SEARCA recently partnered with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization-Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MAI) of Myanmar to organize and conduct a Roundtable on Strengthening Agricultural Competitiveness for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV) in Yangon, Myanmar, last 6-7 August.

Thirty five administrators, policymakers and rural development practitioners from 25 government agencies, academic and research institutions, and international organizations from China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, and the Philippines attended the event.

The Myanmar Policy Roundtable was aimed at strengthening technical and development cooperation, particularly in capacity building, for and among CLMV, in response to the call of the Bali Concord II and toward achieving the ASEAN Vision 2020. It was specifically designed to enable the participants to exchange and draw lessons from their country experiences, and discuss collaborative

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3rd A PAP Forum Conducted in Seoul, S. Korea

The Third Asia Pacific Agriculture Policy (APAP) Forum was held in Seoul, Korea on 22-23 Sep 2004. It was co-hosted by Global Agriculture Policy Institute (GAPI), National Agriculture Cooperative Federation (NACF), and Korea FAO Association.

Photo shows Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director and Secretary-General of the APAP Forum, delivering the welcome remarks at the opening of the 3rd APAP Forum. Among others, this Forum discussed: (1) the WTO/DDA negotiations and the Asia-Pacific agriculture; (2) the market of livestock products in the region; and (3) strengthening the agricultural infrastructure and vitalizing the cooperative movements. It attracted the participation of agricultural policy experts and decisionmakers from Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, and USA.

The APAP Forum aims to foster cooperation on agricultural development issues among Asia-Pacific countries. It's activities include the holding of symposia on major agricultural policy issues impacting on agricultural and rural development in these countries. It is presently chaired by Dr. SangMu Lee, GAPI Chairman. (JCFernandez)

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strategies and policy instruments to reduce food insecurity and poverty in the context of increasing globalization, agricultural trade liberalization, and other emerging challenges in the CLMV agriculture and rural sectors. A presentation on "Overview and Perspectives of Global and Regional Development Trends" by Dr. Ramon Clarete, Professor at the University of the Philippines School of Economics, provided the framework for discussing the economic transition experiences and agricultural policy changes in China and Vietnam and the transition issues and constraints of the agricultural and rural sectors of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar.

During the opening program, H.E. Maj. Gen. Nyunt Tin, Myanmar Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation, emphasized the meeting’s objective in his keynote address. He expressed his appreciation to SEARCA and FAO, in behalf of the CLMV governments, in convening the meeting as it is in line with what the leaders of ASEAN member nations have agreed upon in Bali, Indonesia in October 2003.

Mr. Tang Zhengping, FAO-RAF Director, recognized the importance of the Roundtable as a venue to raise awareness of CLMV officials on the potential pitfalls in today's liberalized trading environment for agriculture to perform and become competitive. He also emphasized the need to translate the lessons from the meeting into capacity building programs to enable CLMV countries to periodically monitor and assess developments, and thus benefit from liberalized trade and ASEAN integration.

SEARCA Director Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan said during the meeting, "In the context of globalization and trade liberalization, it is imperative that the basic framework and policies are in place in CLMV, so that each country would be able to optimize gains and minimize risks. Each country must ensure that the right institutions, instruments, and processes are in place to strengthen its competitiveness in the global market, and more importantly to address the prevailing concerns of food insecurity and poverty."

Aside from the country reports and the exchange of valuable experiences among the participants, a major output of the meeting was the finalization of a capacity building proposal on "Strengthening the Human Resource Capacities for Agricultural Competitiveness of Transition Governments in Southeast Asia through Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC)," developed by SEARCA, in collaboration with FAO-RAF.

The three-year initiative aims to enhance human capabilities in CLMV in agriculture and related fields, through TCDC, by producing a critical mass of technical experts who could translate the benefits of globalization in the agriculture sector, provide better economic opportunities to the rural population, promote good governance, reduce poverty, and lead in developing and implementing programs addressing other critical rural development themes and concerns to achieve national as well as regional goals along the ASEAN Vision 2020.

As resolved during the meeting, the proposal was presented to the Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM) of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) on 11-13 August 2004 in Malaysia and has been endorsed as part of the agenda of the 26th AMAF and the 4th AMAF Plus 3 meetings in October 2004 to be held in Myanmar.

Country paper presenters during the Roundtable were as follows: Dr. Ke Bingsheng, Director General, Research Center for Rural Economy of the Ministry of Agriculture of the People’s Republic of China; Mr. Tran Nam Binh, Manager, International Support Group of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam; Mr. Lord Reasmeay, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Cambodia; Mr. Chene Sithinaronggoy, representative from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Lao PDR; U Hla Kyaw, Director, Department of Agricultural Planning of Myanmar; and Dr. Balisacan.

