

**Enabling Institutions for Agricultural and Rural Development
in a Globalizing Southeast Asia**

**NINTH FIVE-YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN (FYs 2009/2010-2013/2014)
SEAMEO Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research
in Agriculture (SEARCA)**

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Enabling Institutions for Agricultural and Rural Development in a Globalizing Southeast Asia

NINTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN (FYs 2009/2010-2013/2014) SEAMEO Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA)

I. The Challenges of Agricultural and Rural Development in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia has attained remarkable economic and social progress in the past two decades. Yet, some countries in the region remain poor and highly dependent on agriculture and natural resources. As we approach the second decade of the 21st century, Southeast Asia faces multiple challenges of rural poverty and food insecurity, rising energy and food prices, growth of agro-fuels production, biosafety and biotechnology, and the emergence of new value chains and the increasing integration of traditional ones amidst globalization and global policy shifts on one hand, and dwindling natural resources, biodiversity management, and changing climate on the other.

Agriculture and rural development priorities have included the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations, particularly those pertaining to the eradication of poverty and hunger. Scientists are advocating biotechnology to address food insecurity as governments strive to ensure that the technologies adopted are environmentally sound and safe to human health. Even as agricultural research continues to advance science and technology, it is taking a more holistic view, addressing human health and policy agenda setting, while asserting and striving to better understand the role of rural institutions.

Experts are raising concern not just on water scarcity and floods on one hand, but also on the impact of water quality, specifically agricultural runoff, and industrial and household effluents on productivity and the environment – calling for appropriate policy responses at national and local levels. International organizations and governments keep watch over threats to human health and societies posed by emerging animal-borne diseases and unsafe practices throughout the food chain. Climate change has been taking its toll on agriculture and natural resource management; while the rural poor bear the brunt of rising food and oil prices as their implications to tariffs and trade put pressure on the larger economy.

Enhancing the resilience of the rural poor and most Southeast Asian nations in the face of increasing vulnerability in a fragile and unpredictable environment calls for a careful balancing act among agriculture and rural development researchers, policymakers, local governments, and primary resource users – where education, research, training and knowledge services play key enabling roles.

It is in this context that SEARCA asserts its important role in catalyzing agricultural and rural development in Southeast Asia, and has thus laid out its plans for addressing the relevant issues and pressing problems in these areas that confront the region.

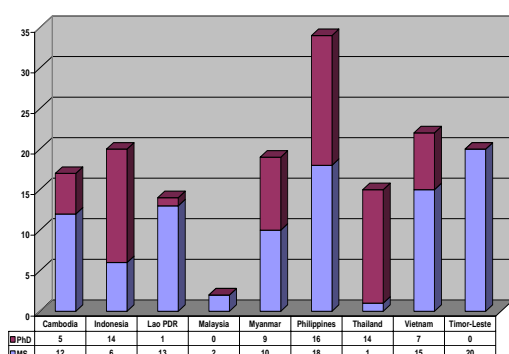
II. SEARCA's Last Five Years and Next

In the course of its Eighth Five-Year Plan, SEARCA has gained visibility in advancing its priority thrusts of agricultural competitiveness and natural resource management (NRM) in its research, conferences, short-term training, and knowledge products. During this period, SEARCA earned its own brand of excellence and relevance, imprinted by its policy roundtables and executive forums, regular agriculture and development seminars (ADSS) and international conferences, and proactive capture and sharing of information and knowledge through online materials and publications. Graduate scholarship remains as its well-established niche in the region.

Research and Development and Training Activities FYs 2004/2005 to 2007/2008

| ACTIVITY | FISCAL YEAR | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2004/ 2005 | 2005/ 2006 | 2006/ 2007 | 2007/ 2008 |
| 1. Seminars/Conferences/ Roundtable and Consultative Meetings | 2 | 4 | 9 | 4 |
| 2. Training Courses/ Learning Events | 5 | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| 3. Policy Roundtable (CMLV) | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| 4. Agriculture and Development Seminar Series (ADSS) | 44 | 44 | 36 | 51 |
| 5. Seed Fund for Research and Training | | 7 | 9 | 9 |
| 6. SEARCA Travel Grant | | | 11 | 16 |
| 7. Research Project/ Studies | 4 | 7 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. Visiting Research Fellows | | | 3 | 2 |
| 9. Adjunct Fellows | | | 4 | 3 |
| 10. Senior Fellows | | | | 1 |

Total Number of Scholarship Grants
FY2004/2005 to FY2008/2009



The last five years saw the Center focusing its limited resources on value-adding activities that would create the greatest impact. It enhanced its scholarship program comprising the sandwich program, the academic bridging program, PhD research scholarships and travel grants. It offered seed funds for research and training that has contributed to building research capacity in the region. It employed cost-sharing schemes in offering executive forums and training in NRM and emerging issues, among others.

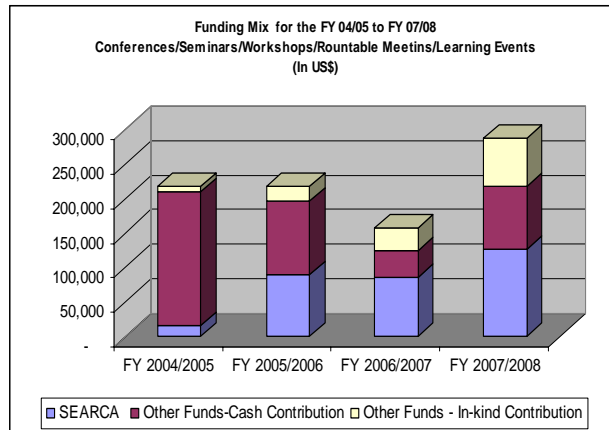
In developing publications on agriculture and rural development in Southeast Asia, the Center engaged in collaborative arrangements with centers of excellence and reputable publishers. Overall, SEARCA's track record in linking up with donors and collaborators and leveraging its smaller contributions for sponsored projects has been noted.

New modes of collaboration have evolved for SEARCA's programs and activities, resulting in lower

Knowledge Products FYs 2004/2005 to 2007/2008

| KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES DEVELOPED | FISCAL YEAR | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2004/ 2005 | 2005/ 2006 | 2006/ 2007 | 2007/ 2008 |
| Journal | 2 | | 1 | 2 |
| Books | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| Primers | | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Monographs | 7 | 16 | 4 | 2 |
| Proceedings | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Discussion Papers | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Newsletters | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Policy Briefs | 4 | 8 | 7 | 8 |
| Pamphlets, Brochure and Other Promotional Materials | 4 | 8 | 17 | 30 |
| Audiovisual presentations | | | | 4 |
| CD-based publications | | | | 10 |
| Websites | 5 | 4 | 7 | 10 |

actual financial outlay by the Center. In various instances, the Center was able to engage a number of partners by requesting them to provide direct funding for some participants and resource persons of activities such as conferences, workshops, training courses, and executive forums as well as by providing counterpart funding for accommodation and meals, activity venues, and other logistical arrangements, among others. Such in-kind assistance increasingly accounts for a sizeable portion of the total funding for SEARCA's activities, particularly conferences and learning events.



This Ninth Five-Year Plan sets out the vision, mission, and goals of SEARCA for the period July 2009 - June 2014 and outlines the major programs, objectives and activities that the Center will pursue and undertake during these five years. It will be the basis for the development of annual operational plans of each office, department, and unit in the Center, and will be reviewed annually and revised as needed.

Compared to the Eighth Five-Year Plan, this Plan articulates more clearly SEARCA's thematic focus on agricultural competitiveness, aiming for a better balance with the current slant on NRM. The Plan also fine-tunes the Center's NRM focus according to emerging issues and challenges. For clearer accountability, it slightly re-positions SEARCA's organizational strategy embodied in its vision and mission statements, in relation to overarching desired outcomes of food security and poverty reduction in the region. The Plan further includes a slight reorganization that makes for enhanced synergy among the Center's core programs and focused generation of resources to support them.

Another key feature of this Plan is an effort to regionalize major facets of its operations. The Center will articulate this through the composition of its staff, the focus of its programs and activities, and approaches/modalities it will employ to expand its reach to stakeholders, clients, and beneficiaries in the Southeast Asian region.

Overall, the Plan takes off from SEARCA's recovery and strides attained in the period July 2004 to June 2009 towards reasserting its leadership as enabler of SEAMEO member countries in addressing contemporary challenges in agriculture and rural development.

III. Vision and Mission

VISION

*Leading Enabler in the Science and Practice of Agriculture
and Rural Development for Southeast Asia*

SEARCA is envisioned to meet contemporary development challenges and provide leadership in enabling an environment for sustainable agricultural and rural development in Southeast Asia.

It helps equip key actors and organizations in agriculture and rural development to address contemporary issues and challenges that would ultimately redound to a robust yet sustainable agricultural economy, made manifest in the improved livelihoods and well being of agricultural and rural communities living in harmony with their ecosystems.

MISSION

We are committed to building the capacities of Southeast Asian institutions working toward agricultural and rural development through graduate scholarship, research and development, and knowledge management.

