SEARCA conducted the Regional Conference on Water Governance and Poverty on 9-10 March 2005 at the EDSA Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong City, Philippines. The conference, with the theme “Reducing Poverty, Enhancing Competitiveness: A Call for Effective Water Governance in Southeast Asia,” was attended by more than 35 representatives of development agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), and research centers in Southeast Asian countries.

Thematic papers on water governance, research and development, water use and allocation, funding of water resource development initiatives, and issues and concerns in water related disasters were presented during the conference. Speakers included (inset, from left to right) Dr. Bruno Z. Haman, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Consultant to the Philippines; Dr. Madar Samad, Head of the South Asia Regional Office of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI); Dr. Eric T. Craswell, Executive Officer of the Global Water System Project (GWSP); Mr. Wouter Lincklaen Arriens, Lead Water Resources Specialist of the Asian Development Bank (ADB); and Ms. Susan R. Espinueva of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

Experts agree every drop must be accounted for so the resource could last longer.

Through the conduct of the conference, SEARCA Addresses / to page 5
MDGs and SEARCA

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) embody the global community’s heightened concern for broadly based economic and social development. MDG One, to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US$1 a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, is the closest to what SEARCA represents.

The past two decades have seen significant progress in reducing extreme poverty in Southeast Asia. Still, poverty levels remain quite high for the region as a whole. Data for recent years of the World Bank and UN show that the proportion of the population subsisting below US$1 a day is about 24%, or 768 million people, most of whom are located in rural areas. The differences across countries are even more alarming: about 35% (4.6 M people) for Cambodia, 35% (1.9 M people) for Lao PDR, 11% (8.6 M people) for the Philippines, 7% (16 M people) for Indonesia, 2% (1.6 M people) for Vietnam, and virtually nil for the rest of the countries in the region. Note that poverty is higher in the Philippines than in Indonesia and Vietnam even though the latter two have lower average income per person. This is because inequality in the distribution of productive assets and incomes is more severe in the Philippines than in either Indonesia or Vietnam.

The region also exhibits heterogeneous experiences across countries when it comes to progress on poverty reduction. It has been particularly sluggish for some countries, and remarkably rapid for others. Note, for example, that Vietnam managed to bring down absolute poverty level from about 15% in the early 1990s to 2% in recent years. Seen from an international perspective, this country, along with China whose absolute poverty was down to about 16% in the late 1990s from a level of 30% a decade earlier, has been spectacularly successful in the war against poverty.

What can be done to improve the rate of poverty reduction? On a long-term perspective, rapid but sustained and broadly based economic growth is the key to hastening the reduction of absolute poverty and hunger. Many of the countries in the region have managed sustained growth rates of over 6%, and these countries have also seen marked improvements in their respective poverty levels. In the Philippine case, boom-bust cycles characterized its economy during the past two decades. Its anemic growth is the single most important cause of extreme poverty in the country.

The recently launched Millennium Project Report commissioned by the United Nations demonstrates that, in general, poverty in Asian countries has been quite responsive to economic growth. A 1% increase in the growth rate would speed up the poverty reduction rate by 2.2% for the Philippines, 2.9% for China, 3% for Indonesia, and 3.5% for Thailand.

While growth is good for the poor, the quality of that growth matters a great deal. The relatively muted response of poverty to growth in the Philippines suggests that growth cannot be solely relied upon to address poverty. Poverty reduction would require access to support services that will allow the poor to participate more in growth processes.

The foundation for sustained poverty reduction is enhanced if economic growth is buttressed by a robust performance of the agriculture sector. Rural development propelled by agricultural growth is crucial to poverty reduction since nearly two-thirds of the poor can be found in the rural areas and are primarily engaged in agricultural activities.

Low growth of agricultural output translates to high food prices, low farm incomes, and demand for high nominal wages. Small farmers do not necessarily benefit from high food prices since the large majority of them are net buyers of food.

Apart from focusing on the agriculture sector, the national strategy for poverty must address the fundamental causes of low productivity in rural areas, particularly the low investment in rural infrastructure, human capital, R&D, and information.

Enabling the poor through provision of access to human capital development and support services is not just an equity objective. The Millennium Project Report clearly shows the link between poverty reduction (equity) and subsequent economic growth. That is, a country that makes a determined effort to address its poverty problem is establishing a strong foundation for a subsequently higher and sustained growth path.

SEARCA, for its part, recognizes these lessons and makes concrete contributions to such efforts. In SEARCA’s Eighth Five-Year Plan (2004-2009), the vision for the next five years is to develop future leaders who can effectively assist in enhancing agricultural and rural development and finding solutions to reduce poverty and ensure food security in the region. Specifically, we are steering our graduate scholarship, short-term training, and research and development programs to focus on agricultural competitiveness and natural resource management.

Of course, the prime responsibility for achieving the MDGs lies with individual countries. However, as an institution, SEARCA is given a unique opportunity to make a difference, not only for the Philippines, but for the region as well. Let us make every effort to this end.
UN IFAD, SEARCA Seek Ways to Alleviate Poverty in the Philippines

The United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (UN IFAD) recently tapped SEARCA to formulate a country strategy for IFAD support to the Government of the Philippines’ National Poverty Reduction Strategy and Effort for the next five years. Using both participatory and consultative approaches, regional consultation workshops were held in the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Baguio in 2004. A national stakeholder workshop was conducted in Cebu City on 24-26 January 2005.

Spearheaded by SEARCA Director Arsenio M. Balisacan, renowned poverty expert in East Asia and the Philippines, the workshop was participated in by representatives of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Agencia Espanola de Cooperation International (AECI), Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), European Commission (EU), the Philippine government, and various nongovernment organizations (NGOs).

The output of these workshops was a Country Strategic Opportunities Paper (COSOP) that prioritizes strategies in the economic, sectoral, and rural poverty context, as well as corresponding constraints on and opportunities for poverty reduction. The COSOP is supported by the following issue papers, authored by experts: microfinance, Dr. Gilbert M. Llanto, Vice President of the Philippine Institute of Development Studies (PIDS); indigenous people and conflict management, Ms. Toby C. Monsod, Project Coordinator of the 2005 Philippine Human Development Report and former Assistant Secretary of the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry (DTI); livelihood/farming systems/environment, Dr. Nicomedes D. Briones, Professor of Environmental Science at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB); local government/decentralization, Dr. Alex B. Brillantes, Dean of the College of Public Administration and Governance (NCPAG), University of the Philippines Diliman; gender, Ms. Ofelia Templo, Professor at the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) and former Deputy Director General, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA); rural institutions/NGOs, Fr. Francis Lucas and Mr. Raul Gonzales, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC); remittances, Dr. Fernando Aldaba, Chair of the Economics Department, ADMU, and Atty. Alfonso Bagasao, Chair of the Economic Resource Center for Overseas Filipinos (ERCOF); and rural policy framework, Dr. Balisacan.