Representatives of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), ASEAN Secretariat, and dignitaries from the embassies of Cambodia, People’s Republic of China, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, and Vietnam in Myanmar attended the Roundtable’s inaugural session. (JCFernandez)
SEARCA Launches ToT in Impact Assessment

While the world is further globalizing, inequality among developed and developing countries is rising sharply. As such, alleviation of poverty has become part of the Millennium Development Goals and much attention is centered on countries in Asia and the Pacific, where problems abound but opportunities are limitless. The World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), in particular, have supported many projects to address concerns on poverty. A lot of resources have been allocated to support development projects, especially in countries like the Philippines.

With a total population of 81.5 million and present debt value of US$61.3 billion, the Philippines is being infused with a lot of development projects to help the poor live fairly decent lives. The question, however, is to what extent do these development projects succeed in their objective to alleviate poverty in the country? What indicators are used to measure the impacts of these development projects on the lives of the poor? Where do policy formulation and advocacy fit in the scheme of things within development projects?

It is in this context that SEARCA launched the Training of Trainers (ToT) in Assessing Development Projects’ Impacts on Poverty on 6-17 September 2004 in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines.

The ToT, the first of a series of similar training courses that SEARCA will implement in the next five years, had Dr. Lisa Grace S. Bersales, Dean of the University of the Philippines’ School of Statistics, as Training Program Director while Dr. Wilfredo H. Libunao, SEARCA Training Specialist, served as Course Coordinator.

Impact assessment (IA) measures and evaluates changes in the well-being of individuals and communities after a particular project, program, or policy is implemented. It is a process of identifying the anticipated or actual impacts of development intervention on social, economic, and environmental factors. It may also be used as a decision-making tool for policymakers.

The ToT is an initiative of SEARCA to develop a critical mass of trained analysts who could serve as the country’s backbone in the assessment of development projects’ impacts. At present, there is no systematic effort on impact assessment among agencies implementing development projects in the country and thus, the ToT is envisioned as beneficial for them.

“So much has been spent in the name of the poor through various channels, including pork barrel,” said Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director. "There are monitoring and evaluation systems for development projects but these are more for tracking down the delivery inputs, not the participants’ understanding of the IA process, and their knowledge of poverty concepts, poverty measurements, and important issues related to poverty analysis. It also aimed to equip them with statistical tools to use at each step of the process; develop their skills in using IA results for policy formulation and advocacy, and at the same time, hone their skills in developing, implementing, and evaluating training courses of similar nature. Emphasis was given to statistical methods for IA and to strategies and methods for communicating IA studies, advocating policy issues and influencing policy formulation.

Impact assessment is needed to improve the design of development programs as well as policies to ensure that limited resources will be spent wisely," he further explained.

The ToT was attended by 19 mid-level professionals from five government agencies, six state colleges and universities, and four non-governmental organizations in the Philippines. It was designed to enhance the participants’ understanding of the connection between impact assessment and policy advocacy and development processes; and, at the same time, learn ways to develop, implement, and evaluate training courses of similar nature. It intended to enhance

Because of the general economic underdevelopment and the highly unequal distribution of wealth and social opportunity, a large number of Filipino families continue to live below the poverty line. With all the development projects being infused into the Philippines, there is an important need to identify and measure the extent to which these projects succeed in their objective to alleviate poverty in the country.

On 11 September, the participants visited the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHICIDSS): Kapangyarihan at Kaunlaran sa Barangay, a World Bank supported government program for governance and people empowerment in Dolores, Quezon.

KALAHICIDSS is a project that aims to empower the communities through development projects that involve the community people themselves in alleviating poverty.

The participants visited the KALAHICIDSS funded projects in Dolores, Quezon that have already been finished.
SEARCA Co-organizes Int’l Water Forum

Shown in photo are (L-R) Dr. Bryan Duncan, Director of ICRAE; Dr. Ramon Barba, representative of NAS; Dr. Sophie Nguyen-Khoa, Fisheries Specialist from IMI; Mrs. Excellence Secretary Etelina F. Alabastro of the Philippine Department of Science and Technology (DOST); Dr. Rafael Guerrero III, Executive Director and Fisheries Specialist of POMRD; and Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Director of SEARCA.