SEARCA builds human, social and institutional capital in Southeast Asia by providing opportunities for high-quality graduate education, research, scholarship, training, knowledge exchange, and Project development and management in agriculture and rural development.

Decision-making, education, research, and action in agriculture and rural development require strong institutions and science-based knowledge and wisdom as their foundation. Within SEAMEO's overall mission of regional cooperation, SEARCA strives to build leaders and institutions in the region for rational and proactive decision-making and programs that address its contemporary challenges in agricultural and rural development.

IV. Goals and Strategies

SEARCA aims to:

1. *Advance rational management of natural resources and agricultural competitiveness toward agricultural and rural development (ARD). Toward this end, it will:*
 - a. Develop a strong cadre of agriculture professionals;
 - b. Conduct and support cutting-edge research that demonstrates the important link between rational natural resource management and agricultural competitiveness and poverty reduction and food security; and
 - c. Promote a learning culture, knowledge use, and knowledge creation among decision-makers, leaders, scholars, researchers, and key actors in agriculture and rural development.

2. *Enhance its organizational credibility and viability. In so doing, SEARCA will:*
 - a. Develop highly relevant ARD programs along SEARCA's mandate in Southeast Asia;
 - b. Regionalize major facets of Center operations;
 - c. Forge and strengthen strategic partnerships, alliances, networks, and linkages;
 - d. Ensure its long-term financial viability through responsible fiscal management and strategic resource generation; and
 - e. Enhance its operational efficiency and productivity.

V. Thematic Focus

A. Natural Resource Management

Natural resource management (NRM) combines economics, policy and governance, and science to study, manage and restore natural resources and ecosystems. The field is applicable in a wide array of ecosystems, including agricultural and rural areas, to sustain and support plant and animal communities and in addressing problems associated with the use and protection of our natural resources. It helps balance the needs of people and economy with the ability of ecosystems to support soil, water, forests, wildlife, fish, and recreational resources.

Agriculture is naturally anchored on natural resources. A degraded or poorly managed natural resource base will constrain agricultural productivity. While NRM in relation to agriculture could cover a wide range of topics, the Center prioritizes 1) the appropriate management of land and water resources; 2) biodiversity management for food security; and 3) risk assessment and the impacts of climate change on agro-biodiversity.

Rapid land degradation caused by poor water management, deteriorating irrigation and drainage infrastructures, and environmental policies that hinder investments in land improvement schemes threaten the performance of the agricultural sector and, consequently, rural livelihoods. Water resources, by themselves, likewise call for appropriate measures of use and protection. It is the lifeblood of most ecosystems and resources.

Biodiversity management, on the other hand, will be along resource management and planning, particularly biodiversity resources, and their links to poverty alleviation and food security in light of global changes, i.e., climate change.

Furthermore, the Center prioritizes on risk assessment and the impacts of climate change on agro-biodiversity, which are seen to have significant relevance in addressing food security and poverty reduction in the region. Risk assessment is the establishment of the qualitative or quantitative value of a risk related to a situation or a known threat. SEARCA would look at risks associated with new technologies as well as those posed by climate change on resources, ecosystems, or particular situations. Results of the studies would serve as inputs to policy and institutional arrangements for more long-term impacts and wider coverage in poverty reduction and food security in Southeast Asia.

B. Agricultural Competitiveness

In the context of SEARCA's development mandate, agricultural competitiveness is defined as the sustained ability of a country's agriculture sector to participate and compete in a given domestic or foreign market. At the sector level, agricultural competitiveness is affected by factors that are endogenous and exogenous to the industry—production technology, infrastructure development, domestic and international markets and marketing environment, and R&D and policy environment, among others. The competitiveness of a nation's specific sector in international markets is clearly related to the relative quality of its products and the quantity of resources available to that sector in the country.

SEARCA strives to address agricultural competitiveness mindful of food security and rural poverty alleviation as overriding goals above revenue generation by big business. Along this line, the concept of agricultural competitiveness is intrinsically linked to natural resource endowment and management, and hence to rural people, their livelihoods and rural growth. The development, resilience and sustainability of the rural economy are greatly anchored on their abilities to produce products and services that meet market requirements, from their management of available natural resources. All together, these are the key factors and contributors to poverty reduction and food security among developing countries of Southeast Asia.

SEARCA emphasizes, among the many aspects that fall within the realm of agricultural competitiveness, four focal concerns, namely, 1) technology management; 2) trade and investment; and 3) policy reforms and institutions, and 4) support services, which were identified to have the most significant bearing on agricultural and rural growth. Technology management relates to both product and production improvement for quality and cost efficiency. Product quality and production efficiency directly determine the agriculture sector's competitiveness in both the domestic and international markets. Trade and investment meanwhile provide the incentives and impetus for technology (product) development. Agricultural competitiveness also calls for strengthening policies and institutions that deal with rural poverty, facilitate and enhance access to social and economic infrastructure, and ensure effective governance.

Thus, SEARCA, within the realm of public-private sector partnerships, prioritizes research and capacity building initiatives relating to resource access and rural economic growth, agricultural policies and trade regimes, and agricultural support services. Moreover, emerging issues dealing with strengthening institutional capacity and enhancing knowledge management are also given utmost priority.

VI. Strategic Framework

As leading enabler in the science and practice of agriculture and rural development for Southeast Asia, SEARCA engages and partners with top experts, scientists, and centers of excellence toward instilling in ARD scholars, decision-makers, researchers and practitioners science-based knowledge that informs their respective programs and policies in SEAMEO-member countries. SEARCA will do this in 2009-2014 by implementing four core programs on Graduate Scholarship, Research and Development, Knowledge Management, and Project Development and Management

along its thematic focus on natural resource management and agricultural competitiveness slanted for rural poverty alleviation and food security.

Toward significant impact on ARD in the region, SEARCA focuses on influencing leaders and centers of excellence in Southeast Asia. These key actors and organizations can multiply any value added by their participation in the Center's programs and activities through the farther and deeper reaches of their decisions, policies, and programs in academe and development in their respective countries.

The Center will assert its crosscutting, interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary problem-based mandate along its thematic thrusts, customizing its capacity and institution-building programs according to SEAMEO member countries' unique ecosystems and climate, cultures, and agricultural economies. It will steer these core programs through a management strategy that features regionalized operations, strategic partnerships, alliances, networks, and linkages, long-term financial viability through responsible fiscal management and strategic resource generation, and operational efficiency and productivity.

Figure 1 summarizes SEARCA's framework for its Ninth Five-Year Plan.



Figure 1. Framework of SEARCA's Ninth Five-Year Plan, 2009-2014

VII. Programs, Objectives and Strategies

A. GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

A strong cadre of agriculture professionals

SEARCA's main mandate is to assist in producing high quality human resources in agriculture for the SEAMEO region to strengthen their institutions that would propel regional economic growth. For SEARCA to continuously and effectively do this in the face of complex global challenges, it has to vigorously look for ways to support young and highly qualified nationals to acquire excellent graduate education that will not only buffer the impact of a graying workforce and fill in the skills gap, but also take on the cudgels of leadership as their more senior colleagues leave the workplace.

As the more senior alumni move on towards retirement, there is a need to continuously develop young and high-caliber human resources to take on important leadership responsibilities from where the senior alumni left off. Thus, in the next five years, SEARCA, through its Graduate Scholarship Department, shall implement activities aimed at achieving the following objectives:

Objective 1. *Provide more opportunities for highly qualified nationals of SEAMEO member countries to gain top-quality graduate education through scholarships toward masters and doctorate degrees in agriculture and related sciences*

SEARCA always believes that highly competent agriculture professionals are very important determinants to achieving success in agricultural development. Through its graduate scholarship program, SEARCA has been able to produce more than a 1,000 such professionals. Over the past number of years, a significant number of SEARCA alumni occupy top positions and majority is serving their respective countries as academicians, technical experts, and research staff.

Strategies

1.1 Provide more graduate scholarships and grants. SEARCA will offer more academic and research scholarship grants as well as academic bridging programs to allow a greater number of Southeast Asian agriculture professionals to obtain masters and doctorate degrees from leading agriculture universities within and outside the region.

The Center will support scholars who will apply for academic programs and research grants towards equipping their respective institutions and countries in natural resource management and agricultural competitiveness, with specific focus on land and water resource management, biodiversity management for food security, risk assessment and the impacts of climate change on agro-biodiversity, environmental economics, land and water governance, and related fields most relevant to Southeast Asia's challenges.

- 1.2 Explore and implement new program modalities.** SEARCA will explore, coordinate, and implement new program modalities with partner universities in Southeast Asia, Europe, and other regions to address the varying needs of SEAMEO member countries and enrich the scholars' graduate programs through scholarships focused on particular fields of specialization along SEARCA's thematic thrusts. These will include sandwich programs, student exchange programs, and joint and dual degree programs.

Such schemes will showcase North-South and South-South collaboration in human resource development and capacity building for food security and poverty alleviation.

- 1.3 Establish linkage with new networks and enhance relationships with existing partners within and outside Southeast Asia.** SEARCA will connect with new networks within and outside Southeast Asia and maintain its relationship with existing networks of academic institutions, University Consortium and alumni associations as well as with relevant agencies and government institutions to provide avenues for the promotion of its scholarship program and services, and increase opportunities for joint projects.