The COSOP will be presented in a high level meeting with Philippine department secretaries before it finally enters IFAD’s Framework of Assistance for the Philippines.

The workshops were facilitated by Dr. Maripaz L. Perez, Undersecretary of the Philippine Department of Science and Technology (DOST), and Dr. Briones. Dr. Maribec A. Campos, SEARCA Consultant, served as Project Coordinator.

IFAD support to the Philippines started in 1978. To date, nine projects had been awarded to the Philippines, totaling US$ 104.05 M. IFAD was established in 1977 to finance agricultural development projects primarily for food production in developing countries, taking into consideration structural problems relating to poverty and that the majority of the developing world’s poor populations are concentrated in rural areas. It has a very specific mandate: to combat hunger and rural poverty in developing countries. To link with the views of the newly re-elected government of the Philippines which took office in June 2004, IFAD realized the need for a Country Strategic Opportunities Paper. (MACampos)
Water: accounting for every drop for it to last longer

Have you ever stopped to count how many drops of water you use each day? If you did, have you thought of the worst case scenario -- one day you wake up to find that there’s not a single drop? To most of us, the scenario is far-fetched given that we are naturally well-endowed with water resources. While water scarcity may not be a problem yet, poor water governance would lead us to water scarcity.

Today, more than ever, with a ballooning population thirsting for more water, there is an urgent need to judiciously account every drop of available water, for only then can we talk of good water governance.

That is what scientists are working at, and people should be informed about it. It’s not just the responsibility of scientists, but also of all water users.

Dr. Bruno Z. Haman, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Consultant to the Philippines, pushes for the need to “accurately assess water resources; how much water we have; where to use this water …; what is the situation right now…; what is the sustainable capacity of this resource…; and what is the long-term consequence to the water quality…”

Today, in many developing countries, there exists no complete database on a river basin as a basic unit of analysis.

According to Dr. Haman, for us to be able to improve water governance, we need to advocate the following policies:

Education. In the case of the Philippines, the local government units must be enabled in water governance by making available to them geologists, hydrologists, engineers, among others. It will take 4-5 years to produce such, and another 4-5 years for these people to have the necessary experience and be able to assist officials and groups directly working on water governance.

Pricing. Water uses must be addressed: irrigation, by far the largest, using both surface and ground water; domestic, industrial, tourism. The following data inputs are needed for proper water pricing:

- **Delineation of boundaries.** Categorizing areas as white (unrestricted amounts of water); gray – semirestricted/regulated; black - prohibited use of water, to be used as buffer when the white and gray areas are exhausted.

- **Monitoring of urban population and water use or network.** Data will be helpful to determine if water is overexploited or not; monitors should be designed to capture how much water is used; in many cases, monitoring data are outdated and need to be updated continuously.

- **Instilling values.** Dedication and perseverance in the workplace and the necessary instruments and transportation will strengthen local units (LGUs/water districts) to do water monitoring. Water governance will have more clout when participatory stakeholder consultations are regularly done.

Thus, one of the research agenda would be to determine the “relative magnitude of changes in the global water system caused by human activities.”

On climate change as one of the factors contributing to water resources sustainability, Dr. Craswell says that nitrogen fixation, carbon dioxide, increased flux of nitrogen to the coastal zone, loss of tropical rainforests and woodlands, extinction of species – these, among others, need to become part of the research agenda too.

Dr. Craswell also brings in some new terms that would need to be explored further: virtual water or water that is needed to produce a product (for example – producing food and in the process, accounting for the volume of water being used, vis-à-vis the food being produced); water footprints or the combination of virtual water plus the accompanying human impacts on the use of water (for example, cereal exporting countries like the U.S. have high water footprints per capita against those that are only importing this product).

Related to this, he also touches on the import/export of actual nutrients, e.g., flows of nitrogen in international food trade. Countries that export a lot of nutrients, Argentina, Canada, and Australia (for meat products) for example, face issues like water trading.

Again, like Dr. Haman, Dr. Craswell emphasizes water governance as a central issue to all concepts stated above.

In accord with Dr. Haman and Dr. Craswell, Dr. Madar Samad of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), said that the “key challenge is how best to allocate the...
As Mr. Wouter Linklaen, water resources specialist from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), puts it, “water resources pricing and allocation should be able to improve access to water by the poor people, and not marginalize them by having them pay more than what they can afford.” This is happening today in some parts of the world, and ADB is trying to correct the situation.

In his presentation, Dr. Johnson said that intensified ‘non-chemical agriculture’, characterized by overgrazing, irrigation, and polluted water, has damaged natural systems.

“We need more food but not more of this type of agriculture,” he added. “I argue very strongly that if we are going to deal successfully with feeding the increasing number of people on this earth, we need to think more smartly about the agricultural systems,” asserts Dr. Johnson. He further commented that the potential of biotechnology makes agricultural intensification less damaging.

Dr. Johnson also shared the results of the world-renowned “UK Farm-Scale Evaluations,” the largest ecological experiment on farmland in the world. According to him, the study aimed to resolve issues on biodiversity by comparing abundance and diversity of farmland-dependent wildlife in between fields of genetically-modified and conventional crops.

He concluded his presentation by saying that in all risk assessments, the final decision depends on what a country wants out of its environment. Although it is informed by science, the decision would be a political judgment at the end of the day.

Dr. Brian Johnson heads the Biotechnology Advisory Unit of English Nature, one of the largest conservation NGOs in Europe. English Nature is UK’s advisor on nature conservation. (DCABaracol)

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SEARCA helped raise the importance of water governance in regional development and poverty alleviation agenda. During the Conference, the participants developed a framework for enabling policies and programs toward equitable and sustained water access. Moreover, priority water development initiatives and funding mobilization strategies were identified, as well as areas for collaborative endeavors in the region that will lead to the alleviation of water poverty.