Fish production, an important source of animal protein for at least a billion people in developing countries, is very much dependent on freshwater ecosystems. However, environmental degradation has led to the loss of about half of the world’s wetlands and the extinction of over 20% of the world’s 10,000 known freshwater species. The Kyoto World Water Forum of 2003 highlighted the use of water for food and rural development as an issue and concern. It declared, “Inland fisheries being a major source of food, freshwater fish production should be addressed through intensified efforts to improve water quality and quantity in rivers and protection and restoration of breeding areas.”

Cognizant of the interconnectivity between freshwater ecosystems and fisheries, and the critical need for an integrated approach in the management of such resources to ensure water and fish security for developing countries, the Philippine Council for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development (PCAMRD) spearheaded the organization of the International Symposium-Workshop on Integrated Water and Fisheries Resources Management in Developing Countries (IPFRM). SEARCA, the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), and the International Center for Aquaculture and Aquatic Environments (ICRAE) were co-organizers. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), WorldFish Center, Global Water Watch, and International Water Management Institute (IWMI) were co-sponsors of the activity. The IPFRM aimed to review freshwater and fisheries integration practices in Southeast Asia and a number of developed countries and assess lessons learned from these practices. It also aimed to identify gaps in, as well as recommend action for, integrated freshwater and fisheries management.

Held on 20-22 September 2004 at Monte Vista Resort in Calamba City, Philippines, the Opening Ceremonies was highlighted by messages from the heads of the various organizing institutions, including SEARCA Director Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan. The keynote address was given by Dr. Sophie Nguyen-Khoa of the IMI.

In pursuit of its objectives, the Symposium-Workshop was divided into five sessions. Session 1 was on Integrated Water and Fisheries Resources Management in Upland Ecosystems. Dr. Bryan Duncan, Director of ICRAE, chaired the session and Dr. Rodolfo Undan, President, Central Luzon State University (Philippines) served as panelist.

Session 2 was on Integrated Water and Fisheries Resources Management in Lowland Ecosystems, chaired by Dr. Kevin Fitzsimons, Professor, University of Arizona (USA). Dr. Andreas Kanzler, DILG-GTZ (Germany) and Dr. Ana Miltstein, Senior Researcher, FASIS (Israel) served as panelists.

Session 3 was on the same subject matter in riverine ecosystems, chaired by Dr. Nguyen-Khoa. Dr. Roberto Pagulayan, Director, University of the Philippines Diliman- Institute of Biology (Philippines), and Dr. Tu Phuc Tuong, Water Specialist, International Rice Research Institute (Philippines) were its panelists.

The fourth session was on Integrated Water and Fisheries Resources Management in Lake/Reservoir Ecosystems. Dr. Rafael Querero III, Executive Director and Fisheries Specialist, POMRD served as session chair, with Dr. Fernando Kubitsch, Director, ACQUA IMAGEM (Brazil) and Ms. Adelina Santos-Borja, Aquatic Biologist, LLDA as panelists.

The fifth session, on Sustaining Water Resources and Production Systems through Community-Based Monitoring and Action, had Dr. William Deutsch, ICRAE and Alabama Water Watch (USA) as chair. It also had as moderator Dr. Nenita M. Manalili, SEARCA Research and Development Department Manager. This session had several paper presentations, which covered monitoring community-based water management projects, community-government partnerships, and best practices and institutionalization. Speakers were Mr. Jim Oprecio, Dr. Agnes Rola and Dr. Rosemary Ferholis (Philippines), and Drs. Deutsch and Duncan. (NGRogel)

SEARCA BRP Holds 8th JPC Meet

The Joint Programme Committee (JPC) of the Philippine-Netherlands Biodiversity Research Programme for Development in Mindanao: Focus on Mt. Malindang and Its Environ (BRP) convened on 15-18 September 2004 at Traders Hotel, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City for its 8th business meeting to discuss the progress of the programme and plan for future activities, now that it is on its final year of implementation.

The JPC is the highest policy and decision-making body of the BRP, which formulates and approves general policies and guidelines for the programme, and reviews and approves research proposals for funding. It is composed of Filipino and Dutch members representing various disciplines in the natural and social sciences.

The Committee is chaired by Dr. Perry S. Ong, Associate Professor at the University of the Philippines Diliman. The members include Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit Jr., SEARCA Deputy Director for Administration, Dr. Victor B. Amoroso, Professor at the Central Mindanao University, Dr. Marc Lammerink, Director of Forestry Waterpower Development (PMD) Consultants, Dr. Leonine Visser, Chair of the Department of Rural Development Sociology at Wageningen University and Research Centre, and Dr. Bram Huijsman, Director of International Agricultural
The SEARCA Agriculture and Development Seminar Series (ADSS) turned one year-old last 28 August. It continues to feature high-profile local and international speakers, quickly gaining a significant number of regular attendees from within and beyond the Los Baños science community.

