SEARCA and THF level up leaders of higher education institutions in Southeast Asia

Experts and emerging leaders of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Southeast Asia participated in the Leadership Development Program for Higher Education Institutions in Southeast Asia jointly organized by SEARCA and the Singapore-based The Head Foundation (THF).

Held on 21-25 January 2019, the executive course was conducted to enhance the capacity of administrators, middle and senior managers, and academic leaders of HEIs in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam to address local and regional contemporary challenges in education leadership and to sustain a competitive advantage for the HEIs amid a rapidly changing environment.

Tapping the expertise of distinguished resource persons, the program tackled key leadership requirements for HEIs to keep abreast of the ASEAN International Mobility of Students (AIMS), ASEAN University Rankings, and ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) agenda.

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Project draws in AFA, Grow Asia to boost support to small producers

Officials of SEARCA, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) met with representatives from the Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) and Grow Asia to explore possible collaborations in integrating small-scale rural producers (SSRP) in the national and regional value chains, which is the overall objective of the “Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration in the ASEAN Region: Responding to Food Security and Inclusiveness Concerns (ATMI-ASEAN)” project. ATMI-ASEAN is funded by IFAD and jointly implemented by IFPRI and SEARCA.

An enhanced partnership of ATMI-ASEAN with AFA and Grow Asia will enhance the role of farmer and civil society organizations and the private sector in the development of policy recommendations that will support SSRPs in the context of agricultural transformation and market integration in the region.

Dr. Pedcris M. Orencio, SEARCA Program Head for Research and Development, presented the national-level component led by SEARCA. His report covered project activities as well as the tentative schedule of proposed events of partner focal agencies and research institutions from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Ms. Aniq Fadhillah and Mr. Manmeet Ajmani, IFPRI Policy Facilitator and Research Analyst, respectively, presented the regional activities and researches on market integration and agricultural transformation.

For his part, Dr. Fabrizio Bresciani, Lead Regional Economist, IFAD Asia and Pacific Division, said the project, in its current phase, can benefit from stronger cooperation among regional partners in view of the implementation of technical assistance for the preparation of regional value chain road maps and national strategic plan of action.

He acknowledged the work of Grow Asia and AFA in the region and their engagements with the ASEAN Secretariat, particularly in the preparation of the guidelines for responsible investment in agriculture and in the road map for enhancing the role of agricultural cooperatives in the region.

Ms. Ishwinder Kaur, Partnerships and Government Engagement Manager, and Mr. Pranav Sethaputra, Country Partnerships Manager for Indonesia and the Philippines, both of Grow Asia, shared the work of their network of private sector institutions that can participate in ATMI-ASEAN project activities in the partner AMS and in the region.

Grow Asia has existing working groups in different commodities set up in Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

SEARCA and THF level up/ from page 1

Discussions also tackled critical issues such as the massification, diversification, internationalization, and marketization of higher education.

The program modules highlighted the importance of developing foresight, being forward-looking, and re-developing curriculum and course work to produce graduates who are prepared for the future.

Learning exercises used included environmental scans, self-assessment, design thinking, and strategic management. These showed the participants the evolving needs of the industry and assisted them in developing their own strategic agenda for presentation to their respective home institutions.

At the end of executive course, its 19 participants prepared re-entry action plans embodying their take-home lessons on educational and managerial leadership.

Singaporeans served as the leadership program’s resource persons, namely: Dr. Natarajan Varaprasad, Managing Partner and Principal Consultant, Singapore Education Consulting Group LLP, who was also the Program Director; Dr. Paul P. S. Teng, SEARCA Senior Fellow and Managing Director and Dean, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University; Prof. Ashok Kapoor from The HEAD Foundation; Dr. Rebekah Wei Ying Lim, Director, Teaching and Learning Centre, Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS); and Dr. Calvin M. L. Chan, Director, Office of Graduate Studies, SUSS. (Report from NARamos)
School and home gardens can help achieve sustainable development goals

TOKYO, Japan—SEARCA shared at the 2018 Science Council of Asia (SCA) Conference held here how its School-Plus-Home Gardens Project (S+HGP) contributed to the achievement of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the localities where the project was piloted.