Throughout the rest of the year, the Center will organize other international and regional fora and conferences addressing pressing issues and concerns in the areas of agriculture and rural development. For more information on future conferences, please email post@agri.searca.org, or visit www.searca.org. (AJTAragon)
Social Dynamics, Microeconomics of Poverty Discussed

Does a person’s social context affect his or her productivity and welfare? Recent literature in development economics suggests such a relationship.

To push the research frontier on this subject matter to the next level, 22 economists, including leading personages in development economics, gathered at the Bellagio Study and Conference Center of the Rockefeller Foundation in Bellagio, Italy on 30 March-1 April 2005 for a workshop on “Social Dynamics and the Microeconomics of Poverty.”

The workshop aimed to assemble a critical mass of rigorous empirical research that explores more carefully how and why associational patterns matter to the economics of poverty and development. The meeting served as the final conference of a project on “Identity, Community and Economic Policy for Poverty Alleviation” sponsored by grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Rockefeller Foundation. The workshop was organized jointly by Cornell University and Brown University.

Dr. Christopher B. Barrett, coordinator of the project that organized the workshop, said that the workshop invited a small, select group of leading researchers who would be able to offer new empirical results on how and why people form into groups and the consequences of these often-endogenous associational patterns for productivity and welfare.

The conference discussed nine papers and conducted three panel discussions on (1) “Incorporating Social Economics into Undergraduate Curricula,” (2) Incorporating Social Economics into Graduate Curricula,” and (3) “Social Economics and Policy Research and Outreach.”

Among the participants was Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Professor of Economics at the University of the Philippines and Director of SEARCA. Recognized for his works on East Asian poverty, inequality and rural development, Dr. Balisacan served as a panelist of the session on “Social Economics and Policy Research and Outreach.” He discussed policy questions and issues relevant to contemporary development problems in developing countries of Asia, particularly Southeast Asia. (LL(Tallofer)

Inception Report for Risk Assessment Project Presented

SEARCA presented the inception report for the project titled, “Assessment and Management of Risks due to Natural Calamities in Support of QUEDANCOR’s Lending Operation” to the Project Steering Committee on 02 March 2005 at the QUEDANCOR office. The proposed approach and methodology in relation to project objectives and outputs were discussed with QUEDANCOR, an attached credit agency of the Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA).

The Project Steering Committee is co-chaired by Mr. Nelson C. Buenafior, President and CEO of QUEDANCOR and Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Director of SEARCA. The members are Mr. Edmund J. Sana, Undersecretary for Regional Operations of the DA; Dr. Gilbert A. Llanto, Vice-President of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS); Mr. Niels Patrick C. Riconalla, Acting Senior Vice-President of QUEDANCOR; Ms. Marissa E. Caparaz, Vice-President of Planning Services Office of QUEDANCOR; and Dr. Mercedita A. Sombilla, Manager of SEARCA Consulting Services (ConServ).

The project aims to evaluate the impacts of natural calamities on the lending operations of QUEDANCOR; develop appropriate measures to mitigate the adverse impacts of natural calamities on the borrowers’ welfare; and provide QUEDANCOR with directions on how loans can be restructured to help borrowers recover from damages. It has five components: 1) crop protection, 2) livestock, 3) fisheries and aquaculture, 4) socioeconomic, and 5) credit and financing.

A purposive and systematic procedure will be adopted to evaluate risks due to natural calamities, and to determine the potential impacts that will rationalize the differences in area-specific and time-bound risks. This will help QUEDANCOR and other stakeholders appreciate the nature of risk and determine impacts that are critical in agricultural production decision-making.

The assessment of risks will be based on analysis of primary data and other secondary information that are location-specific due to natural calamities, as well as impacts based on sample survey to be conducted in selected QUEDANCOR coverage areas. Three types of natural disasters that frequently beleaguer the Philippines will be covered: 1) typhoons, 2) El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) - El Niño, La Niña, floods and drought, and 3) pests and diseases.

The multidisciplinary project team of SEARCA will work on the following components of the agricultural production system: grains, high value crops, aquaculture, and livestock. It will formulate coping mechanisms and general guidelines on the management of agricultural risks for each component, quantify the risks to generate effects and impacts, and assess impacts on QUEDANCOR’s lending programs. (DCMagnaye)
SEARCA, DA-BAR, PhilRice Work on Rice Policy Options Book

SEARCA, the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), and the Philippine Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR) are working together to come out with a volume on rice entitled, “Ensuring Rice Security for All: Issues, Constraints, and Policy Directions.” The book, set to come out in February 2006, will feature a systematic, organized, and forward-looking assessment of the Philippines’ rice industry from a policy perspective.

Forward-looking analysis begins with identifying existing policy issues and key constraints that are relevant to achieving a rice-secured economy five to ten years from now. This may involve scenario-building exercises that quantify the probable impact of changes in policies, institutions, and technologies on the rice market and on the economy as whole. Constraints, and consequently ensure rice security for the Filipino people.

This book-writing project aims to provide policymakers, legislators, and other stakeholders with a comprehensive, systematic, and organized forward-looking assessment of the rice industry. The contents of this book will focus on important rice policy issues and institutional constraints and examine policy choices that will lead towards achieving rice food security. It will be presented in a manner that can be easily understood and appreciated by lay readers, especially decision makers and legislators.

Experts who will contribute to the volume include Arsenio Balisacan, SEARCA; Donato Antiporta, UN Food and Agriculture Organization-Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UN FAO-RAO); Leocadio Sebastian, PhilRice; Eliseo Ponce, Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS); Gilberto Llanto, PIDS; Tirso Paris, University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB); Herminia Francisco, UPLB; Prudenciano Gordoncillo, UPLB; Alex Brilliantes, University of the Philippines Diliman; George Norton, Virginia Polytechnic Institute; Rodrigo Badayos, UPLB; Mercy Sombilla, SEARCA; Flor Lantican, UPLB; Nerlita Manalili, SEARCA; and Ma Concepcion Lizada, UP Diliman. (MLVRavago)

Policies on price, market and trade regimes, institutions, research and development, extension, biotechnology, marketing and distribution, among others, have varying degrees of impact on productivity and food security. These various strands have to be systematically linked so that government can appropriately address policy issues and constraints, and consequently ensure rice security for the Filipino people.