The SEARCA ADSS is a flagship project of the Center’s Research and Development Department (RDD) and a brainchild of SEARCA Director Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan.

Public Morale Low, but Remains the Philippines’ Saving Grace

The Philippines is not just in the midst of an economic crisis that threatens to overwhelm it, as President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo recently acknowledged. The country is also in an unsatisfactory state in terms of governance, and it is just a matter of time before public morale and general sentiment follow suit. In a time of political and financial disarray for the country, it is the Filipinos’ famous resilience that remains to be their saving grace in 2004.

This was the assessment of Professor Randolf “Randy” S. David of the Philippines’ present financial state, governance, and public sentiment, when he discussed “The Philippines in 2004: Economy, Governance, and Public Morale” at the SEARCA ADSS last 14 September. (See related story on this page.)

Professor David, a respected sociologist from the University of the Philippines and a veteran broadcaster and multi-awarded opinion columnist, enumerated three important measures through which a nation can begin to recover from decades of economically, socially, and politically lagging behind neighboring countries: a nation’s productivity must expand in proportion to its growing needs, if it is to avoid perennially living beyond its means and, consequently, tapping the savings of other nations; its political leadership must live and measure itself against the rules of good governance, if it is committed to democracy and equal distribution of wealth and services; and a nation’s citizens must be engaged and given a chance to meaningfully participate in defining national directions, if they are to be an integral force in nation building. (AJTAragon)
Nagoya U Hosts 15th AAACU Biennial Convention; Council Accepts Two New Members

Nagoya University hosted the 15th Biennial Convention of the Asian Association of Agricultural Colleges and Universities (AAACU) on 28-30 September 2004. The convention's theme was "Development of e-Learning System as a Tool for Distance Education in Agriculture and Bio-Industry in Asia." Nagoya University is a regular member of AAACU. About 100 representatives from AAACU member institutions in Asia and the Pacific attended the convention.

Speakers at the opening ceremony stressed the value of using information and communication technologies (ICT) and introducing new approaches to strengthen teaching and learning systems. In his keynote speech, Dr. Shin-ichi Hirano, President of Nagoya University, pointed to the importance of consortia like the AAACU and other networks such as the Academic Consortium 21 as vehicles for international exchange and cooperation. Both Dr. Surdev Singh of the Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) and Dr. David Atchoarena of the Institute of International Education and Planning of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasized the need for partnership and expressed interest in collaborating with the AAACU.

Back-to-back with the convention, the AAACU Executive Board and Governing Council conducted meetings on 27 September and 29 September, respectively. The major decisions made by the Governing Council upon the endorsement of the Executive Board were as follows: 1) admission of Mie University in Mie, Japan, and the Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU) in Ilocos Norte, Philippines as new AAACU members; 2) certification of two projects jointly implemented by AAACU and Nagoya University, namely: Development of Agriculture Curriculum and Database of Human Resources for AAACU Network; and the Development of e-Learning System for AAACU; 3) the utilization of SEARCA's Asian Journal of Agriculture and Development as one venue for the publication of articles contributed by AAACU members as well as selected papers presented in AAACU conventions; and 4) the publication of an electronic newsletter.

The Governing Council also elected a new set of officers of the Executive Board during the last day of the convention. The members of the AAACU Executive Board are Dr. Tsukasa Matsuda, Dean of the Graduate School of Bioagricultural Sciences of Nagoya University, as President of AAACU; Dr. Shy-Hwa Cheng, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, National Chung-Hsing University, Taiwan, as First Vice-President; Dr. Pedro D. Destura, President of University of Eastern Philippines, as Second Vice President; Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Director of the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) as Executive Secretary and Treasurer; Dr. Dang Vu Binh, Rector of Hanoi Agricultural University, Vietnam, and Dr. Mooka Lee, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Seoul National University, Korea, as Board members; and Dr. Pongsek Angkasaith, Vice President for Administration of Chiang Mai University, Thailand as Immediate Past President and Ex-Officio Member.

The term of office of the Executive Secretary/Treasurer is three years, while the rest of the Board/Council Officers serve the Association for two years from 30 September 2004 until the closing date of the 16th AAACU Biennial Convention in 2006.