The SDGs are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all peoples of the world agreed on by the UN General Assembly in 2015. They address the global challenges humanity faces, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice. The goals interconnect and the aim is to achieve them by 2030 in order to leave no one behind.

Co-implemented with the Department of Education (DepEd)-Laguna and University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), the S+HGP aimed to improve the nutritional condition and dietary habits of school-age children by increasing production of locally adapted vegetables through school and home gardening and consequently contribute to the community’s food and nutrition security.

SEARCA presented specific strategies to contribute to achieving targets of SDGs through its S+HGP at the 18th SCA Conference to highlight research, innovations, and programs that address the 2030 Agenda on SDGs across Asia. The SCA is the official body of all science academies in Asia.

In the paper “Addressing and Localizing SDGs through Grassroots-Based School-Plus-Home Gardens in the Philippines” presented by project leader and SEARCA adjunct fellow Dr. Blesilda Calub, SEARCA elaborated on how the S+HGP contributed to achieving at least four SDGs.

For SDG 2: Zero Hunger, the S+HGP showed that year-round production of diverse nutritious indigenous and common vegetables is possible by following a planting calendar.

For SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, the promotion of organic agriculture in the S+HGP showed an alternative food production system that respects natural ecological processes and avoids using harmful synthetic farm chemicals that endangers the health of farmers, consumers, and the environment.

For SDG 4: Quality Education, local government units were mobilized to allocate funds for school gardening plus feeding programs to improve academic performance of school children and reduce absenteeism and early dropping-out from school.

For SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, parents, teachers, and students appreciated that food can be better produced through sustainable organic methods. The school gardens were used as learning laboratories for teaching composting and responsible waste management, among others.

In 2018, SEARCA already conducted a training of trainers on scaling up the school-plus-home gardens model in Southeast Asia. The training was designed to ensure that lessons learned from the pilot stage of the project in the Philippines are picked up, implemented, and sustained in other schools in Southeast Asia.

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The training of trainers on school-plus-home gardens focused on the step-by-step process of establishing locally appropriate models in consideration of the unique context of the schools and communities in neighboring Southeast Asian countries.

Also present during the conference was Mr. Elson Ian Nyl Galang, former S+HGP project assistant who is currently pursuing graduate studies at the Tokyo-based United Nations University.

Ms. Adoracion T. Robles (front row, third from right) and Ms. Maria Monina Cecilia A. Villena (rightmost) with the other conference participants.

SEARCA joins 5th SEAMEO polytechnic meet

IPOH, Malaysia—Officials and heads of various polytechnic universities and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions in Southeast Asia convened here for the 5th SEAMEO Polytechnic Network Meeting on 25-27 March 2019.

The annual meeting serves as a platform for TVET institutions to discuss and collaborate in the implementation of the cross-country TVET student exchange program.

Currently on its fourth offering, the TVET program aims to enhance the internationalization and partnership of TVET institutions and promote global competitiveness and 21st century skills of TVET students in Southeast Asia.

This year’s meeting is hosted by the Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education, Ministry of Education, Malaysia and the Politeknik Ungku Omar, with the SEAMEO Secretariat as co-organizer.

SEARCA was represented in the meeting by Ms. Adoracion T. Robles, Officer-in-Charge, Office of the Deputy Director for Administration and Unit Head, Management Services; and Dr. Maria Monina Cecilia A. Villena, Program Head, Knowledge Management Department (KMD).

(TLDDomingo with report from EINEGalang)
8 community forestry case studies in Cambodia underway through SEARCA-ASRF grant

SIEM REAP, Cambodia—Eight case studies in selected provinces in the country are being conducted by a project that is funded by a grant from the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SF) Strategic Response Fund (ASRF) administered by SEARCA.

"Community Forestry (CF) in Cambodia: A review of community forestry contribution to livelihoods after 25 years of development" is a project of Cambodia’s Department of Forest and Community Forest (DFCF) that received the SEARCA-ASRF grant in 2018.