- 1.4. Monitor and evaluate the outcomes and impacts of graduate scholarship at SEARCA.** Part and parcel of providing Graduate Scholarship in ARD in the region, SEARCA will track its fellows to assess its contribution to their capacity development and contribution to their respective institutions and national programs.

Objective 2. *Facilitate the provision of appropriate training for enhanced research capacities of SEARCA scholars and to prepare them for higher management responsibilities when they return to their mother institutions.*

Data show that most of the SEARCA alumni are given higher responsibilities and assume bigger roles upon their return to their home institutions. SEARCA feels that it is but appropriate to equip its graduates with the necessary skills, tools, and techniques that will prepare them to efficiently and effectively carry out the more difficult and challenging tasks ahead through customized training and participation in scientific forum, conferences and seminars.

Strategies

- 2.1 Facilitate the provision of customized training.** In coordination with appropriate units within and outside the Center, SEARCA will provide opportunities for customized training to its senior scholars as well as to SEARCA alumni to prepare them for leadership and management roles as well as enhance technical knowledge and skills in the performance of their respective lines of work.

- 2.2 Support the dissemination of scholars' and alumni outputs and achievements.** SEARCA will provide avenues for its scholars, alumni, and other grantees to disseminate results of scientific researches vital to agriculture and rural development. SEARCA will support activities that will keep the scholars and alumni abreast of new skills, techniques and scientific findings in their field through attendance and presentation of papers in the

Center's agriculture and development seminar series as well as in national, regional and international conferences.

Objective 3. *Provide assistance to higher education institutions and catalyze collaboration in their efforts to produce graduates who are globally competitive and who adequately meet the demands of the labor market*

In this highly competitive world, agricultural universities cannot afford to lag behind. They must be able to produce the right graduates for the right jobs. A strong graduate curriculum in agriculture must aim to teach the right mix of knowledge and skills needed by the graduates to face and respond to the challenges of development. SEARCA consistently supports efforts to enhance and strengthen the agriculture curricula of Southeast Asian universities through capacity-building activities, grants, and facilitation of collaborative arrangements between and among agriculture universities and faculties. Such support aims to build up their institutions to ensure that graduates of these universities are highly competitive and match the demands of the labor market.

Strategies

- 3.1 Match suitable academic degree programs of scholars with HRD needs of each SEAMEO member country.** In order to address the need to meet the demands of the labor market, SEARCA, in coordination with the Ministries of Education, will determine the specific agricultural HRD needs of each SEAMEO member country and coordinate with relevant universities for suitable academic programs to match such needs.
- 3.2 Support the conduct of studies on different educational systems of universities in different regions of the world.** In order to determine feasible cross-border academic activities that would lead to more specially designed programs between two or more universities, SEARCA will support the conduct of studies that examine the different educational systems of universities in Southeast Asia vis-à-vis those in Europe, and other regions in the world.
- 3.3 Support continuing agriculture curriculum enhancement and strengthening in Southeast Asian universities.** In order that Southeast Asian universities produce graduates who are globally competitive, SEARCA commits itself to support activities leading to the enhancement and strengthening of the agriculture curriculum. It will encourage development of innovative, interdisciplinary and inter-institutional programs and courses in NRM and agriculture that are problem based, like risk management in agriculture in response to changing climate, land and water governance, agricultural biotechnology, among others.

The Center will further move forward its **Special Projects on Enhancement and Strengthening of Agriculture Curricula in Southeast Asia**; and on-site capacity building and **curriculum strengthening assistance program for Timor Leste**. The proposed projects aim to catalyze the enhancement/improvement, modification and strengthening of agriculture curricula of institutions of higher education in ASEAN in order to be more responsive to the changing times; as well as strengthen the capacity of the National University of Timor Leste to offer agriculture graduate courses through

curriculum and human resource development programs for faculty and researchers. This includes facilitating faculty exchange and mentoring programs between universities in Europe and SEAMEO member countries and within the latter.

The Center will explore cross-country twinning arrangements between agriculture faculties that exploit online modalities blended with residency in separate campuses. This is to enable graduate students to take the best advantage of the faculties and facilities offered across institutions. At the same time, such collaborative arrangements open up avenues for synergy in academic programs across SEAMEO countries.

- 3.4 Provide grants for professorial chairs.** SEARCA will award professorial chairs to recognize outstanding achievements of agriculture faculty and researchers and boost the competitive edge of leading agricultural universities in Southeast Asia. Specifically, it will favor professorial chairs addressing contemporary and crosscutting issues and challenges in NRM and agricultural competitiveness.

B. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Cutting-edge research

Agriculture and rural development, which have grown more dynamic and have evolved in unpredictable ways over the years, continue to be basic instruments for poverty reduction and food security, particularly in Southeast Asia. It is therefore imperative that investments in knowledge generation through innovative scientific research remain at par with these changes and lead to improvement in the well-being of rural societies through the creation of an enabling environment for growth, i.e., competitive agriculture, a sustainably managed natural resource base, and empirically based-policies.

Research and development at SEARCA will build an environment and culture of research and science-based investigations through a number of modalities which would generally include co-implementation with national, regional, and international partners. This allows SEARCA to catalyze research and access external experts while at the same time build research capacities in the region.

SEARCA will spearhead research initiatives toward articulating policy directions that would lead to a highly viable agriculture sector while addressing pressing and emergent environmental concerns. Rather than focusing solely on technical aspects of various agriculture issues, SEARCA's researches will look at policy and institutional concerns that can serve to offer a holistic perspective of the subject matter. The Center's researches will serve as bridge between science and policy, with a view to enriching policies and decisions employing tools of science and empirical data.

SEARCA research and related initiatives will focus on issues of regional importance and scope. As such, these will be multi-country in nature and will have space for various perspectives and contexts of its member countries.

Objective 1. *Conduct, coordinate, and promote appropriate and relevant ARD research that promotes agricultural competitiveness and sound natural resource management*

Quality and timely research remains as the most important means of adding to the body of knowledge in any field of endeavor. It has also been proven to be a necessary engine for development. That choices and decisions generally have wide-ranging and long-term impacts, particularly in promoting agricultural competitiveness and sound natural resource management, highlights the need for their sound empirical bases. Research should be nuanced as well to respond to the varying contexts and needs of countries and stakeholders in Southeast Asia to ensure even greater relevance.

Along these lines, SEARCA will address emerging research issues such as those relating to inter-sectoral water allocation and water governance, vulnerability and sustainable management of biodiversity, mitigating and adapting to climate change-related risks, biofuel development for a balanced food, feed and fuel requirement, value chain analysis for agricultural product competitiveness, and food safety. It is understood that studies on policies and institutions, as well as the publication and dissemination of research findings and outputs, will be inherent components of all research activities. These research initiatives will not necessarily touch on only a single thrust or theme emphasized by the Center, but will cohesively address related issues and themes. SEARCA will also more actively promote institutional capacity building through technical assistance and partnerships in research project development and implementation.

Strategies

- 1.1 Initiate and facilitate multi-country implementation of regional researches.** Countries will be clustered according to needs such that transition economies may be one cluster and the more advanced economies may be another. Other ways of clustering, depending on the demands of the undertaking, may be done as well. Research will be undertaken involving different member countries or a particular cluster depending on the purpose, research subject or content, and methodology. Such research will delve into issues that are regional in significance and scope.
- 1.2 Initiate and facilitate collaborative and commissioned researches.** SEARCA will continue to commission short-term researches particularly in response to pressing or emerging issues that need quick responses. Collaborative researches with like-minded institutions will likewise be continued to optimize reach and resources.
- 1.3 Tap experts in appropriate fields for inputs to research.** The Visiting Research Fellows and Adjunct Fellows Programs of SEARCA provide a rich array of expertise that can be harnessed in the various stages of the research projects. Outside these Programs, newer linkages with experts and expertise will be developed and enhanced. The experts will be invaluable in the harvesting of knowledge towards policy support.

- 1.4 Explore alternative or non-traditional funding mechanisms or collaboration arrangements.** In view of the high competition for research funds from donor agencies, various mechanisms for funding or partnership will be explored to ensure that research responsive to the needs of the member countries will be undertaken. In particular, non-traditional linkages or partnerships with other SEAMEO Centers, the private sector, and non-government organizations within and outside the region will be pursued.

Objective 2. *Provide opportunities for scholars and development practitioners to contribute to the proposed promotion of natural resource management and agricultural competitiveness through research and related initiatives*

The complex and vast array of researchable areas in the promotion of agricultural competitiveness and sound natural resource management calls for the time, skills and commitment of a cadre of qualified researchers and development practitioners. Making opportunities available to these like-minded individuals will ensure wider coverage of these researchable areas as well as a faster pace at which the existing body of knowledge is enriched, particularly within the context of Southeast Asia.

Strategies

- 2.1 Ensure that SEARCA scholars' researches are aligned with the thrusts of the Center and are responding to the needs of their institution or their home country.** To add to the body of knowledge towards the promotion of sound natural resource management and agricultural competitiveness, SEARCA will work closely with scholars in identifying an array of possible researches toward his/her graduate degree from which his academic committee can choose.