The AAACU was established in 1972 in Baguio City, Philippines. The admission of Mie University and Mariano Marcos State University as regular members of AAACU brought the total membership to 47 regular and 4 affiliate members. (ECCedicol)
SEARCA Signs New MOA with Quedancor

On 24 September 2004, SEARCA signed a new Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corporation (QUEDANCOR) for the project titled, “Assessment and Management of Risks Due to Natural Calamities in Support of QUEDANCOR’s Lending Operations.” Mr. Nelson C. Buenaflor, President, and Mr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Director, respectively, represented SEARCA and QUEDANCOR. The project will be implemented by the Center’s Consulting Services Department (ConServ) for six months, from 01 October 2004 to 31 March 2005.

The project will assess the impacts of natural calamities on the lending operations of QUEDANCOR and develop appropriate measures to mitigate the adverse impacts of natural calamities on the borrowers’ welfare. It will also provide QUEDANCOR with directions on how loans can be restructured to help borrowers recover from the devastation.

ConServ will engage the services of an interdisciplinary team of experts for the project. They are expected to estimate the amount of bridge funds for QUEDANCOR’s credit assistance; determine crop mix in a given area or region that can minimize losses to small farmers due to natural calamities; prepare map showing risks to specific natural calamities by province or region in the Philippines; recommend an alternative or even better system of assessing risks and vulnerabilities to natural calamities; and formulate strategic program of communication and education of various stakeholders on various sources of risks associated with natural calamities, as well as on the effective and efficient coping mechanisms to manage these risks.

Study Tour for 30 Indonesian Community Empowerment Workers Conducted

Thirty officials from Indonesia’s Department of Community and Village Empowerment (DGCVE), Ministry of Home Affairs (MOMA), participated in a short-term overseas comparative studies from 22 August to 4 September 2004.

The study tour, the second of three batches, took the Indonesian officials to different agencies and provinces in Malaysia and India. SEARCA, through its Training and Consulting Services Department, coordinated with DG CVE, Ministry of Home Affairs (MOMA), for the study tour. The comparative study is designed to enhance the capability of 30 officials recruited and selected by the CERD Project. These officials are divided into three batches, with each batch further divided into two groups consisting of 15 members each.

The comparative study is deemed to be an effective capability-building approach for the DG CVE staff in gaining additional or new knowledge/insights in implementing Indonesia’s community empowerment and government coordination program. This approach will expose the staff into varied local government decentralization scheme, community development activities, financial intermediation services, community-based savings, loan organization, and micro-enterprise development.

The Malaysia leg, which ran from 22 to 27 August 2004, included visits to INTAN; Malaysian Cooperative Development Department; Cooperative College of Malaysia; Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia; Cheras Agricultural and Floral Station; Small and Medium Industries Development Corporation; and Pengerusi Jawatan Kuasa Keselamatan Kampong (JKKK) Project. It also included a visit to the Genting Highlands, one of the most developed hill resorts in Malaysia.

The India leg of the tour was held from 28 August to 4 September 2004. The offices and projects visited in this country included the NAARM; National Institute of Rural Development; National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management; Directorate of Rice Research; Acharya N. G. Ranga Agricultural University; and International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics.

Local coordinators were hired in Malaysia and India to facilitate and coordinate the comparative studies.
SEARCA Scholar Attends Int’l Confab on Sustainable Land and Watershed Management

An Indonesian SEARCA scholar, Mr. Budi Guntoro, participated in the International Conference on Innovative Practices for Sustainable Sloping Lands and Watershed Management, which was held on 5-9 September 2004 at the Chiang Mai Hill Hotel in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Mr. Guntoro’s attendance to the conference was supported by his SEARCA scholarship.

Organized by Thailand’s Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the conference aimed to bring to light effective innovative practices for sustainable management and conservation of sloping land and watersheds.

Attended by 240 participants from eight Southeast Asian countries and China, the conference, according to Mr. Guntoro, provided a venue for the presentation and sharing of knowledge and experiences on innovative sloping land management practices and effective knowledge transfer accumulated by several projects conducted in the Southeast Asian region. He said the challenges of achieving effective adoption by smallholders of these innovations through improved policies were also presented and discussed.

He also indicated that the end goal of the conference was to develop a functional research-extension-farmer linkage system-network for sustainable and acceptable sloping land and catchment management.

Mr. Guntoro is pursuing his PhD in Agricultural Extension at Kasetsart University in Bangkok, Thailand. He obtained his MS in Community Development at the University of the Philippines Los Baños in 2000, also under a SEARCA scholarship grant. He is currently Lecturer at the Faculty of Animal Science, Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. (LLDDomingo)

Five New Scholarships Awarded

SEARCA has recently awarded graduate scholarships to Mr. Seng Leang, Cambodian; Mr. I Wayan Budiasa, Indonesian; Mr. Sengmouang Sithivohan, Laotian; Ms. Pham Huu Aung, Vietnamese; and Ms. Pham Huu Yen Phuong, Vietnamese.