The SEARCA Diary

SEARCA Director Garners 2 International Publication Awards

The University of the Philippines has bestowed two International Publication Awards on Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Professor of Economics and concurrently Director of SEARCA.


The awards were given in a ceremony held on 28 February 2005 at the University of the Philippines Diliman. They were conferred by the new UP President, Dr. Emerlinda R. Roman, the first woman appointed to the highest office of the state university.

Last year, Dr. Balisacan also received six international publications awards for his various publications. A recognized expert, his research interests focus on poverty, inequality, food security, agricultural and rural development, globalization, and political economy of policy reforms.

Aside from being UP Professor of Economics and SEARCA Director, Dr. Balisacan also concurrently serves as Secretary General of the Asia-Pacific Agricultural Policy Forum, Executive Secretary of the Asian Association of Agricultural Colleges and Universities, President of the Human Development Network (producer and publisher of the Philippine Human Development Report), and Chair of the Board of Advisors of the Asian Institute of Management-Mirant Center for Bridging Societal Divides. (LTtaller)

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Sustainability in the Philippines.” Jaime Z. Galvez-Tan, Executive Director of the National Institute of Health, focused on the fifth MDG in his discussion on “Commitments to Enhance Maternal Health in the Philippines: Prospects for Achieving MDG5.” Finally, Dr. Josef T. Yap, research fellow at the Philippine Institute of Development Studies, made a presentation on “The Impact of the Debt Overhang and Trade Sector Developments on MDG Progress in the Philippines.”

The guest of honor was Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. In her speech she promised to “slay the deficit dragon, raise revenues, and put a stop to dependence on borrowings.” (CJTubianosa)
Vietnam Hosts 40th SEAMEO Council Meet

Vietnam hosted the 40th Council Conference of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), which was held at the vibrant city of Hanoi on 15-17 March 2005.

The Conference was opened by His Excellency Mr. Tran Duc Luong, State President of Vietnam. The Vietnamese Minister of Education and Training, H.E. Prof Dr. Nguyen Minh Hien, was elected as the new SEAMEO Council President and Chair of the Conference. The Singapore Minister of Education, H.E. Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam, was elected as the Council’s Vice President and Vice Chair of the Conference.

The Vietnamese President acknowledged SEAMEO’s contributions in accelerating sustainable human resource development and in promoting development, understanding and solidarity among the Southeast Asian countries. Sharing Vietnam’s national concerns, he identified as priority concerns education and training, science and technology, and policies that address the needs of disadvantaged children, including ethnic minorities.

Among the highlights of the Conference’s opening ceremony were the formal proclamation of Norway as the newest associate member of SEAMEO (Please see related story on Page 9), the awarding of SEAMEO Service Awards, and the signing of several Memoranda of Agreement/Understanding.

Three papers were presented for the discussion of the Ministers, namely: Education for Cultural Diversity and Peace, which told of initiatives of the SEAMEO Regional Center for Educational Innovations and Technology (INNOTECH) that address the learning needs of school children and young adults in the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in the Philippines; Water in Child-friendly Schools, where the SEAMEO Regional Tropical Medicine and Public Health Network (TROPMED) discussed water, sanitation, and health dimensions of access to quality education; and Quality and Equity in Education (QEE) through Information and Communication Technology (ICT), by the SEAMEO Regional Center for Education in Science and Mathematics (RECSAM), which brought two of SEAMEO’s priority areas into sharp focus: ICTs and their application for improving quality of and equity in education.

Convened annually, the Conference is attended by the Ministers of Education of the SEAMEO member and associate member countries. (LLTallafer)

His Excellency Mr. Tran Duc Luong, State President of Vietnam, visited the SEARCA booth and spoke briefly with Dr. Balisacan at the 40th SEAMEO Council Conference.
Norway Joins SEAMEO

Norway has been admitted as an associate member of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO).

The formal admission ceremony was held in Hanoi, Vietnam on 15 March 2005 during the opening program of the 40th SEAMEO Council Conference.

SEAMEO is a treaty organization founded in 1965 to promote regional cooperation in education, science, and culture. Presently, its core members are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Norway becomes the seventh associate member of SEAMEO. The others are Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and New Zealand.

The proclamation admitting Norway to SEAMEO was read by H.E. Pehin Dato Haji Abdul Aziz Umar, Minister of Education of Brunei Darussalam and outgoing President of the SEAMEO Council. The proclamation was followed by the entrance of the colors of Norway and playing of its national anthem.

Speaking on behalf of the Norwegian Government, H. E. Helge Ole Bergensen, Norway’s Deputy Minister of Education and Research, acknowledged the assistance of the Vietnamese Government, particularly its Ministry of Education and Training, in paving the way for its admission to SEAMEO. He said that the tsunami catastrophe has brought Southeast Asia closer to Norway. Among the rebuilding efforts that have struck a sympathetic chord on Norway was the Thai Government’s commitment for free education of the Thai children who had been orphaned because of the tsunami. He stressed that such commitment is highly relevant because “knowledge is an asset that cannot be taken away and even grows when used and shared.”

He reported that in Vietnam, Norway

SEARCA Gears Up for Int’l Conference on Agri and Rural Development

SEARCA is firming up preparations for the International Conference on Agricultural and Rural Development in Asia: Ideas, Paradigms, and Policies Three Decades After, to be held on 10-11 November 2005 in Manila, Philippines. This milestone event marks the beginning of the year-long celebration of SEARCA’s 40th anniversary in November 2006.

For more information on the conference, please visit http://web.searca.org/ard.

Confirmed paper presentors are: Dr. Yujiro Hayami, Director, Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development (FASID) Graduate Program; Dr. Mark Rosegrant, Director, Environment and Production Technology, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); Dr. James Roumasset, Professor of Economics, University of Hawaii; Dr. Jock Anderson, Consultant, Agriculture & Rural Development Department, World Bank; Dr. Ian Coxhead, Professor of Agricultural and Applied Economics, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Dr. Keijiro Otsuka, Professorial Fellow and Director, GRIPS/FASID Joint Graduate Program, FASID; Dr. Scott Rozelle, Professor, University of California Davis; Dr. Randy Barker, Senior Adviser to the Director General, International Water Management Institute (IWMI); Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director and Professor of Economics, University of the Philippines Diliman; Dr. Nobuhiko Fuwa, Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics, Chiba University, Japan; Dr. Dina Umali-Deininger, Lead Agricultural Economist, World Bank; Dr. Gershon F. Feder, Research Manager, Development Research Group, World Bank; Dr. Prabhu Pingali, Director, Agricultural and Development Economics Division (ESA), UN Food and Agriculture Organization; and Dr. Thomas Reardon, Professor of International Development and Agribusiness, Michigan State University.