SEARCA can likewise provide guidance in the conduct of the study and reap policy inputs. Their re-entry plans to their home institutions would also be fertile ground in which these fields of endeavor can further be enriched. For all these activities, SEARCA's Agriculture and Development Primer series will be a rich and useful reference on the specific national priorities that the scholars may want to work on.

- 2.2 Enhance the Seed Fund for Research and Training Program.** A more aggressive marketing of the SFRT can reach and encourage more development practitioners and academics to develop relevant proposals. Innovations in the program can likewise be introduced to make it more accessible yet maintain quality. Post research activities can also be highlighted to disseminate research results as well as increase visibility of the program.

- 2.3 Enhance the Travel Grant Program.** To reinforce the Center's efforts and resources in the promotion of its priority areas of endeavor, the Center will more actively seek and develop linkages and other modalities to strengthen the funding base of the Program. This increased funding support will allow for more opportunities to qualified agriculture and agriculture-related professionals and social scientists, including graduate students, to present scientific papers in local and international scientific fora. Furthermore, an option is available to publish the Travel Grantee's research work.

- 2.4 Enhance the Fellows Program.** Towards an optimized use of resources and opportunities, a more judicious selection of fellows will ensure that the Center's programmed activities are complemented and strengthened by the expertise of these invited fellows. Concrete outputs in the form of project proposals and publications are targets that will be more actively pursued.
- 2.5 Enhance the Dioscoro L. Umali Achievement Award for Agricultural Development.** This regional award, aimed at promoting agriculture by recognizing exemplary individuals who have contributed to its advancement in Southeast Asia, is envisaged to become a landmark award for agriculture achievers. Towards this end, SEARCA with its partners will actively promote and advertise the award. It will further enhance its awardee selection and evaluation process for improved credibility and prestige.

SEARCA will more actively seek and develop new linkages and modalities to widely promote these programs, as well as to strengthen their respective funding bases. Within the next five years, after a reasonable period of program implementation, the Center will commission external reviews to generate specific strategies for improving these programs. The specific strategies and post-research activities may include: a) revisiting the proposal evaluation and selection processes and grant implementation monitoring systems; b) developing and implementing a results-based monitoring and evaluation (RBME) system; c) impact assessment of completed research and projects; and d) prompt publication of final research results for wider dissemination and promotion.

Objective 3. Lead initiatives in ARD toward articulating policy directions and providing inputs to policy and regulatory framework development

Other effective and efficient avenues for harvesting knowledge and sharing the same towards policy directions and inputs have to be pursued, particularly for transition Southeast Asia. Relevant policies and perspectives need to be arrived at by equipping stakeholders with analytical tools and strategic frameworks. With these, countries can more ably deal with the challenges it faces and be able to move forward in its own roadmap to development.

Strategies

- 3.1 Conduct policy roundtable series for transition countries in Southeast Asia.** Transition countries face significant challenges in the light of the rapid changes taking place in Asia's mega-economies and as patterns of production, consumption, and trade evolve. SEARCA will continue to organize policy roundtables on relevant emerging issues to assist these countries in policy planning and strategic perspectives, with a view to formulating supporting frameworks and associated analytical tools.
- 3.2 Conduct conferences and other fora on emerging issues in natural resource management and agricultural competitiveness.** In efforts to pursue an active role in shaping agricultural research and policy directions in the region, SEARCA can focus on a number of emerging policy issues and challenges through various fora. One effective and efficient modality for bringing together experts and eliciting the latest cutting edge thinking on these issues and challenges is the organization of conferences and similar fora. Policy inputs can be harvested from such a gathering of experts. Researchable areas can likewise be an output of these fora.

In general, the Center will conduct these conferences, roundtable discussions and other fora in congruence with its research focus. As such, emerging issues related to climate change and natural resource management, with particular emphasis on water resources; technology management; and value chain analysis of economically important commodities; among others, will be the priority central themes of these regional gatherings. SEARCA will gather and polish papers and presentations made for these meetings for publication as monograph or proceedings.

C. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

A culture of learning, knowledge use, and knowledge creation

SEARCA strives to contribute to rational and informed policy and decision-making in agriculture and rural development as the pillar of relevant programs in their academic institutions and national agencies in Southeast Asia. Science-based explanations drawn through competent and rigorous research make for such rational and informed policy and decision-making.

Excellence in leadership and governance in agriculture and rural development requires fostering and supporting a learning culture in the region that applies science- and research-based analyses, which in turn makes the creation of new knowledge and wisdom possible. Through the years, SEARCA has supported the continuous learning, knowledge use, and creation of knowledge and wisdom by agriculture and rural development professionals and leaders in the region, and will continue the same through a knowledge management program made holistic (Fig. 2).

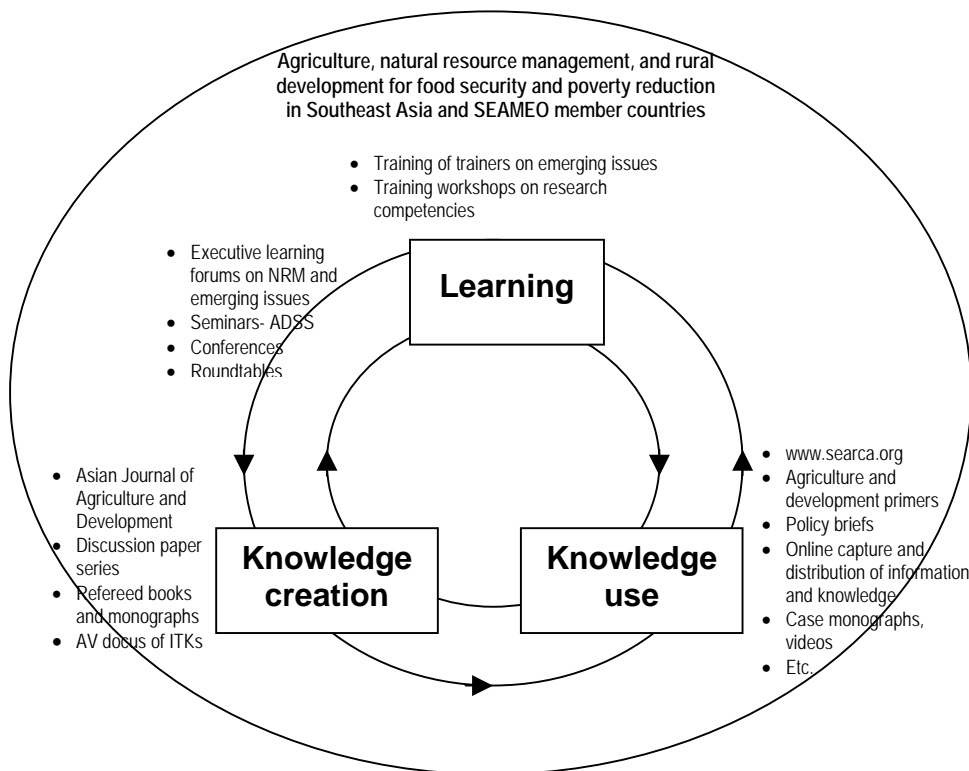


Fig. 2. SEARCA's knowledge management framework drawn from Torracco's (2000) model

Objective 1. *Provide opportunities for agriculture professionals and decision-makers to update themselves on and discuss contemporary issues and science-based perspectives, strengthen their leadership competencies, and hone their research capabilities and build their institutional capacities in knowledge management for ARD.*

Every age ushers in new challenges and opportunities that make continuous learning a necessity for equipping leaders and researchers in agriculture and rural development to manage beyond merely coping with new pressures. Likewise, continuous turnover of agriculture executives is to be expected, hence short-term capacity development of rising leaders and researchers should be an ongoing effort. SEARCA thus needs to keep these professionals updated with new developments including knowledge management, informed by science-based analyses. Their participation in learning events organized by SEARCA is hoped to improve their decision and policymaking that shape relevant agriculture and rural development programs in Southeast Asia.

Strategies

1.1 Offer fora and learning events for executives, researchers, academe, and trainers. Towards equipping policy and decision makers in academic and research institutions in agriculture, SEARCA's executive forums in NRM will emphasize water management in relation to food security and the changing environment, land and water governance, and risk assessment for changing climate. It will develop training of trainers on emerging issues in agricultural competitiveness, like cost-benefit analysis of biofuel options. The Center will also conduct study tours on agribiotechnology and biosafety for regulators and decision makers.

For SEARCA fellows and agriculture researchers, the Center will offer forums on leadership excellence in the academe, research management, and knowledge management; plus training on impact assessment and other research competencies in the context of agriculture and rural development for poverty alleviation and food security. Further, a special program for executives and program staff of the Philippines' Department of Agriculture will focus on developing a corps of skilled, knowledgeable and committed public managers essential to the achievement of food security in the country.

1.2 Provide platforms for online exchange and sharing of knowledge and solutions. SEARCA will support the ongoing learning of its fellows, in assistance of translating their individual learning to organizational learning back at work, through user-moderated online forums on specific themes. As many of these fellows are leaders back home, these online forums are also envisioned to become elite platforms for debate among Southeast Asian experts.