Mr. Budiasa began his PhD in Agricultural Economics at Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in September 2004. Mr. Budiasa is Lecturer at the Faculty of Agriculture, Udayana University in Bali, Indonesia.

Mr. Sithivohan will begin his MS in Irrigation Engineering at Kasetsart University in Bangkok, Thailand in November 2004. Mr. Sithivohan is Chief of Irrigation Operation and Maintenance of the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Service Office, Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao PDR.

Meanwhile, the three other new scholars will pursue their graduate programs at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) in November 2004. Mr. Leang and Ms. Aung will pursue their master’s degree in community development and plant genetic resources conservation and management, respectively. Mr. Leang is Assistant Researcher at the Inland Fisheries Research and Development Institute, Department of Fisheries of Cambodia. Ms. Aung is Assistant Supervisor at the Myanna Agricultural Service, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Myanmar.

On the other hand, Ms. Phuong will pursue her PhD in Food Science and Technology also at UPLB. Ms. Phuong is Lecturer at the Faculty of Food Science and Technology, University of Agriculture and Forestry in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam.

The new scholarship awards bring to 1,091 the total number of scholarships granted by SEARCA. (LLDDomingo)

SEARCA Has Two New Fellows

Two SEARCA scholars from Myanmar recently completed their graduate studies at Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).


Ms. Than Da Min, on the other hand, completed her PhD in Agronomy (Crop Production and Cropping System) at UPM in September 2004. Her dissertation is titled “Performance and Stability of Grain Maize Genotypes in Peninsular Malaysia.” Based on her research, Ms. Min co-authored a paper titled “Multi-locational Trials on Locally-developed Maize Hybrids and Synthetics,” which was published in the UPM Research Report 2001.

To date, SEARCA has a total of 935 fellows (538 MS, 397 PhD). (LLDDomingo)

UPLB Has New Vice Chancellor for Administration

Effective 1 September 2004, Dr. Isabelita M. Pabuyan, a professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) College of Economics and Management, assumes the Vice Chancellorship for Administration of UPLB. The University is one of the members of the SEARCA-initiated University Consortium.
Performance and Stability of Grain Maize Genotypes in Peninsular Malaysia

Than Da Min
Myanmar
PhD in Agronomy
Universiti Putra Malaysia

In plant breeding programs, potential genotypes are usually evaluated in different environments (locations and years) before desirable ones are selected. Genotype and environment (G x E) interaction is associated with the differential performance of materials tested at different locations in different years, and influences selection and recommendation of cultivars. Highly stable genotypes are desirable. Furthermore, spatial variability on soil properties and crop yield has been one of the major objectives in investigations related to agriculture production. Performance and stability of grain maize (Zea mays L.) genotypes were evaluated in four locations in Peninsular Malaysia, namely: Padang Rengas (Perak), Rhu Tapai (Terengganu), Sungai Udang (Melaka), and UPM, Serdang, Selangor, in two years.

The objectives of the study were to: 1) determine the performance of 14 grain maize genotypes for grain yield and yield components at the four locations in two years; 2) evaluate the G x E interaction effects; 3) identify high-yielding genotypes at each location and their stability by using different stability parameters; 4) evaluate the spatial variability of soil nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K); plant N, P, and K; and their influence on grain yield; and 5) investigate the relationship among grain yield and soil and plant nutrient variables.

The experiments at the locations were arranged in a randomized complete block design (RCBD) with four replications. Recommended agronomic practices were used at each location. Evaluations were conducted from June 2000 to March 2002.

Genotypes and G x E interaction effects were highly significant, indicating high variability among genotypes, and genotypes responded differently to the changing environments. Among the 14 genotypes evaluated, GxA. Selected GxA, SC-2, Putra J-58, and TWC-4 showed high performance and have good potential to be used as source populations for future breeding programs. Comparing performance of genotypes for grain yield and yield components, Selected GxA was found to have the highest grain yield (5,726 kg/ha), shelling percentage (84.9%), 100-grain weight (25.5 g) and ear weight per plant (149.5 g), earliest in flowering (50.6 days to tasseling and 53.2 days to silking) and longest ear (15.5 cm). TWC-2 was found to be earliest to mature. SC-3 showed the shortest plants, while Swan 1 was the tallest and was late in maturity. The highest ear diameter was observed on SC-1. Terengganu in 2000 was found to be the most favorable environment, as shown by its highest environmental index.