Endorsed to the ASRF by the DFCF under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries-Forestry Administration (MAFF-FA), the project aims to review and assess the history of CF development in Cambodia and its impacts on local livelihoods. It is expected to produce key recommendations on community forestry best practices to ensure provision of benefits to local people and sustainable forest management.

The project is now conducting the following case studies: “Resin-based CF in Stung Treng Province,” “Ecotourism-based CF in Siem Reap,” “Credit-based CF in Kampong Thom,” “Charcoal-based CF in Pursat,” “Bat Manure-based CF in Battambang,” “Bamboo-based CF in Kampong Speu,” “Rattan-based CF in Kampot,” and “Wild Honey-based CF in Kraits.”

During the visit of the SEARCA-ASRF project management team to the Siem Reap case study site on 17-19 January 2019, Mr. Long Ratanakoma, AWG-SF Focal Point and Deputy Director of DFCF, presented the project accomplishments since it began in April 2018 as well as its remaining activities.

Mr. Ratanakoma commended the ASRF and SEARCA for the strong support to Cambodia. The current project is the fifth under the ASRF, which has been managed by SEARCA since 2014.

He said Cambodia is in the process of reviewing its Forestry Law. He explained that the output of the current ASRF-funded project is expected to provide recommendations to policymakers on how to improve local livelihoods through community forestry.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) provides funds for these projects through the SEARCA-ASRF program. (Report from XGBCapiña)

Phl community forestry benefit-sharing schemes under study

Field documentation of benefit-sharing schemes in the Philippine community-based forest management (CBFM) has been conducted in three out of nine sites of the Study on Existing Benefit-Sharing Mechanisms in the Philippine CBFM since it commenced in April 2018.

The research project is financed by the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SF) Strategic Response Fund (ASRF), which is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and administered by SEARCA.

Implemented by the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) of the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the project looks into how CBFM-People’s Organizations (CBFM-POs) manage the distribution of benefits as influenced by community characteristics and social structures, among others.

The project is expected to develop policy recommendations consisting of a menu of benefit-sharing mechanisms that CBFM-POs may adopt. It will also serve as guide for DENR Field Office personnel to effectively assist CBFM-POs.

The project team identified nine CBFM-POs. Three are located in Luzon: Tao Kalikasan Foundation of the Philippines in Labo, Camarines Norte; LBN Multi-Purpose Cooperative in Vintar, Ilocos Norte; and Caunayan Multi-Purpose Cooperative in Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte.

Two are in the Visayas: Nalundan United Farmers Association, Inc. in Bindoy, Negros Oriental and Katilingban sang Pumuluyo nga naga-Atipan sang Watershed sa Maasin in Maasin, Iloilo.

The rest are in Mindanao: San Isidro Upland Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative in Santiago, Agusan del Norte; Limatong Dalumangkom Bual Farmers Multipurpose Association in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato; Malakiba People’s Improvement Multipurpose Cooperative in Davao City; and Imbayao Community-based Forest Management (CBFM) People’s Organization (PO) in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon.

Field documentation was already conducted in the two Visayas sites and the Davao City site. (Report from XGBCapiña)
Cardamom, rattan deemed promising non-timber forest products in upland Myanmar

NAY PYI TAW, Myanmar—The project “Assessment of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) in Mountainous Regions of Myanmar towards Community Forestry Development” funded by the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SF) Strategic Response Fund (ASRF) has selected two NTFPs from more than 50 NTFPs in its two case study sites.

The project aims to identify NTFPs in mountainous regions of Myanmar and develop value chain analysis of promising NTFPs. It is expected to produce policy recommendations towards sustainable forest and NTFP management. Project implementation began in February 2018.

Led by Myanmar’s Forest Research Institute (FRI) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC), the project has conducted two case studies. One is in Than Daung Kayin State and the other in Putao, Kachin State.

Cardamom (Elettaria cardamomum) in Than Daung and rattan (Calamus sp.) in Putao were selected for value chain analysis.