They will include online learning support for NRM in a globalizing Asia, environmental economics for decision-making, risk management for agricultural production, and an e-platform for extension and communication in NRM and agriculture. SEARCA envisions the formation of self-managed communities of practice from these learning and discussion platforms from among its training and scholarship alumni.

Along building capacities of University Consortium (UC) members and other country partners in knowledge management (KM) in agriculture and rural development (ARD), SEARCA will provide platforms by which these country partners may add value to their institutional knowledge through capture, exchange, and validation of practitioners' indigenous technical knowledge and practices in ARD.

1.3 Develop trailblazing and relevant learning initiatives for executives, researchers, academe, and trainers in agriculture and rural development. SEARCA will strive to keep its clients abreast with emerging issues and challenges in natural resource management and agricultural competitiveness, by developing new learning initiatives focused on land and water management in a changing climate, financial options for biofuel development, and private-public sector partnerships in the delivery of agricultural services, through learning forums addressing these new frontiers.

1.4 Monitor and evaluate the outcomes and impacts of SEARCA's short-term learning initiatives. The Center will track the outcomes and impacts of its learning initiatives and in so doing contribute to knowledge on capacity development and knowledge management in ARD.

In undertaking the above activities, SEARCA's Knowledge Management (KM) program will tap accomplished experts in partnership with international organizations and centers of excellence. SEARCA will ensure quality in its regional and national learning events by engaging these top experts as resource persons, banking on its relationship with other international organizations and centers of excellence in the region.

Further, the KM program will continue to adopt a rational marketing scheme towards cost sharing of offerings. SEARCA will announce regular learning events in advance to potential fee-paying participants and organizations willing to sponsor their own participants or partners. It will continue to offer limited training scholarships and subsidies for selected participants in these learning events as public good. It will further invite partners to share costs of offering these events in cash and in kind.

Objective 2. Provide access to science-based as well as field-based information and knowledge in agriculture and rural development and their platforms of learning and exchange towards achieving food security and poverty reduction in SEAMEO member countries

In this age of the Internet and the World Wide Web, information and knowledge resources abound and may be easily accessed by the click of a finger. Yet the need for credible field-based and science-based information and knowledge resources focused on and appropriate for the agriculture and rural development contexts of Southeast Asian countries remains. Making such information and knowledge resources available in organized fashion will support ongoing learning that SEARCA strives to foster in this sector.

Likewise, the plethora of information sometimes complicates making sense out of them and discerning which is relevant, negating their usability. Theme-based search-and-share engines for information and knowledge resources in the World Wide Web

will facilitate sifting for the information and knowledge that are relevant and needed by ARD users in the region.

Strategies

- 2.1 Package, publish, and distribute or make available appropriate knowledge and learning resource materials on agriculture and rural development in SEAMEO member countries.** SEARCA will harvest the best practices and insightful lessons from conferences, seminars, research projects, graduate research, learning events and regional platforms on agricultural competitiveness and NRM to make these accessible for ready application in the region. They will find their way in various materials such as policy briefs, thematic exhibits, case monographs, and other learning materials relevant to the Southeast Asian context, with emphasis on decision-makers as users. SEARCA will also complete and continuously update its agriculture and development primers for the SEAMEO countries. SEARCA's knowledge resources will bear the mark of rigor and credibility through quality assurance in its process of packaging knowledge resources.
- 2.2 Actively promote the distribution and utilization of SEARCA's knowledge and learning resources with its publics.** SEARCA will undertake special events, such as SEARCA caravans and "Day with the Policymakers" or with other key stakeholders. "Day for Policymakers" referring to those who are in charge of agriculture and NRM, will be SEARCA's way of informing them about its efforts in these sectors. In doing this, knowledge solutions coming from SEARCA will have a greater possibility of becoming part of national or regional policy. When this happens, a greater majority will feel their use and impacts.
- 2.3 Develop, monitor, and evaluate online mechanisms and networks for sharing and validating research and practice.** SEARCA will continue to maintain and improve its website as its show-window and organized repository where its online knowledge resources may be accessed. It will replicate the Biotechnology Information Center (BIC) model that it hosts, as an avenue for information capture and sharing on selected contemporary themes like risk management in agriculture and biodiversity management in the face of changing climate. This will be in support of promoting knowledge exchange and a learning culture in the region's agriculture and rural development sector in general, and on specific themes emphasized by its graduate scholarship, research, and learning programs.

In addition to BIC-type initiatives, SEARCA will facilitate a KM system that makes possible in-country and regional sharing and exchange of credible and relevant field-based knowledge in ARD among UC members and other country partners. These will also comprise SEARCA's avenue for innovating and adapting an appropriate KM system for ARD in the region.

Objective 3. Encourage and support knowledge creation through intellectual and scholarly productivity in agricultural and rural development for Southeast Asia

Upbuilding the agriculture and rural development sciences and their professionals in the region includes providing an avenue for publishing the research and intellectual outputs of its scholars. Such knowledge creation further completes the knowledge

management cycle that also includes learning and knowledge use, which equip this sector to competently and proactively address emerging issues and challenges.

By participating in the development of publications and online materials and presentation of seminars, SEARCA's fellows, scholars, and grantees will be able to actively contribute to the knowledge pool in tropical agriculture and NRM, thereby informing programs and policies towards food security and poverty alleviation in the region.

Strategies

- 3.1 Publish a refereed journal and other scholarly publications on agriculture and development in the region.** SEARCA will continue to publish its semi-annual Asian Journal of Agriculture and Development, an international, refereed journal that serves as a vehicle for the exchange of ideas on agriculture and development issues both within Asian countries and between these countries and the rest of the world. It will post and make freely accessible an online version of the journal's six-month old or older editions. In addition, SEARCA will continue publishing books, monographs, discussion papers and similar scholarly publications focused on its twin emphases on agricultural competitiveness and NRM.
- 3.2 Conduct seminars and conferences.** SEARCA will continue to contribute to vibrant scientific exchange and knowledge creation through seminars and conferences, addressing contemporary issues and challenges especially toward informing policy related to its thematic thrusts.

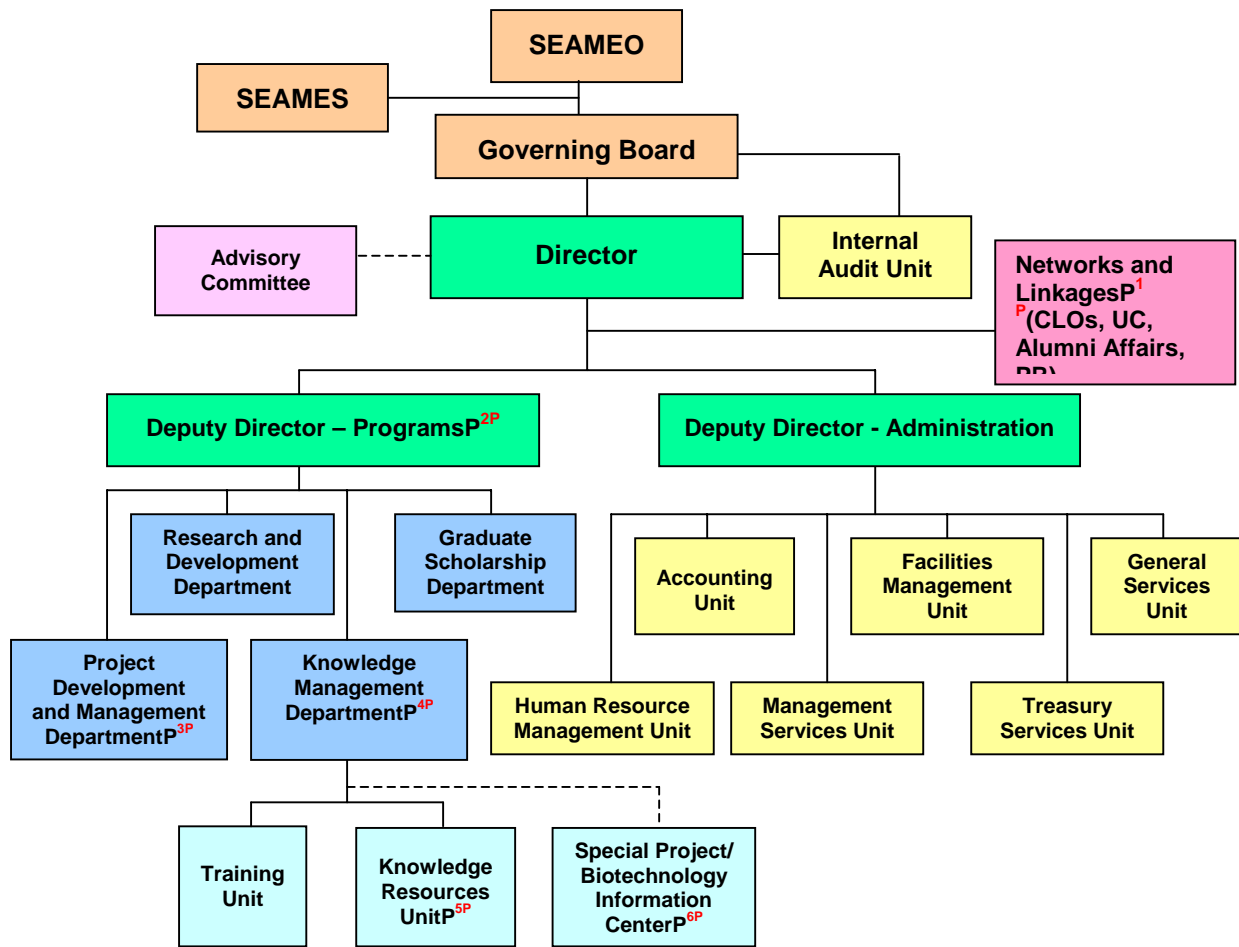
For its KM program, SEARCA will maintain and continuously update a roster of agriculture and rural development experts for Southeast Asia. Nurturing knowledge and its creation requires of SEARCA to keep tabs with a pool of scholars and experts, starting with its well-placed fellows, who can be tapped to actively contribute to intellectual endeavors in agriculture and rural development. SEARCA will thus keep and continuously update a database of these ARD scholars and experts whose work are focused in the region. This database will further assist them in seeking synergy with fellow scholars and experts.