Different methods of stability analyses (i.e., comparison of mean values, regression coefficient, deviation from regression, coefficient of determination, environmental variance, Wricke’s ecovariance, Shukla’s stability variance, and genotype grouping involving coefficients of variation) were used and they were consistent with each other in revealing the stability of the genotypes. Selected GxA was identified as having the highest grain yield and most stable in performance, followed by DC-1, while SC-2 was the lowest yielding and most unstable genotype. Some genotypes showed specific adaptability to specific locations. This experiment led to the identification and possible release of a new, high-yielding and stable grain maize synthetic variety, Selected GxA.

Broad-sense heritability estimates on the genotypes were moderate for grain yield in the year 2001 evaluation and years combined, and also for ear length, ear diameter, and number of kernel rows per ear in each year and years combined. These indicate that genetic factors had moderate effects on the control of grain yield, ear length, ear diameter, and number of kernel rows per ear in the population of genotypes.

In addition to the evaluation on genetic stability, spatial variability for grain yield and leaf and soil chemical properties were also evaluated at the four locations, where different patterns of spatial variability for grain yield variation was associated with

Role of Root Signals in Rice Responses to Salinity Stress

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Salinity is a major problem affecting productivity of agricultural crops. Rice is sensitive to salt stress, particularly during early seedling stage and reproduction. This study aims to determine the short- and long-term responses of two contrasting rice genotypes and to examine the role of root signals in mediating such responses.

Three experiments were conducted using salt-sensitive (IR 29) and tolerant (IR 651) genotypes. These genotypes were subjected to salt stress of 12 ds m⁻¹ starting 14 days after germination. Physiological responses were monitored from 0.5 hour to 12 days of salinization by measuring gas exchange parameters, leaf water potential, and abscisic acid (ABA) concentrations in roots and shoots at different intervals.

Salinity adversely affected growth and gas exchange characteristics and caused reduction in leaf water potential as well as progressive increase in ABA concentrations in roots and shoots in both genotypes. The sensitive genotype showed greater reduction in all parameters and higher ABA concentration compared to IR 651 with prolonged stress.

Few mechanisms seem to underlie the tolerance phenotype of IR 651 such as efficient control of Na⁺ transport from roots to the shoots, maintenance of higher K⁺ uptake, greater capacity to sequester salt into roots and dilution of salt concentration in plant tissue through vigorous growth. Additionally, this genotype tends to close its stomata.
SEAMEO Center Directors Meet in Bangkok

The Directors of all the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) centers gathered on 20-24 July at the Montien Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand, for the SEAMEO Center Directors’ Meeting (CDM) 2004.

SEARCA Director Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan attended the meeting, along with Ms. Nelia R. Belen, Head of Accounting Unit.

SEAMEO is a chartered international organization established on 30 November 1965 to promote cooperation in education, science, and culture in the Southeast Asian region. Its member countries are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and New Zealand are associate members.

SEAMEO has 15 centers spread across Southeast Asia, among the first of which to be established is SEARCA, back in 1966.

Through its regional centers, SEAMEO aims to enhance regional understanding and cooperation and unity of purpose among member countries and achieve a better quality of life by establishment of networks and partnerships, providing an intellectual forum for policy makers and experts, and promoting sustainable human resource development.

During the meeting, the centers’ accomplishments for the year 2003/2004 were reported. These accomplishments are based on the five Key Result Areas of SEAMEO, namely: 1) Enhanced Programme Excellence and Relevance; 2) Increased Access to Markets of SEAMEO Programmes; 3) Increased Linkages with National, Regional and International Institutions; 4) Ensured Financial Viability; and 5) Enhanced Quality and Efficiency of Management. (AJTAragon)

The three and a half day meeting covered discussions on JPC self-assessment and Mid-term Programme Evaluation, and the strategy towards programme extension, and regionalization of the programme for BRP 2.

In the self-assessment, the JPC discussed the innovativeness of the programme, which include the demand-driven North-South collaboration, interdisciplinary cooperation, enhanced capacity building of Mindanao researchers and other local stakeholders, and the participation of various stakeholders in research and support activities. It also espouses the landscape approach in undertaking research.

The BRP is a five-year research programme on biodiversity management and conservation jointly undertaken by Filipino and Dutch researchers in a geographical wedge in the Mt. Malindang Range, Misamis Occidental. (CSFule)
SEARCA Director Reports on Population, Economic Growth, Poverty Connection

SEARCA Director Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan is spearheading the Center’s pursuit of leading discussions on emerging development issues and concerns, as he presented the groundbreaking study "The Population-Poverty Nexus: The Philippines in Comparative East Asian Context", establishing for the first time with empirical basis the significant connection of population, economic development, and poverty.