SEARCA welcomes institutions and organizations, both public and private, that would like to sponsor this rare conference or partner with SEARCA by funding specific sessions that are supportive of or complementary to their organization’s specific interests. For details of sponsorship and partnership, please visit http://web.searca.org/ard.
The weekly SEARCA Agriculture and Development Seminar Series (ADSS) continues to be a venue for dynamic and vibrant discussion of scientific findings, research results, and perspectives within the purview of agriculture and development. It has had high-profile researchers and practitioners from the academe, government, and industry as resource persons. Open to the public and held at the Center every Tuesday at 4:00 p.m., the ADSS is attended by students, academics, scientists, and other members of the Los Baños community and beyond. The following are the seminars held from January to March 2005.

15 March -- A Management Bureaucrat’s View on IWRM: Ideology, Strategy and Tactics in Water Resources Management by Dr. Mogens Dyhr-Nielsen, Senior Programme Advisor from the UNEP Collaborating Center on Water and Environment, Denmark

8 March -- Putting Agricultural Research on Target: A GIS-based Spatial Framework for the Philippines by Engr. Tolentino Moya, PhD, Professorial Lecturer at the University of the Philippines Los Baños

1 March -- Rural Institutions/NGOs in Poverty Alleviation by Fr. Francis Lucas, Board Chair of the ASEAN NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)

22 February -- Inflation Targeting and Core Inflation by Mr. Francisco Dakila, Jr., Bank Officer at the Central Bank of the Philippines

15 February -- Effects of Trade Liberalization: Ex-ante versus Ex-Post Assessment by Dr. Ramon Clarete, Professor at the University of the Philippines School of Economics

8 February -- Growth Models, Development Planning and Implementation in the Philippines by Dr. Gonzalo M. Horado, Professor of Economics and Vice President for Finance and Development, Kalayaan College

1 February -- Mangroves: Natural Barriers Against Tsunamis by Dr. Honorato G. Palis, Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau, Department of Environment and Natural Resources

25 January -- Assessing Impacts of Crop Biotechnology Research by Dr. George Norton, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia, USA

18 January -- GIS and Pollution Management by Dr. Rodrigo B. Badayos, Agricultural Systems Cluster, College of Agriculture, and Prof. Moises A. Dorado, College of Engineering and Agro-industrial Technology, UPLB

11 January -- Flashflood and Tsunami by Dr. Raymundo S. Punongbayan, Former Director, Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) and Director, Earthquakes and Megacities Initiatives

4 January -- Quedancor’s Microfinance Program: The Self Reliant Team (SRT) Model Approach by Dr. Nelson Buenaflo, President and CEO, Quedancor

SEARCA Implements Phase 2 of QUEDANCOR SRT Project

SEARCA and Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corporation (QUEDANCOR), an attached agency of the Philippine Department of Agriculture, signed on 16 March 2005 a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to implement Phase 2 of the project “Strengthening Capacity of Self-Reliant Team (SRT) Leaders of QUEDANCOR in Agribusiness and Credit Management: Skills Enhancement and Social Awareness for SRT Leaders.” This is part of the SEARCA-QUEDANCOR Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to jointly undertake capacity building programs for 30,000 Self-Reliant Team (SRT) Leaders for a period of five years.

For Phase 2, SEARCA will train 13 batches of SRT Leaders for 13 regions of the Philippines (Regions 1-13) from March 2005 to April 2006. Each batch will have 30 participants composed of SRT farmers/fishers/entrepreneurs of a particular commodity. The priority commodities are swine, sugar, rice, cassava, corn, banana, cotton, seaweeds, onion, and palm oil.

During Phase 1 of the project, 158 SRT Leaders from the National Capital Region (18 urban retailers), Southern Tagalog (5 hog raisers), Ilocos (23 tomato farmers), Bicol (32 fishers), Western Visayas (49 swine breeders and fatteners), and Northern Mindanao (31 corn farmers) were trained.

The training, conducted from March to July 2004, was evaluated to have been highly effective in equipping the SRT Leader-participants with basic business management and entrepreneurship concepts vital to running their enterprise.

SEARCA ADSS

SEARCA Implements Phase 2 of QUEDANCOR SRT Project

SEARCA and Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corporation (QUEDANCOR), an attached agency of the Philippine Department of Agriculture, signed on 16 March 2005 a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to implement Phase 2 of the project “Strengthening Capacity of Self-Reliant Team (SRT) Leaders of QUEDANCOR in Agribusiness and Credit Management: Skills Enhancement and Social Awareness for SRT Leaders.” This is part of the SEARCA-QUEDANCOR Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to jointly undertake capacity building programs for 30,000 Self-Reliant Team (SRT) Leaders for a period of five years.

For Phase 2, SEARCA will train 13 batches of SRT Leaders for 13 regions of the Philippines (Regions 1-13) from March 2005 to April 2006. Each batch will have 30 participants composed of SRT farmers/fishers/entrepreneurs of a particular commodity. The priority commodities are swine, sugar, rice, cassava, corn, banana, cotton, seaweeds, onion, and palm oil.

During Phase 1 of the project, 158 SRT Leaders from the National Capital Region (18 urban retailers), Southern Tagalog (5 hog raisers), Ilocos (23 tomato farmers), Bicol (32 fishers), Western Visayas (49 swine breeders and fatteners), and Northern Mindanao (31 corn farmers) were trained.

The training, conducted from March to July 2004, was evaluated to have been highly effective in equipping the SRT Leader-participants with basic business management and entrepreneurship concepts vital to running their enterprise.
UN Millennium Project Report Launched

The UN Millennium Project Report was launched in the Philippines on 16 February 2005 at the Dusit Nikko Hotel in Makati City, Philippines. The UN Millennium Project is an independent advisory body commissioned by UN Secretary-General to propose the best strategies for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs provide the world’s targets in reducing extreme poverty in its many dimensions by 2015. These include addressing hunger, education, gender equality, health, as well as environmental sustainability, among others.