VIII. Implementing Structures and Strategy

A. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

To best operationalize the implementation of the Ninth Five-Year Plan, SEARCA will realign its core departments and units. The following organizational structure (Fig. 3) is seen as most appropriate to ensure efficient and successful implementation of the Plan.

The Center will be led and administered by a Director and two Deputy Directors.



^{P1P} Networks and Linkages- new

^{P2P} Deputy Director-Programs- previously unfilled from 2005-2008

^{P3P} Project Development and Management Department - formerly Consulting Services Department

^{P4P} Knowledge Management Department - formerly Training Department

^{P5P} Knowledge Resources Unit- formerly Knowledge Management Unit under Research and Development Department

^{P6P} Biotechnology Information Center- formerly a Special Project under the Research and Development Department

Figure 3. SEARCA Organizational Structure for the Ninth Five-Year Plan

The **Director** provides overall leadership and direction in articulating the Center's mandate and functions as well as the implementation of programs and activities submitted to and approved by a Governing Board composed of representatives of 11 member countries.

An **Internal Audit Unit (IAU)** reports simultaneously to the Director and the Governing Board. It provides internal control monitoring functions to ensure compliance to policies and operating procedures.

In an effort to organize, promote, coordinate and enhance its regional operations, a **Networks and Linkages** section under the Office of the Director will take care of the

following: a) **Country Liaison Officers (CLO)** – in-country CLO's will serve as conduit, coordinator, and facilitator of SEARCA activities in the different member countries; b) **University Consortium (UC)** – a network of top agricultural universities in Southeast Asia and other parts of the world geared to facilitate free exchange of information, facilities, and expertise for improving human resources in agricultural and rural development; c) **Alumni Affairs** - will harness and nurture Center relations with all alumni of its various capacity building programs which includes graduates of SEARCA's scholarship program, former recipients of student/staff exchange programs, travel grants, PhD research grants, SEARCA professorial chairs, Seed Funds for Research and Training, former participants in SEARCA conferences and learning events, and associates of the Center's various Fellows Program (i.e., Visiting Research and Adjunct Fellows Programs); and d) **Public Relations** - to enhance public awareness of SEARCA, particularly its contributions and relevance to SEAMEO member countries .

The **Deputy Director for Programs** takes responsibility for management of the technical operations of the Center, in particular its core programs on Graduate Scholarship, Research and Development, Knowledge Management, and Project Development and Management. In addition, s/he is expected to assist the Director in resource generation efforts to secure financial resources that will fuel the core programs and support Center operations.

The Office of the Deputy Director-Programs oversees four major Departments. The **Graduate Scholarship Department** manages the awarding of formal graduate degree scholarships (PhD and MS) for nationals of member countries. This includes sourcing of funds for scholarships through various modalities that include twinning and exchange arrangements, sandwich programs, and development of proposals for donor funding, among others.

The **Research and Development Department** coordinates research and research-related activities in line with the major defined thrusts in the Center's Five-Year Development Plan. It facilitates discussion and attention to emerging and contemporary issues affecting agriculture and rural development in the Southeast Asian Region.

The **Knowledge Management Department** comprises the **Training Unit (TU)** and **Knowledge Resources Unit (KRU)**. The KMD will be responsible for all non-degree capacity-building activities of the Center and all activities related to the development and sharing of knowledge products developed from the Center's various program activities and projects. This Department also houses the **Biotechnology Information Center (BIC)**, a collaborative special project that actively contributes to advancing food security through capacity building of key actors in biotechnology and provides a virtual hub that supports knowledge exchange in the region's agriculture and rural development sector.

The **Project Development and Management Department (PRODEV)** will: a) coordinate with the core departments in facilitating synergistic development of flagship programs and special projects that can create greater impact along SEARCA's strategic framework; b) complement the Deputy Director for Programs in generating from traditional and non-traditional donors external funding that will fuel the core departments and programs; and, c) provide professional technical services limited to and complementary to the major programs of the Center. Technical Working Groups (TWG) comprising experts from partner organizations will assist

PRODEV in determining thematic topics that will be developed into proposals. TWG's involvement in project formulation will increase coverage of concerns of other countries.

The **Deputy Director for Administration** will be responsible for all support and management services, finance, and required administrative functions in the operations of the Center. The administrative units under the Office of the Deputy Director-Administration are **Accounting, Facilities Management, General Services, Human Resource Management, Management Services, and Treasury Services**. The Deputy Director for Administration is the Center's Treasurer and will assist the Director in sourcing and managing financial resources as well as establishing linkages and collaborations with partners, clientele, and donors. S/he manages and addresses day-to-day operations in the Center's headquarters and support facilities and structures. S/he also supervises the Center's regular planning activities as well as the annual meetings of the Governing Board, of which s/he is the Secretary. S/he handles legal matters and assists in fostering good working relations between SEARCA and the host institution, host government, relevant focal government agencies of SEAMEO member countries and the SEAMEO Secretariat.

SEARCA will benefit from the guidance of an **Advisory Committee**, composed of accomplished and credible individuals from various sectors and development-oriented institutions from the host and member countries. The Committee's function is to provide advice and recommendations to SEARCA Management regarding strategic areas it may go into, strategic approaches it may employ to carry out its mandates, or resource-mobilization schemes it may pursue to augment its incomes.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

Highly relevant ARD programs in Southeast Asia

SEARCA's involvement in development projects in Southeast Asia in collaboration with various international, regional and national organizations and government agencies has influenced the management of development in the region.

The Center has assisted government agencies in the region in preparing and managing important projects and master plans covering the areas of fisheries and agricultural development, forest resources management, river and watershed management, integrated coastal management, agrarian reform, poverty reduction and hunger mitigation, land administration and management, integrated area development, institutional development, rural finance, policy studies, biofuel research and development, and climate change.

SEARCA will re-channel these successes in project development to crosscutting, regional programs on graduate scholarship, research and development, and knowledge management to further enhance SEARCA's impact on creating an enabling environment for sustained rural poverty reduction and food security in Southeast Asia. Project development and management at SEARCA will thus take a more strategic approach in pursuing the Center's vision and mission while it generates substantive financial resources that will allow it to expand its reach.

Objective 1. *Develop long-term regional programs*

The long-term flagship programs will focus on regional issues that will involve synergy among core programs to create greater impact. The recent soar in commodity prices that led to the food crisis is an example of a regional issue that demands closer scrutiny. Such phenomenon is the working of numerous factors that are either cyclical or structural in nature. Cyclical factors, like weather-related disturbances and geopolitical events, are short-term phenomena that eventually fade away. Structural factors, however, linger around much longer, causing bigger concerns including the possibility of their negating progress made in the past vis a vis reducing rural poverty.

Some of the key structural changes that have contributed to the rise in food prices include continued growth in population and incomes that change food demand structures; climate change that impacts upon crop production and its management; rapid increase in biofuel production that poses great competition for resources with growing crops for food and feed; and the increasing globalization of the market that bears upon farmers to strive to be more competitive. These issues need to be carefully evaluated not singly, but in an integrated manner that involves R&D, knowledge management, and capacity development. SEARCA will develop flagship projects based on these issues. Research on climate change and biodiversity and on the development of biofuels being hatched in the tail end of the Eighth Five-Year Plan are examples of such programs. These programs will enable the Center to continue leading in providing technical support necessary for SEAMEO member countries to meet the issues head on.

Strategies

- 1.1 Develop crosscutting, Center-wide regional flagship programs.** SEARCA will develop long-term regional programs where research and development, knowledge management, and graduate scholarship can create an impact on regional capacity promoting sustained agricultural and economic growth.
- 1.2 Participate in regional development activities that relate to SEARCA's mandate in the SE Asian region.** SEARCA will support regional initiatives in SEAMEO member countries and sub-regional cooperation such as those promoted by development partners (e.g. ADB, WB, IFAD, FAO, ACIAR) in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) and Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA).
- 1.3 Strengthen cooperation with international, regional and national organizations.** SEARCA will continue to enhance its collaboration with institutional partners like EU, UNDP, ACIAR, IFAD, IDRC, AusAID, USAID, FAO, ADB, WB, JICA. It will advance cooperation with the ASEAN Secretariat particularly in policy studies on regional cooperation and integration.