In the year 2000, Philippine per capita GDP would have been US$1,210 instead of only US$993. At the same time, about 1 million families or 6 million Filipinos would not have been counted among the poor. That is, if the Philippines’ population growth were to have been only two children per woman.

The study, authored by Dr. Balisacan, Dennis Mapa, Leonardo Lanzona, Rosemarie Edillon, and Charisse Tubianosa, discusses such foregone economic and social benefits for the Philippines. Using actual and simulated data, the researchers studied developed and developing countries in East Asia for determinants and interplay of population growth on the one hand, and economic growth and poverty reduction on the other. The study was undertaken through the joint efforts of the Philippine Center for Population and Development (PCPD) and the Asia Pacific Policy Center (APPC).

The paper is now incorporated as a chapter in the second edition of the book "The Ties That Bind: Population and Development in the Philippines", a PCPD-supported publication, in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) Policy Center.

At the launching of the book on 10 August 2004 at the Peninsula Hotel in Makati City, Dr. Balisacan delivered a lecture on how the Philippines and Thailand were neck-and-neck in terms of population size and per capita GDP back in 1975, one of the findings shown in the paper.

Twenty five years since, Philippine population ballooned to 75 million while the number of Thais were pegged at 62 million. In the same year, Thai women have, on the average, only two children or a total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.9, while the Philippine TFR stood at 3.6 or an average of three to four children per woman.

The decline in the population growth rate of Thailand is complemented with an increasing per capita GDP, growing to about eight times the 1975 level. Indonesia’s per capita GDP grew 6.5 times and South Korea 10 times, while the Philippines per capita GDP increased only 2.6 times. This was compounded by the high population growth rate of 2.36% a year, the highest among all four countries.

The study does not solely cite population as the reason for the dismal performance of the Philippines’ economy. It also looked into other factors like savings rate, trade regime, governance, human capital, and availability and quality of social services. Yet it established that the impact of population growth is much more significant and could worsen poverty if left unchecked.

How much would the savings be in terms of the cost of education and health services if the Philippine population growth rate followed that of Thailand? According to the study, from 1996 to 2000 some 52 billion pesos from the health sector and 128 billion from the education sector from 1991 to 2000 could have been saved. If these savings would have been invested on the agricultural sector where most of the country’s poor belong, population growth would have been slower, income higher by 3%, rural poverty declined by 70%, and national poverty lower by 60%.

The book launch and the unveiling of the study came at the heels of a major controversy involving the Philippine Senate and House of Representatives, where there are already five versions of the family planning bill filed, the most contentious of which is House Bill No. 16 of Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman because of its provision for having two children as an ideal family size. To provide a venue for an informed dialogue between the authors of the study and concerned lawmakers, Dr. Balisacan was also invited by the Philippine Legislators’ Committee on Population and Development Foundation (PLCPD) to present the said study at the House of Representatives Congress last 17 August and 13 September at the Senate.
SEARCA Extends Knowledge Through Exhibits

SEARCA participated last 15-17 September in the “Tuklas Agham” (discover science) exhibit at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) Student Union (SU) Building. The exhibit was conducted in celebration of Bañamos, the annual festivity organized by the municipality of Los Baños.

The SU Building, which served as a one-stop shop for the Bañamos revelers, saw more than 650 foreign and local viewers in just two days. It was an opportune time to promote the Center’s publications and activities, especially the weekly Agriculture and Development Seminar Series (ADSS). Guests, including the town mayor and his councilors, were quick to get hold of free brochures, books and monographs. There was a huge demand for the Center’s knowledge products, especially from students and professionals, and specifically for materials on biotechnology and biodiversity. All in all, the exhibit provided SEARCA an opportunity to extend knowledge, as information-seeking municipal agriculturists and agricultural technicians came to learn of new applications generated by R&D.

Earlier, SEARCA, together with other research agencies such as the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) and the ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (ARCBBC), had joined an exhibit at IRRI to celebrate the Los Baños Science Community (LBSC)-National Science and Technology Week (NSTW) last 4-6 August 2004. Farmers, entrepreneurs and scientists in various fields came to participate in the seminars, browse at publications, and view the exhibits — a similar scenario when SEARCA took part at the National Academy of Science and Technology Meeting last 13-14 July 2004 to showcase the Center’s role in agriculture and rural development. (RNAForonda)