippines has earned it the title “Calamansi King” of the Southwestern Tagalog region. Among the province’s 14 towns, Victoria has the highest volume of production and average yield as well as the biggest area planted to calamansi, a citrus widely produced in the country.

In the past decades, however, oversupply of fresh calamansi produce in the market during peak production periods caused prices to plummet and fruits to rot in many farms. Farmers have been discouraged to maintain their calamansi trees and shifted to producing other fruits. Area devoted to calamansi production gradually declined and the likely threat of continuous decline was foreseen in succeeding years. This scenario posed the need to revitalize the calamansi industry of Victoria.

From the benchmarking performed as part of the initial activities of the project Revitalizing Calamansi Industry in Victoria, Oriental Mindoro through Strengthening Linkages Among Farmers, LGUs, NGOs, SUCs, CSOs and the Private Sector, primary problems, constraints, and needs of the calamansi industry were identified.

The project was a collaboration among Mindoro State College of Agriculture and Technology (MinSCAT), SEARCA, and the local government unit (LGU) of Victoria. Applying SEARCA’s Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development (ISARD) model, potential solutions were identified, focusing on the rehabilitation of pilot calamansi farms in 19 barangays of the municipality.

The most pressing problem raised by the farmers was the seasonal supply of the calamansi fruits that caused market glut during peak season, resulting in low price. During this period, price ranged from PHP 5 to PHP 8 per kilogram. Thus, farmers opted not to harvest their fruits because labor cost and transportation would unlikely be recovered. Given this situation, there was a need to explore different marketing possibilities for calamansi, both in fresh and processed forms.

Another constraint identified was the unstable demand of big traders within the province, prompting efforts to enhance market linkage for calamansi outside of the province.

In view of these, major activities of the ISARD Piloting Project included the setting up of a calamansi processing enterprise. The aim was to increase the potential of processing calamansi into products that could offer additional and alternative income sources, particularly when there is marketable fruit surplus.

The processing enterprise that was set up has been operated by the Victoria Kalamansi Farmers Federation (VKFF). Initially, the farmers that constituted VKFF identified calamansi concentrate and ready to drink (RTD) calamansi juice as the product forms. The farmers were then trained on the processing of these products as part of the project’s capacity building component, which was facilitated by MinSCAT’s Technology and Product Development Center (TPDC).

VKFF uses the Victoria LGU’s shared service facility to process calamansi. The processed calamansi concentrate is sold within and outside of the province in 350 ml and 500 ml bottles, and bulk volumes are sold in large containers for repacking by distributors. During its initial months of processing from September to October 2017, VKFF was able to produce and market an average of 3,380 liters of calamansi concentrate per month.

VKFF is a federation of 19 upland farmers’ associations representing 19 upland barangays of Victoria. Calamansi is one of the major crops raised by members of the federation. Through the facilitation of LGU Victoria and MinSCAT under SEARCA’s ISARD Piloting Project, VKFF has been registered with the Department of Labor and Employment since July 2016.

The newly found hope among farmers to earn more from calamansi has enticed more farmers to venture into the crop and expand production. Others who previously raised calamansi but shifted to other fruit crops are now encouraged to plant calamansi again.

The calamansi concentrate is sold not only to contract buyers from neighboring provinces of Batangas and Laguna and even Metro Manila, but to local retailers and consumers within Oriental Mindoro. The products are available in popular outlets such as the Grand Pasalubong Center at Xentro Mall in Calapan City and in farmers’ stalls at the Producers’ Weekend Market or Merkado sa Kapitolyo at the Provincial Capitol grounds.

Processed calamansi products have indeed opened new markets and extended the marketing season of the fruits. The farmers involved are now reaping the benefits of engaging in calamansi value-addition enterprises.
Moving forward with school gardens project

MANILA, Philippines—Representatives of SEARCA, the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), and the Department of Education-Development Division of Laguna (DepEd-Laguna) provided updates on the recently concluded Participatory Action Research on School- and Community-based Food and Nutrition Program for Literacy, Poverty Reduction, and Sustainable Development (SGHP) to the DepEd Central Office executives and senior staff on 2 February 2018.

They discussed the scaling-up approach of the SHGP and upcoming knowledge events on school gardens, namely, the International Conference on School Gardens and Training of Trainers on Scaling up the School-plus-home Gardens in Southeast Asia. These back-to-back events will be held on 16-21 April 2018 at SEARCA and will involve resource persons and participants from DepEd Central and Regional offices.

Both events are an offshoot of the SHGP, which was approved by the SEAMEO High Officials for dissemination in Southeast Asia.

Themed “Leveraging the Multifunctionality of School Gardens” the international conference will draw lessons from the different models of school-plus-home gardens.

On other hand, the training of trainers will serve as a platform for exchanging knowledge, experiences, and success stories that shall strengthen implementation of similar School-plus-home garden projects already being undertaken or to be initiated in the SEAMEO member states.

The SEARCA-UPLB-DepEd Laguna team was received by officers and senior staff of the DepEd Office of the Undersecretary for Legal Affairs, the School Health Division Office, and the Office of External Partnerships.