Regionalized operations

A key feature in SEARCA's Ninth Five-Year Plan is an effort to regionalize major facets of its operations. The Center will articulate this through the composition of its staff, the focus of its programs and activities, and approaches/modalities it would employ to expand its reach to stakeholders, clients, and beneficiaries in the Southeast Asian region.

Liaison Offices

In support of its efforts to regionalize operations, the Center proposes to set up one-man Liaison Offices in each member country or at least in the member countries requiring the most assistance from SEARCA. Such Liaison Offices will be located in either a partner institution (university, research institution) or a government Ministry/Department (Ministry of Education, Agriculture, Environment or Foreign Affairs through which SEARCA provides assistance consistent with its mandate.

The general terms of reference of such Liaison Offices are to act as conduit, coordinator, and facilitator of current and future SEARCA activities in each of the countries where they are set up. These include identification of needs, possible programs, and assistance required by the country and donors/partners working in the area.

Further, such Offices will be the link to SEARCA as far as the implementation of the Center's core programs in graduate scholarship, research and development, and knowledge management is concerned. For all intents and purposes, Liaison Offices are envisaged as "one-stop shops" that give almost direct access to SEARCA programs and services. More importantly, it gives the Center a presence in the region as well as in the individual countries it is mandated to serve.

Stronger strategic partnership, alliances, networks, and linkages

SEARCA possesses intangible wealth in its network of committed partners and friends who share the Center's aspirations to contribute to poverty reduction and food security in Southeast Asia through capacity and institution building in agriculture and rural development and related concerns. The Center needs to continually and actively tap this pool of experts and allies. In this age of knowledge and information explosion, decreasing external financial resources devoted to the region, and the mounting challenges facing SEAMEO member countries, partnership and synergy with other institutions and individuals is the way to go in creating a meaningful dent on sustainable development in Southeast Asia. SEARCA, in its enabling role as a knowledge managing and learning organization, will thus continuously build and deliberately improve its partnership and networking with other organizations and individuals.

The Center will systematically strengthen its network with its hundreds of graduate fellows, thousands of training alumni, and numerous recipients of SEARCA

professorial chairs, travel grants, and other similar grants. In so doing, it will harness alumni expertise and tap their assistance in identifying and developing projects and activities in their respective countries as well as negotiating possible sources of funds. The alumni of SEARCA are an untapped resource that when harnessed to full potentials can bring significant benefits to the Center and the countries it serves. Further, organized alumni will provide a corps of ambassadors of the Center to enhance and extend its network and linkages.

Recognizing the wealthier status attained by some Southeast Asian countries, SEARCA will tap these countries' experts and organizations in assisting the region's transition countries. Moreover, the Center positions itself as the door through which external donors may channel support for institution and capacity building toward rural poverty alleviation and food security in the region.

The University Consortium: Main Vehicle for Forging Strategic Linkages

The Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC), established by SEARCA in 1989, is seen as vital in promoting strategic exchanges and collaboration between and among leading institutions of higher learning in the region. With the increasing participation of selected universities in developed countries, the UC is envisaged as a vehicle for SEARCA to enhance its efforts to improve human resources in agriculture and related fields. Being multi-country in nature, the UC is similarly regarded as a means by which SEARCA's activities and programs may be regionalized. UC institutions could, in partnership with the Center and other UC members, formulate and implement research and development projects, specialized trainings, and capacity building activities added to its logical role of source and host of SEARCA scholars in their academic programs.

Inarguably, the value of the UC will be more felt in activities related to the Center's Graduate Scholarships Program and related academic activities. A well-organized consortium of universities allows promising avenues for expanded staff and student exchange, sandwich programs, joint degrees, curriculum review and improvement, and institutional development among others. It would open the door for alternatives to pump prime activities in Graduate Scholarships as well as efforts to generate funding either from donors or from counterparts of collaborating member institutions

Counterpart Contributions and Direct Funding

As proven in the past, SEARCA has capitalized on an alternative mode of drawing financial resources from external sources to fuel its many activities and programs. Donors and partners are given the option of either providing counterpart funding or direct sponsorship of their participants/representatives to SEARCA activities and programs in which they share a common interest and concern. This minimizes bureaucratic and administrative requirements while allowing donors and partners to take credit and share in the benefits and outputs of the collaborative activity. In its Ninth Five-Year Plan, the Center will further improve and rely heavily on this modality to generate funds that it would have otherwise drawn from its coffers. Hence, financial resources are conserved allowing alternative investments that could draw in still more funds.

IX. Management and Administration

The Center will boost the activities of its core programs and departments with proactive management and administrative support. As the directorate raises the beacon light for the right focus in programs and paves the way through good external relations and resource generation, the administrative units will strive their best to back up the core programs in successfully implementing their activities through relevant and proactive services and processes. With the core programs as figurative arrowheads aimed at pre-determined directions and thrusts, the Center's administration and support units comprise the shaft that allows them to take flight and hit the desired targets. Recognizing this, the Center will enhance the support aspects of its operations through proactive fiscal management, improved systems and processes, sound asset management, and proactive service delivery to ensure that the objectives of its five-year plan are met with the utmost efficiency.

Long-term financial viability

SEARCA will promote efforts to ensure the Center's financial viability and sustainability through resource generating activities and strategies toward judicious use and management of funds.

The Center will continue to engage in providing short-term professional technical services, but in a more judicious manner focusing on its thematic areas and niches that include natural resource management and agricultural competitiveness. Professional technical services will continue to lean towards policy reviews and impact studies along with preparing and managing projects and master plans.

The involvement of SEARCA in the development and implementation of projects in Southeast Asia has helped country governments identify appropriate interventions to overcome issues and problems that hinder agricultural growth and improve rural economies in the region. Through these projects, SEARCA, in collaboration with various international, regional and national organizations and government agencies, has provided assistance to Southeast Asian countries in the management of their development plans and activities.

Objective 1. Market the Center's core programs

SEARCA's core programs and activities are aimed at equipping its member countries with the necessary tools to achieve sustainable agricultural economy through increased opportunities for livelihood activities. These tools are wide-ranging and their identification and development require financial support that may be more than what the Center can allocate.

Strategies

- 1.1 Identify possible sources of funding.** The Center will identify donors and other sources of funding including development partners that it may approach for collaborative work on the activities defined in the core programs.

- 1.2 Market the core programs of the Center.** SEARCA will promote and market its research and development, knowledge management, and graduate scholarship programs and activities. It will try to link these programs with the areas of focus and objectives of other funding agencies

Objective 2. *Provide professional technical services for agriculture and rural development projects of governments and international donors.*

SEARCA has already established good track record in providing high quality professional technical services, project loans, grants and technical assistance to member countries from multi-lateral and bilateral funding agencies. Continuing to offer professional technical services on a selective basis consistent with thematic thrusts of the Center is yet another way of advancing the professional development of SEARCA fellows when the Center engages their technical expertise as consultants. At the same time, this modality allows SEARCA to extend its mileage in serving the region while raising additional revenue for its operations.

Strategies

- 2.1 Actively pursue opportunities for professional technical service contracts in the region.** SEARCA will focus on and prioritize projects within the ambit of agricultural and rural development and natural resource management of Southeast Asian countries in cooperation with various multi-lateral and bilateral agencies. It will give special attention to projects with regional perspective/scope and emphasize regional cooperation and integration. Likewise, SEARCA will be selective of projects with high impact and long-term engagements.

Potential projects for short-term professional technical service work are the development initiatives included in the Asian Development Bank's Core Agricultural Support Program for GMS and BIMP-EAGA. There are also numerous opportunities for projects on climate change under ADB's Climate Change Fund. Management of water resources is a critical area being studied under various funding windows with donor partners like the ADB, World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Korea-FAO has been supporting SEARCA lately in addressing various development issues including biofuel development. Collaborative projects with FAO on areas that affect rising food prices and food security are also possible.

- 2.2 Tap and promote experts based in the region in pursuing professional technical service contracts.** SEARCA will assemble international experts from the region in pursuing development projects. It will likewise prioritize tapping experts from the University Consortium and other centers of excellence in the region.

- 2.3 Collaborate with international, regional and national management consulting companies and organizations.** Competition in the provision of professional technical services is tough; hence it will be necessary to further strengthen SEARCA's partnership with other consulting service providers, research centers, academic institutions, professional organizations and non-government organizations.

Objective 3. Promote and practice proactive fiscal management

Apart from developing high-impact flagship programs and judicious use of available funds for its operations and programs, the Center will continue to increase earnings from its investments through placements in relatively low-risk long-term investment instruments. As well, the Center will seek to maximize revenue generation from its facilities. Such earnings are intended to provide needed buffer funds that will allow SEARCA to support its regional flagship programs and activities that are expected to increase in the course of the implementation of the Ninth Five-Year Development Plan.