Cardamom is native throughout tropical and subtropical Asia and is used as flavoring and cooking spice. Rattan, on the other hand, is a vine that is extensively used for making baskets and furniture.

These were reported by Dr. Thaung Naing Oo, AWG-SF Leader and FRI Director, when he presented the project accomplishments as of February 2019 and the remaining activities to SEARCA, which manages the ASRF.

He also conveyed that the national government aims to develop 50 Community Forestry Products (one community, one product) by 2020. The results of the study will be presented in a workshop to be attended by relevant stakeholders in community forestry in March 2019. The study findings will provide relevant inputs to the achievement of their national government’s goal.

On 21-23 February 2019, the SEARCA-ASRF program management team and Dr. Ei Ei Swe Hlaing, AWG-SF Focal Point and FRI Assistant Director, visited the Than Daung Township to observe the project site and interact with stakeholders.

Mr. Saw Chucholl, the village chair, shared their experience in accessing NTFPs from the forest. He gave detailed information on the access and use of cardamom and how it is being sold in the market as one of their sources of livelihood. He pointed out that the farm gate price of cardamom is very low because they are selling it as raw material to traders.

Dr. Ei Ei Swe Hlaing explained that the result of the value chain analysis will provide business information to stakeholders who are interested in investing in value addition of cardamom, especially since the technology for processing cardamom is not available in the township.

The SEARCA-ASRF team also collected NTFP specimens in both project sites, which will be displayed in a museum that the FRI is currently upgrading.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) provides funds for this project through the SEARCA-ASRF program. (Report from XGBCapiña)
The project “Upgrading the Calamansi Value Chain towards Improving the Calamansi Industry of Oriental Mindoro” kicked off with a workshop conducted by SEARCA and the University of the Philippines Los Banos (UPLB) on 24 January 2019. The project is funded by the Philippine Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR) and implemented by SEARCA in collaboration with UPLB, Tokyo University of Agriculture (Tokyo NODAI), the Provincial and Municipal Local Government Units (LGUs) of Oriental Mindoro, and Mindoro State College of Agriculture and Technology (MinSCAT). The Victoria Kalamansi Farmers Federation (VKFF) is the partner-beneficiary.

Hosted by SEARCA, the workshop aimed to ensure efficient project operations through the development of a detailed work plan, identification of human and material resource requirements per component, and drawing up of a common calendar of activities.

The workshop participants were members of the SEARCA project management team, UPLB study leaders, and a representative from MinSCAT.

The workshop discussed the activities to be conducted specific to each component, activities that could be more advantageous if undertaken together by the team members, the timelines, and tentative schedules.

Resource requirements were also enumerated, with due consideration for stipulations in the contract and administrative procedures and requisites.

A seminar on the status and prospects of the calamansi industry in Oriental Mindoro (see related story below) will be held to further level off on the context and situation in the project site as well as available data sets, among others. Resource persons are technical experts from UPLB who have assisted the province or a number of its communities in various capacities, as well as representatives from the provincial government.

SEARCA hosted a seminar-workshop on the status and prospects of the calamansi industry in Oriental Mindoro for the project “Upgrading the Calamansi Value Chain towards Improving the Calamansi Industry of Oriental Mindoro” on 12 February 2019. Two professors at the Institute of Crop Science (iCropS) of the University of the Philippines Los Banos-College of Agriculture and Food Science (UPLB-CAFS) were among the resource persons. Dr. Calixto M. Protacio presented an “Analysis of Calamansi Production Practices in Oriental Mindoro,” while Dr. Domingo E. Angeles talked about the “Calamansi Sub-sector Industry Situationer, Challenges, Programs, and RDE Needs.”

From the perspective of the local community, Ms. Christine M. Pine, Provincial Agriculturist of Oriental Mindoro, shared the vision for the calamansi industry in the province. She emphasized the need to increase year-round production of high-quality fresh calamansi fruits, increase farmers’ income, increase adaptive capacity of calamansi farmers to climate change, develop and sustain new local and export markets, and establish a functional industry cluster that complements the agriculture and food industry sectors.