Through live feed from New York City, the keynote speaker for the event was Jeffrey Sachs, special adviser to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and the Director for the UN Millennium Project. His summary points from the Report reiterated that the MDGs are methods for “escaping poverty and for speeding up economic growth.” Its core areas consist of: 1) investment in people, health, education, nutrition, family planning; 2) investment in the physical environment (water and sanitation, forestry, biodiversity); 3) investment in infrastructure (power, roads, support services, telecommunications).

On tackling the Philippine progress in relation to achieving the Goals, Sachs observed that the government plans seem to be in line with the MDGs. However, in view of the fiscal bind, the country must identify investments and must have detailed analyses as to how these will be financed. According to him, the country is particularly challenging with its diversity, geographic complexity, and the existence of pockets of intense poverty.

One of the key recommendations from the Report was for international donors to identify at least a dozen MDG “fast-track” countries for a rapid scale-up of official development assistance (ODA) in 2005. When asked what it would take for the Philippines to be included among those countries, Sachs replied that the country must be able to demonstrate good governance to be able to obtain endorsement.

To provide further insight on the current status of the Philippines in relation to achieving the MDGs, four experts gave presentations on their respective fields: Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, tackled the first MDG with his discussion on “What Does It Take to Get Out of Our Poverty Trap?” Dr. Rodel D. Lasco, Programme Coordinator for the Philippines of the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), gave his views on environmental sustainability with “Challenges in Environmental...
SEARCA-HEP Fellows Complete Postdoc Programs

Five Indonesian postdoctoral fellows supported by the Higher Education Project (HEP) of the Government of Indonesia and SEARCA completed in January 2005 their programs at the University of Queensland (UQ) in Australia and Georg-August University of Goettingen (UniGott) in Germany in June 2004.

The fellows, their fields of specialization, and home institutions are as follows: Dr. Hadi Paramu, PhD in Agricultural Economics, Universitas Jember; Dr. La Sara, PhD in Fisheries, Universitas Haluoleo; Dr. Bambang Nugroho, PhD in Forest Resource Management, University of Papua Manokwari; Dr. Aleh Human Saleh, PhD in Agricultural Extension Education, University of Mataram; and Dr. Marthen Robinson Pellokila, PhD in Natural Resource and Environmental Economics, University of Nusa Cendana.

While at UQ, Dr. Hadi Paramu focused on agriculture and sugar industry development in Australia, while Dr. La Sara concentrated on the development of collaborative research on fish farming, environmental management, and marine culture development. Dr. Aleh Human Saleh conducted a research on extension methods, while Dr. Marthen Robinson Pellokila developed research papers on food and nutrition security at the community level.

At UniGott, Dr. Bambang Nugroho worked on research on land use systems and environmental impact assessment.

The Postdoctoral Fellowship Project is a follow-up activity to the HEP-SEARCA Regional Fellowship Project, which was implemented from 1995 to 2002 and had provided MS and PhD scholarships to 52 agricultural professionals from selected universities in less-developed regions of Indonesia.

In 2003, SEARCA and HEP recognized that the HEP-SEARCA fellows advanced degrees needed to be backed up by further studies and enhancement programs. Hence, the Postdoctoral Fellowship Project was conceived to further build up the HEP-SEARCA fellows’ capacity for practical applications of the knowledge and skills gained from their newly completed graduate programs.

The Postdoctoral Fellowship Project aimed to give opportunities to highly qualified HEP-SEARCA doctoral fellows to spend at least three months in either Australia or Germany to do a small research project, attend enhancement courses/training, or serve as visiting lecturer. It also provided opportunities to selected HEP-SEARCA doctoral fellows to gain firsthand exposure to academic and research systems in other countries that could be adapted to their home institutions. The Project also allowed the fellows to meet counterpart professors and discuss possibilities for collaboration.

The HEP-SEARCA Postdoctoral Fellowship Project was viewed by the professors at the host universities as a very good model for establishing new and strengthening old networks among the universities involved in the program.

Another noteworthy aspect of the Project is that it is an immediate follow-up activity after the fellows’ completion of their graduate programs, which allowed them to apply the knowledge and expertise they gained from their graduate work to an actual need or concern of their home institution or region. (LLDDomingo)

SEARCA Has Four New Fellows

Two Thais, one Vietnamese, and one Filipino join the ranks of successful SEARCA fellows upon completing their graduate programs under SEARCA scholarship at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

They, their degrees, and their thesis/dissertation titles are:

**UPLB Graduates**

Ms. Surangsi Wapet of Thailand, PhD in Agricultural Extension, “Performance of the Implementation of Decentralized Extension Policy through Community Agriculture Technology Transfer and Services Center in Kamphaengphoth Province, Thailand”

Mr. Nguyen Tien Thanh of Vietnam, MS in Animal Science, “Comparative Efficiency of Four Breeding Strategies for Improvement of Native Chickens (Gallus gallus domesticus Linn) in Smallhold Farming Conditions”

Mr. Ricardo Bagarinoa of the Philippines, PhD in Environmental Science, “Landscape Change in Mananga Watershed and Its Implications on Groundwater Resource Management in Metro Cebu, Philippines.”

**UPM Graduate**

Ms. Sureerat Butprom of Thailand, MS in Animal Science “Aetopathogenicity of Ulcerative Disease in Koi Carp, Cyprinus carpio Linnaeus.”