Strategies

- 3.1 Improve the monitoring of investment offerings in the market in order to make informed decisions on its placements, thus maximizing returns.** SEARCA will explore alternative modalities for investing its financial resources with the end view of increasing its interest earnings. Such modalities include the use of fund managers expected to minimize risk while maximizing earnings from existing funds.
- 3.2 Aggressively package and market SEARCA facilities.** The Center will seek to maximize revenue generation from its excellent facilities. This strategy would include improvements in packaging, promotion, and marketing SEARCA facilities in the service of its mandate as well as the professional interests of its partners and clientele.
- 3.3 Plan and monitor the judicious use of the Center's budget.** The Center will work towards financial decisions and budget allocation that reflect and support organizational goals, priorities, and strategies; cost-efficient operation; and balanced budget.

Operational efficiency and productivity

The Center can operate efficiently and productively only when it is able to bring together the right combination of human resources, processes, and technology. Such combination will ensure that the Center can deliver high-quality products and services. SEARCA will continuously rationalize human resource services and functions and provide opportunities to enhance staff capabilities. Moreover, the Center will continually improve operational systems and procedures, sound asset management and proactive service delivery.

Objective 1. Improve the management of the Center's human capital

SEARCA will place a premium on recruiting, hiring, and retaining capable and high quality work force to better enable it to carry out its core programs and thrusts with utmost success.

Strategies

- 1.1 **Improve recruitment procedures by instituting more rigor.** Recruiting the best and the brightest will go hand in hand with the "center of excellence" tag. In order to achieve this, SEARCA will ensure rigor in its selection process for personnel. This includes implementing special testing procedures for short-listed applicants; conduct of background investigation during pre-selection; and managed recruitment advertising. Likewise, it will continuously review selection and recruitment policies and procedures; increase its pool of candidates by vacancy and expertise, and reduce the time it takes to fill in vacancies.
- 1.2 **Conduct periodic review of staff job descriptions and evaluation of staff performance.** In order to cope with the growing demands of the job coupled with the desire to stay lean in terms of staff strength, SEARCA promotes multi-tasking. In this connection, the Center periodically reviews job descriptions and evaluates staff competencies and performance.
- 1.3 **Develop and implement a rational staff development program.** SEARCA's staff development program will encourage its people to professional growth that equips the organization to keep in step with advances in technology and emerging challenges in the rapidly changing work environment. It will put in place a proactive and well-programmed staff development strategy and programs.
- 1.4 **Conduct periodic review and updating of salaries and benefits.** To retain an excellent and highly capable work force, the Center will periodically review and adjust salaries and benefits to be attuned to qualifications, market price, and reasonable quality of life standards.

Objective 2. Improve systems and procedures to enhance the efficiency and integrity of operations

The Center will complement the activities of its core programs and departments with excellent administrative support. Particular attention will be given to promoting cost efficient measures, streamlining of processes and systems, and the institution of standards of quality in operations.

Strategies

- 2.1 **Review and streamline Center processes and procedures for greater efficiency and more timely delivery of output.** Specifically, it intends to institutionalize quality control measures or systems; review and update human resources, general services, facilities, and finance policies and practices; and improve work instructions of the e-FMS.
- 2.2 **Update and integrate financial systems.** SEARCA will ensure the complete rollout of a new financial system capable of producing timely and reliable financial data through improving the operation of the Great Plains and upgrading the payroll system to payroll SQL.
- 2.3 **Prepare financial statements to provide leading data on Center performance.** SEARCA will regularly produce financial statements to track

financial performance against agreed-upon budget through monitoring and annual audit by external auditors.

- 2.4 Review existing internal controls and implement changes where necessary.** Internal controls will be improved through information systems audit. Other efforts would include review of processes for monitoring and holding employees, grantees, service providers, and contractors accountable; and closing open audit recommendations.

Objective 3. *Manage information technology resources, facilities, and other physical assets to improve service for Center employees, partners, and clients.*

The Center will continue to create, maintain and operate a conducive work environment through the most cost-effective means possible.

Strategies

- 3.1 Acquire, maintain, and upgrade properties and equipment with particular attention to cost-effectiveness.** The Center will continue to employ rational equipment and facilities acquisition. It will acquire, maintain, and upgrade its equipment regularly towards reduced maintenance cost, reduced energy requirements, and increased efficiency in operations. Such equipment includes information technology facilities, vehicles, air-conditioning units, and lighting fixtures among others. A judicious disposal program will also be in place.
- 3.2 Improve information technology structure.** To continually improve and manage information exchange/flow and support its knowledge management program, SEARCA will continue to manage a secure and efficient information technology structure that supports connectivity and access to network resources and Internet services.
- 3.3 Enhance, maintain and upgrade library and archive collections to provide quality service to users.** To continually upgrade library collection; maintain and improve the library system (ATHENA Library System); and facilitate the establishment of DOCU1 database and digitization of documents to provide online and electronic access to library and archive materials.

Objective 4. *Monitor and evaluate Center performance in fulfilling the Ninth Five-Year Plan.*

Cognizant of its accountability to its funders and publics, SEARCA will closely monitor and undertake a midterm and summative review of its performance in fulfilling its mission and vision for the period June 2009 until July 2014. All key program strategies have incorporated monitoring and evaluation among their activities. At the Plan's outset, the Center will develop and fine-tune a set of quantifiable performance indicators (Please see Annex B) that factors in the quality of its program outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

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About SEARCA

Brief History

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), a chartered international organization whose purpose is to promote cooperation in education, science, and culture in the Southeast Asian region, established the SEAMEO Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) in 1966.



The proposal on SEARCA's formation was approved in November 1966 during the Second Conference of the SEAMEO Council. In June 1967, an Agricultural Advisory Council (AAC) was formed to formulate guidelines on the organization and operation of the proposed center.

SEARCA operated on an interim basis from 1 July 1967 to 30 June 1969. During this time, the project blueprint, detailing the Center's academic programs, financing, and staffing, was developed and subsequently approved by the AAC.

On 1 July 1969, SEARCA began its operation as a permanent center of SEAMEO after the Letter of Agreement regarding its establishment, operations, and representatives of the SEAMEO Council, SEARCA, and the governments of the Philippines and the United States of America signed funding for five years.

Organization



The Philippine government on the campus of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) hosts SEARCA. Operating autonomously from UPLB, SEARCA is managed by a Filipino director and two deputy directors, one of whom is a non-Filipino, but a national of a SEAMEO member country, and the other, a Filipino.

SEARCA's policy-making body is the Governing Board (GB), which is composed of a representative from each SEAMEO member country. The representatives are nominated by their respective ministers of education and appointed by the SEAMEO Council. The SEAMEO Secretariat (SEAMES) director and the SEARCA director serve as ex-officio members of the Board.

The SEARCA Governing Board is responsible for operational policies, strategic planning, and annual review and evaluation of the Center's programs and budget within the framework of its approved five-year development plan.

Objectives

SEARCA's general objectives, as specified in its Enabling Instrument, are as follows:

1. To provide participating countries with high-quality graduate education and training in agriculture;
2. To promote, undertake, and coordinate research programs related to the development needs and problems in agriculture of the region; and
3. To disseminate the findings of agricultural research and experimentation.

Functions

Specifically, SEARCA's functions are:

1. To promote and facilitate high-quality graduate study programs leading to the master's and doctoral degrees through collaborating institutions;
2. To provide graduate scholarships, fellowships, and/or assistantships for students from member countries;
3. To provide direction and funds for research by graduate students, faculty members, and other cooperating research workers of member countries;
4. To promote, undertake, and coordinate research programs, as instituted and supported by the Center, with special emphasis on research related to the needs and pressing problems of agriculture in Southeast Asia;
5. To publish the findings of agricultural research done in the region, or other pertinent research done elsewhere;
6. To hold short-term training courses, seminars, workshops, and conferences on selected agricultural problems and topics;
7. To provide advisory and professional technical services to member countries through staff visits and exchanges, seminars, and participation in relevant training and extension programs;
8. To stimulate and assist further development of agricultural institutions in Southeast Asia, and to enlist their efforts in a concerted attack on agricultural problems of the region; and
9. To engage in income-generating activities that will further promote the aims of the Center.

Funding

The Philippine government donates SEARCA's **Operating Funds**, which is used mainly for administration and management and core staff salaries and benefits.

The **Special Funds**, which is generated and provided by the SEAMEO Secretariat, is used to support the Center's graduate scholarship and short-term training programs, Governing Board meetings, seminars and conferences, and personnel exchanges. Such fund is composed of contributions of SEAMEO member and associate member countries, partner governments, organizations, and individuals to the SEAMEO Educational Development Fund (SEDF).

The **Other Funds**, which is composed of funds for research and development and other extension activities that are not included in the operating budget, comes from donor agencies, government and non-government organizations, and other institutions that collaborate with SEARCA in its programs and projects.

The **Unallocated Funds** consists of funds received from donors, interest earnings, and earnings from approved income-generating activities that have not been identified as Operating, Special, and Other Funds.