The seminar-workshop also served as venue for developing approaches for the scoping activity and baseline studies of the project. Attendees were representatives of MinSCAT, LGUs of Oriental Mindoro, Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) of Victoria, Oriental Mindoro, Victoria Kalamansi Farmers Federation (VKFF), UPLB, and SEARCA. (Report from AGCVallez/CNGRogel)
The project “Upgrading the Calamansi Value Chain towards Improving the Calamansi Industry in Oriental Mindoro” conducted a scoping activity on 14-16 February 2019 in three towns in the province of Oriental Mindoro, Philippines.

The project team is composed of staff from SEARCA and the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), Together with partners from Mindoro State College of Agriculture and Technology (MinSCAT), Victoria Kalamansi Farmers Federation (VKFF), and the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPag) of Oriental Mindoro, they paid courtesy calls on the provincial governor and the mayor of the municipality of Victoria. They discussed the project objectives, oriented them about the project interventions, and set up initial collaboration with concerned offices.

Calamansi farms in the municipalities of Naujan, Victoria, and Socorro were visited. The project team found out that these farms were being converted gradually to other crops because of low profitability.

The team also visited accredited nurseries, processing plants, and traders and consolidators to discuss production, cultural management practices, postharvest handling, and processing.

Prevailing diseases like citrus greening, pests such as rind borers, and other parasitic plants were also identified by the team.

The discussion likewise covered the identification of critical concerns within the value chain, which will be used in preparing the baseline survey for the study.

Aside from banana and takudo chips enterprise development, the project is also working on improving the production of jackfruit, tilapia culture to contribute to household food security, and environmental sustainability through the integrated coconut farming system.

The SEARCA ISARD project in Inopacan is led by Dr. Jose Bacusmo, former president of VSU, and coordinated by Dr. Jose Medina of SEARCA.

SEARCA has embarked on upscaling effective models of ISARD to strengthen the linkages among farmers, industry players, and government institutions in achieving ISARD outcomes of food and nutrition security and poverty alleviation. (LLDDomingo)
Clockwise from the top: (1) SEARCA officers and staff in Boracay, Philippines for their summer outing on 27-31 March 2019 with Dr. Fernando C. Sanchez, Jr. (in white behind the tarpaulin), SEARCA Governing Board Chair; (2) Dr. Sanchez (leftmost in green, standing) gives a message during the fellowship dinner at Henann Garden Resort where the staff were billeted; (3) SEARCAns aboard the MV St. Anthony de Padua traveling from the Port of Batangas to Port of Caticlan on 27-28 March 2019; (4) SEARCA men enjoying the pool at Henann Garden Resort; (5) SEARCAns at the hotel lobby; and (6) SEARCAns aboard a ferry from Boracay to Caticlan on their way home.
First Filipino NUASC-SEARCA scholar completes PhD

NAGOYA, Japan—Dr. Ronilo de Castro, swine research manager at the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (DOST-PCAARRD), has completed his doctorate at Nagoya University (NU) under the Transnational PhD program for leading professionals in Asian countries.

He obtained the Doctorate Degree in Agriculture Science (Animal Production) with support from SEARCA under the NU-SEARCA PhD Research Scholarship. He was the first Filipino Doctorate scholar of the NU Asian Satellite Campus (NUASC) based at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), which it formally started its operations in the Philippines three years ago.

The graduation ceremony was held on 25 March 2019 at the NU Toyoda Auditorium and was attended by 1,500 masters and doctorate students. Dr. de Castro is one of 18 graduates of the NU Graduate School of Bioagricultural Sciences (GSBS). (Report from ECCedicol)

Study mission on livestock dairy dev’t in Thailand organized

BANGKOK, Thailand—Twelve officials and staff of the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC) and three officers of the Lamac Multipurpose Cooperative, Inc. (Lamac MPC) based in Cebu, Philippines participated in an Overseas Comparative Study Mission Toward Inclusive, Sustainable, and Competitive Livestock Dairy Development here on 10-16 March 2019.

The study mission was the last in a series organized by SEARCA as part of the project “Capacity Development under Livestock Research and Biotechnology Research and Development of the Carabao Development Plan (CDP)” that the Center is implementing for PCC.