The four new fellows bring to 949 (544 PhD, 405 MS) the total number of SEARCA fellows to date. (LLDDomingo)

**Thesis Abstracts / from page 13**

Conducted. The monophyly of the family Kerriidae and most of its included genera, subtribes, and tribes is confirmed. The Tachardina-Paratuchardina clade is polyphyletic. The present sub-family Kerriinae is polyphyletic. A new classification is proposed and involves three sub-families, namely: Kerriinae sensu stricto, Tachardinae, and Tachardillinae, stat. nov. Within Kerriinae sensu stricto are the tribes Kerriini sensu stricto and Metatachardiini tribus nov. and within Tachardiillinae, stat. nov. are the tribes Austrotachardiini and Tachardiillini, stat nov.
Comparative Efficiency of Four Breeding Strategies for Improvement of Native Chickens (Gallus gallus domesticus Lin) in Smallhold Farming Conditions

Nguyen Tien Thanh, Vietnam MS in Animal Science University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB)

A rapid assessment of smallhold poultry raising in three regions of Vietnam indicated that farmers keep mostly nondescript native chickens in small flocks. While farmers expressed high preferences for faster growth and higher egg production rates typical of the modern exotic breed, they, nevertheless, prefer the native chickens for their hardiness and adaptability to low-input production system. Practically all the farmers interviewed expressed keen interest in participating in a community-based genetic improvement program of the native chickens. To address the need to organize a community-based breeding program, four alternative breeding strategies feasible under smallhold farming conditions were designed and simulated by using an electronic spreadsheet software (Microsoft Excel). The productive and economic efficiencies of the four strategies were analyzed and compared. Results reveal that Strategy 1, wherein farmers keep small closed breeding flock, is the least desirable mainly because of the effect of inbreeding depression. Alternatively, by simply regularly introducing new males, flocks in Strategy 2 overcome the effects of inbreeding depression but without any expected genetic improvement in the economic performance could be expected. But if farmers impose regular selection for body weight in addition to regular introduction of males (Strategy 3), improved economic returns due to an increase in marketable weight may be expected. If, however, farmers organize themselves and participate in a community-based nucleus breeding program that will allow them to select both for body weight and the reproductive traits (Strategy 4), even greater economic returns will accrue to them.

Comparative Analysis of the Competitiveness of the Indonesian and Malaysian Palm Oil Industry

Syafitul Hadi, Indonesia PhD in Agribusiness, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)

The palm oil industry of Indonesia has always been overshadowed by that of Malaysia, the world’s main palm oil producer and exporter. The study aimed to calculate the production cost; to measure the production efficiency and productivity in producing fresh fruit bunches and crude palm oil; to examine the export competitiveness of Indonesia’s palm oil; and to recommend policy alternatives to improve the competitiveness of Indonesia’s palm oil industry. Production costs were analyzed in tabular descriptive manner, while efficiency of production was analyzed using the Banker-Charles-Cooper model. Productivity was analyzed using general malnquist productivity index and export competitiveness was analyzed using comparative advantage. The study found that for some parameters, Indonesia’s competitiveness was higher than those of Malaysia. Indonesia’s fresh fruit bunches yield, oil extraction rate, and crude palm oil yield were higher with lower production cost of fresh fruit bunches and crude palm oil than those of Malaysia. These conditions were supported by the increasing trend of export performance ratio and net export/total trade ratio. However, Indonesia’s palm oil industry was still inefficient in using production input and productivity of palm oil estates suffered a fluctuating decreasing trend. Based on the results of the study, several strategies are recommended to improve the competitiveness of Indonesia’s palm oil industry. First, there is a need for immediate replanting of oil palm trees to replace the trees that are over 20 years old, and those that are over 17 years old and damaged. Second, fertilizer application must be done according to the recommended dosage. Third, the quality of fresh fruit bunches fraction that are being harvested and processed need to be improved. Fourth, the fund gained from the palm oil export tax should be deposited in a special account. Finally, the strategy for determining the export tax need to be reviewed.

Morphology, Systematics and Phylogeny of the Lac Insects (Hemiptera: Coccoidea: Kerriidae)

Ireneo L. Lit, Jr., Philippines PhD in Entomology, UPLB

The external morphology of adult female lac insects was studied using scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and light microscopy. Features previously thought to be unique to Kerriidae, namely: the anal tubercle, brachia and brachial plates, canellae, and their associated pores and ducts are homologous to anal and stigmatic structures of Coccidae. The dorsal spine and post-oral lobes are autopomorphic to kerriids. The enlargement of anterior spiracle is also autopomorphic. The posterior spiracle is believed to be vestigial. The genus Austrotachardia is revised and includes eight species, namely: A. acaciae (Maskell), A. angulata (Froggatt), A. australis (Froggatt), A. bifida sp. nov., A. longissima sp. nov., A. melaleucae (Maskell), A. micropoda sp. nov., and A. pumila sp. nov., and their associated pores and ducts. The dorsal spine and post-oral lobes are autopomorphic to kerriids. The enlargement of anterior spiracle is also autopomorphic. The posterior spiracle is believed to be vestigial. The genus Austrotachardia is revised and includes eight species, namely: A. acaciae (Maskell), A. angulata (Froggatt), A. australis (Froggatt), A. bifida sp. nov., and A. longissima sp. nov., A. melaleucae (Maskell), A. micropoda sp. nov., and A. pumila sp. nov., Paratachardina is represented in Australia by four species, namely: P. decorella (Maskell), P. gibbosa sp. nov., P. incognita sp. nov., and P. morobensis Williams & Watson and in the Philippines by P. merdelynae sp. nov., and P. minuta (Morrison). Lectotypes are also designated for A. acaciae, A. angulata, A. australis, A. melaleucae and P. decorella. Chamberliniella, stat. nov. is recognized as a full genus, Chamberliniella greeni (Chamberlin), comb. nov. and C. meridionalis (Chamberlin), comb. nov. are redescribed. C. fici (Green), C. javana (Chamberlin), and C. rangoonensis (Chamberlin) are also proposed as new combinations. Tachardina avranticola (Cockerell) from Southeast Asia is also redescribed. Notes are given for P. minuta and other Southeast Asian species. Illustrations and keys to facilitate identification of genera and other species are provided. A cladistic analysis of the lac insects was
SEARCA BIC Conducts Process Documentation Training

The SEARCA Biotechnology Information Center (BIC) conducted a two-day training in Process Documentation at SEARCA on 26-27 January 2005. 16 participants from the Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines (BCP), DOST-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD), Department of Agriculture (DA)-Bureau of Agriculture & Fisheries Product Standards (BAFPS), DA-Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), the Regional Consortia for Agriculture and Resources Research and Development, and SEARCA attended the training to learn the essential elements of process documentation.

The training aimed for the participants to: (1) learn the importance, concepts, strategies, and applications of process documentation; (2) gain skills and techniques in process documentation; and (3) apply strategies and techniques gained by subjecting the initial activities of the DA’s Project on Integrated Information, Education, and Communication Campaign and Advocacy for Modern Biotechnology to process documentation, and coming out with a monograph as final output.

The first day of the training involved a series of lectures tackling the principal concepts of process documentation, and a field trip to document situations of interest to the participants. Selected participants presented their individual write-ups on the second day, followed by focus group discussions and presentation of outputs.