SEARCA was represented by Dr. Bessie M. Burgos and Mr. Henry M. Custodio, Program Head and Program Specialist of the Research and Development Department, respectively.

The UPLB group consisted of Dr. Blesilda M. Calub and Dr. Ma. Theresa M. Talavera, of the Agricultural Systems Institute and the Institute of Human Nutrition and Food, respectively.

Representing the DepEd-Laguna was the Education Program Specialist for Agriculture at the Department of Education, Mr. Lamberto C. Perolina. (HMCustodio)

SEARCA distributes/ from page 12

Ms. Nancy M. Landicho, Program Specialist and Officer-in-Charge of SEARCA’s Project Development and Technical Services (PDTS), presented SEARCA’s thrust on inclusive and sustainable agricultural rural development (ISARD) and discussed how the Center provides technical assistance to achieve its goals of ensuring growth and development in the agriculture sector. Such technical assistance is through projects funded by international organizations as well as Philippine government agencies like PCC.

Ms. Guillerma Abay-abay, PCC USF Carabao-based Enterprise Development (CBED) Coordinator, encouraged the farmer beneficiaries to take this opportunity to earn more. She hopes that, through hard work and unity of the cooperative members, their quality of lives will continue to improve.

SEARCA and PCC’s efforts were recognized by BODACO during the turnover ceremony and were both given Certificates of Appreciation. Ms. Lita Aranas, BODACO Chair, said they are very grateful to SEARCA and PCC, “never in my wildest dream that we will receive such blessings and now it is realized.” She added that they will give their best to take care of the equipment they received so that the next generation can still use it. Meanwhile, Ms. Jesusa Danila, BODACO Vice-Chair, mentioned that they will work hard to increase their income through the equipment provided.

Other representatives from SEARCA during the awarding ceremony include Ms. Sarah Grace Quiñones, Project Coordinator, and Ms. Elma M. Banzuela, Purchasing Assistant.

On 1 March 2018, partial distribution of items for Lamac Multi-Purpose Cooperative (The Dairy Box-Cebu) were held at Pinamungajan, Lamac, Cebu. SEARCA was represented by Ms. Landicho, Ms. Quinones, and Ms. Marie Cris P. Mendoza, Property and Supply Assistant. PCC USF were represented by its Center Director, Dr. Caro Salces. Ms. Guillerma Abay-abay facilitated the Awarding Ceremony. (SGLQuinones)

SEARCA shares school gardens project experience


The CODHEND seminar also introduced The Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN), the central kitchen school-feeding model, and capacity building of leaders, among other important topics.

The presentation was based on the results and lessons learned from the Participatory Action Research on School- and Community-based Food and Nutrition Program for Literacy, Poverty Reduction, and Sustainable Development also known as the School and Home Gardens Project (SHGP).

The SHGP was jointly implemented by SEARCA, the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), and the Department of Education (DepED)-Laguna Division from January 2016 to June 2017, with funding from SEARCA and ADB through the SEAMEO College.

Dr. Bessie M. Burgos, SEARCA Program Head for Research and Development, discussed the rationale, conceptual and operational frameworks, design, and key findings and accomplishments of the project. She concluded her session by announcing two important back-to-back events related to school and home gardens, namely: International Conference on School Plus Home Gardens and Training of Trainers on Scaling-up the School Plus Home Gardens in Southeast Asia, which will be held on 16-21 April 2018 at SEARCA.

There was high interest in the SHGP model among the participants, especially in the overall implementation guidelines, the edible landscaping component, and the links of the school gardens to the school feeding program and the households.

With Dr. Burgos at the meeting was Mr. Shun-Nan Chang, SEARCA Visiting Research Fellow from the University of California. (BMBurgos)
Vietnamese top 2017 SEARCA Photo Contest

Photos by Vietnamese photographers bested 1,452 other entries and bagged the top 3 prizes in the 2017 SEARCA Photo Contest with the theme *Agriculture for All: Moving forward on agricultural and rural development in Southeast Asia.*

The selection process for the best photos was in three stages—international scholars of SEARCA and staff were involved in shortlisting the entries, and external judges selected the three best photos of the year. The judges included international and Filipino photographers and professionals in the creative industry.

As a curatorial endeavor, the photo contest collected images on the current progress in Southeast Asian agriculture, focusing on inclusive growth, sustainability, and innovations.

Photo submissions showed the diversities and similarities of landscapes and peoples of Southeast Asia, as countries individually and collectively improve the agriculture sector, still the biggest source of livelihood for majority of the region’s population.

The photo by Tien Ho Anh, which emerged as first place, focused on a woman pleasantly contemplating on a seemingly bountiful cropping season as she winnows harvested rice to separate grain from chaff. The second placer photo by Ho Dang Khoa is a colorful spread, elevating the common look of a traditional vegetable market; while the third placer photo by Vu Thanh depicts simple fishnet mending almost as an artwork.

Lensman Kyaw Soe Latt of Myanmar bagged the People’s Choice Award, which won by online voting. His photo of a group of Akhar women passing through the paddy fields to their work was taken in Kyinge Tong, Shan State, Myanmar.

The four winning photos received cash prizes and will be featured in the various regular publications of SEARCA. (Report from MBCadiz)