The mission enabled the participants to identify relevant and specific overseas public and private sector program concepts and strategies needed to strengthen the i-REB (Intensified Rural Enterprise Build-Up) framework and its operationalization. They also sought to forge stronger partnership with international research and development institutions that will enhance generation of major final output relevant to improving productivity through the application of relevant biotechniques, technology transfer, and policy reforms.

The group visited the Murrah Dairy and Mini Murrah Farm in Chachoengsao Province; 108 Agriculture Machine and Equipment Co., Ltd. in Manao Wan; Nakorn Ratchasima Animal Nutrition and Research and Development Center in Pakchong; Aura Farm in Khon Kaen Province; Sweet Napier Pasture Area in Kalasin Province; Dairy Farming Promotion Organization (DPO) in Saraburi Province; Chokchai Agritourism Dairy Farm in Nakhton Ratchasima; and Zonta Dairy Village in Ratchaburi Province.

The group was accompanied by Dr. Nova A. Ramos, Program Specialist, SEARCA KMD-TU, who served as the overall Study Mission Coordinator. (Report from NARamos)

ATMI-ASEAN national/ from page 10

the ATMI-ASEAN Project Support Unit led by Mr. Jimmy Williams.

As the implementing partner of the ATMI-ASEAN Project, SEARCA presented the completed, ongoing, and planned national-level activities of the project in each of the five AMS. The proposed schedule of Project Year 4 activities was reviewed by each country and has been adjusted in consultation with the country representatives who attended the meetings. The consolidated report on the project’s progress and proposed schedule of activities at the regional and national levels will be presented by IFAD, IFPRI, and SEARCA in a meeting with Dr. Pham Quang Minh of the ASEAN Secretariat on 8 March 2019 in Jakarta, Indonesia. (LAMCarandang/BACDarvin)
SEARCA joins IFAD-Philippines country program review

SAGADA, Philippines—SEARCA participated in the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-Philippines 11th Annual Country Programme Review (ACPoR) with the theme “Promoting Inclusive Value Chains for Sustainable Rural Development” held here on 6-8 February 2019.

SEARCA currently implements three IFAD-funded grant projects. “Supporting Smallholder Farmers in Asia and Pacific-Islands Region with Agricultural Advisory Services (SAAS)” is managed by the SEARCA Project Development and Technical Services (PDTS). Meanwhile, the SEARCA Research and Development Department (RDD) oversees the “Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration in the ASEAN Region: Responding to Food Security and Inclusiveness Concerns (ATMI-ASEAN)” and the “Rural Regional Transformation: Pathways, Policy Sequencing, and Development Outcomes in China, the Philippines, and Vietnam (RRT).”

Dr. Pedcris M. Orencio, SEARCA Program Head for Research and Development, served as a panelist in the session that discussed the 2018 country strategic opportunities program and annual country program review results. He raised the impending challenges for project implementers to keep their programs significant and relevant given the changing conditions affecting the agriculture and rural sectors.

Three key considerations that Dr. Orencio identified for projects to have impact and sustainability were people or target beneficiaries, processes and strategies, and partnerships and commitments.

Ms. Sarah Grace L. Quinones, Project Associate of the SAAS Project, presented the project’s good practices and initiatives regarding the provision of advisory/extension services to farmers. She underscored the policy recommendation authored by the Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Training Institute (DA-ATI) and the Philippine Extension and Advisory Services Network, Inc. (PhilEASNet) through the SAAS project, which emphasizes the need for a separate criteria in the Seal of Good Local Governance to recognize the agricultural sector and encourage local government units to prioritize agricultural development. Said policy recommendation has been submitted to the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture for evaluation.

More than 50 participants from various IFAD-funded loan and grant projects in the Philippines attended the 11th ACPoR. (BCDarvin with report from SGLQuiñones)

ATMI-ASEAN national programs in 5 countries reviewed

A series of one-on-one review meetings with national programs in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam of the project “Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration in the ASEAN Region: Responding to Food Security and Inclusiveness Concerns (ATMI-ASEAN)” was conducted at SEARCA on 25 February-1 March 2019.