The training served as the kick-off activity of the DA-SEARCA Project on the Establishment and Nurturance of Biotechnology Information Nodes, Component 2 of the above-mentioned DA-funded project. The other components of this project are: (a) the National IEC Campaign and Advocacy through Media (Component 1), where the Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines served as the implementing agency; and (b) the Regional IEC Campaign and Advocacy through Media (Component 3), which is being implemented by DOST-PCARRD.

The training was facilitated by Dr. Lorna C. Malicsi, Head of SEARCA’s Knowledge Management Unit; Ms. Emerald Dimapilis and Ms. Rinda Apolinario, both of DOST-PCARRD. (RBLapitan)

SEARCA PUBLICATIONS

From January to March 2005, SEARCA published the following:

Policy Brief Series


Ledesma, VTM. 2005. As the debate continues, UK shares its four lessons on GMOs. SEARCA Policy Brief Series. 2005-1.


Discussion Paper Series


Monograph

Garcia, AG and CM Madid. 2005. The journey and beyond: SEARCA’s experiences in sustainable agriculture and community-based natural resources management. Los Baños: Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Development.

Reprints


SEAMEO Confers 17 Service Awards

Seventeen staff members from the different regional centers and network of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) were conferred the 2005 SEAMEO Service Award.

Testimonial plaques were presented to the 2005 SEAMEO Service Award recipients during the opening ceremony of the 40th SEAMEO Council Conference held in Hanoi, Vietnam on 15-17 March 2005.

The plaques, which expressed SEAMEO’s appreciation for the awardee’s achievement and dedication to work for the Organization, were presented by H. E. Prof Dr. Nguyen Minh Hien, Minister of Education and Training of Vietnam, new SEAMEO Council President; H.E. Pehin Dato Haji Abdul Aziz Umar, Minister of Education of Brunei Darussalam, outgoing SEAMEO Council President; and Dr. Edilberto C. de Jesus, Director of the SEAMEO Secretariat.

The awardees are:

1) Dr. Tania June, Scientist, SEAMEO Regional Center for Tropical Biology (BIOTROP) based in Bogor, Indonesia

2) Mr. Myo Aung, Programme Officer, SEAMEO Regional Center for History and Tradition (CHAT) based in Yangon, Myanmar

3) Mr. Jesse Tuason, Publications & Documentation Officer, SEAMEO Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (INNOTECH) based in Quezon City, Philippines

4) Ms. Irene Lee Chow Kheng, Administrative Assistant (Finance), SEAMEO Regional Center for Education in Science and Mathematics (RECSAM) based in Penang, Malaysia

5) Mr. Mohd Yusri Osman, Information Technology Assistant, SEAMEO Regional Language Center (RELC) based in Singapore

6) Mr. Than Trong Minh, Director of Studies, English Language Training Department, SEAMEO Regional Training Center (RETRAC) based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

7) Ms. Wachareeporn Nilratt, Documentation Officer, SEAMEO Regional Center for Higher Education and Development (RIHED) based in Bangkok, Thailand

8) Mr. Muhammad Lukman, Training and Human Resource Development Manager, SEAMEO Regional Open Learning Center (SEAMOLEC) based in Jakarta, Indonesia

9) Ms. Lily L. Tallafer, Senior Executive Assistant to the Director, SEAMEO SEARCA based in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines

10) Ms. Ratchaporn Tesjeeb, Computer Manager, SEAMEO Regional Center for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SPAFA) based in Bangkok, Thailand

11) Ms Parinda Chomning, Accountant, SEAMEO Regional Tropical Medicine and Public Health Network (TROPMED Network) based in Bangkok, Thailand

12) Prof. Dr. Johanna S.P. Rumawas, Advisory Board Members, TROPMED Indonesia based in Jakarta

13) Ms. Selvarani d/o Ariakutty, Clerk, TROPMED Malaysia based in Kuala Lumpur

14) Ms. Betty Beatriz D. Flores, Records Officer, TROPMED Philippines based in Manila

15) Ms. Kannikarkaew Pinit, Head, Administrative and General Affairs Unit and Assistant of Faculty Secretary, TROPMED Thailand

16) Ms. Ibarizah binti Haji Ibrahim, Confidential Secretary, SEAMEO Regional Center for Vocational and Technical Education (VOCTECH) based in Gadong, Brunei Darussalam

17) Mr. Swarng Jitrarnont, Service Assistant (Computer Operator), SEAMEO Secretariat based in Bangkok, Thailand

The SEAMEO Service Award was first conferred in 2004. It was initiated by the SEAMEO Secretariat to encourage excellent service and dedication among the staff of the various SEAMEO units.
SEARCA received last 24 January two officers from the Embassy of the Republic of France in the Philippines. Mr. Francois Blamont, Counsellor for Cooperation and Cultural Affairs, and Ms. Claire Crochemore, Scientific Attache, were briefed by Dr. Djoko Suprapto, Deputy Director for Programs, and Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., Deputy Director for Administration, on the Center’s activities and priority areas. Apart from renewing the ties between France and SEARCA, the meeting also helped identify areas where the two may work together, in the common pursuit of agricultural competitiveness and rural development for Southeast Asia. France is one of the seven associate member countries of SEAMEO.

The University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) celebrated its 10th foundation anniversary on 23 February 2005. SEARCA, which has supported UPOU since its founding a decade ago, received a copy of UPOU’s rendition of the UP Oblation (right), in recognition of the partnership. Dr. Nerlita M. Mandalili, Manager of the Research and Development Department of SEARCA, received the Oblation in behalf of the Center. The UP Oblation symbolizes academic freedom.

The book *Landcare in the Philippines – Stories of People and Places* was launched last 22 February at the Australian Embassy in Makati City, Philippines. Published by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), the book is a collection of more than 40 stories gathered from the experiences of farmers, facilitators, government representatives, church members, and community groups involved in the Landcare Project, implemented from 1999 to 2004 in Mindanao, Philippines. Considered one of the most successful rural development initiatives in Southern Philippines, Landcare is funded by the Australian Government through ACIAR and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), in cooperation with the Philippine Government, SEARCA, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. The implementation of an expanded version of Landcare, starting this year, was recently formalized through a project agreement signed by the Australian Government and SEARCA (Please see related story on page 11).