The review was conducted by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which funds the project, and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and SEARCA, the project implementing agencies.

The aim was to monitor and evaluate the current status of project implementation in each of the five targeted ASEAN Member States (AMS). The review also discussed issues or concerns in the implementation of the project and its activities. It also sharpened the focus of the need-based technical assistance component of the project to support the five AMS.

Country-level activities and plans were reviewed and discussed by the team led by Dr. Fabrizio Bresciani, Lead Regional Economist, IFAD Asia and Pacific Division, together with Ms. Aniq Fadhillah, Policy Facilitator, IFPRI; Ms. Bui Thi Viet Anh, Researcher, Center for Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD), Vietnam; Dr. Fabrizio Bresciani, Lead Regional Economist, Asia and Pacific Division of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); Mr. Jimmy Williams, ATMI-ASEAN Project Support Unit (PSU) Coordinator; Mr. Do Van Hoan, Vice Head of Poultry and Small Livestock Division, Department of Livestock Production, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD); Ms. Lea Thi Minh Hue, Vice Director of Social-Population-Family Department of the Viet Nam Farmers’ Union (VNFU); Dr. Pedcris Orencio, Program Head, Research and Development Department (RDD), SEARCA; Ms. Bernice Anne Darwin, Program Specialist, RDD, SEARCA, and; Mr. Nguyen Van Trong, Researcher, CAP, IPSARD.
IFAD conducts mid-term review of ATMI-ASEAN project

JAKARTA, Indonesia—The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) conducted a mid-term review of the Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration in the ASEAN Region: Responding to Food Security and Inclusiveness Concerns (ATMI-ASEAN) project in a meeting held on 8 March 2019 at the ASEAN Secretariat here.

Dr. Fabrizio Bresciani, IFAD Lead Regional Economist of the Asia and the Pacific Division, presided over the mid-term review, which also served as the second supervision mission of said IFAD-funded project. With him at the meeting were the project implementers, namely: the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) led by Dr. Pramod Kumar Joshi, Director of IFPRI-South Asia, and SEARCA led by Dr. Pedcris M. Orencio, Program Head for Research and Development.

The objective was to assess the project’s progress against its deliverables, discuss the plans for the remaining years of implementation, and decide about the overall program management.

Dr. Joshi; Dr. Orencio; and Mr. Jimmy B. Williams, ATMI-ASEAN Project Support Unit Coordinator, presented the Year 3 accomplishments as of 28 February 2019, the statement of expenditures for 2018, and the proposed budget for Year 4.

IFPRI and SEARCA enumerated the activities and initiatives conducted by the project in 2018 to respond to the observations presented by IFAD in the aide-memoire for 2017.

Dr. Bresciani acknowledged the project’s engagement with the Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) and the Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA), and their involvement in the regional- and national-level activities in the five ASEAN member states (AMS). He suggested to further explore ways for the two organizations to benefit from the project in terms of policy analysis.

He lauded the initiatives that the ATMI-ASEAN Project has planned for Year 4, which includes a publication. He was also pleased with the one-on-one meetings with the five target AMS because these have allowed IFAD, IFPRI, and SEARCA to understand how the country-level activities will progress.

On the same day, IFAD, IFPRI, and SEARCA met with Grow Asia—Mr. Grahame Dixie, Executive Director, and Mr. Reginald Lee, Director for Partnerships, to discuss their ongoing and planned activities at the national and regional levels. Grow Asia has seen tremendous amount of agricultural innovation coming out of the national level and they would like to explore how they might leverage learnings from this and other relevant institutions into their work in the ASEAN. Grow Asia has actively participated in some of the ATMI-ASEAN activities, both national and regional.

A courtesy call on Dr. Pham Quang Minh, Assistant Director of Food, Agriculture and Forestry Division (FAFD) of the ASEAN Secretariat provided updates on the project’s regional and national programs, including the work on developing roadmaps for regional value chains.

Dr. Minh welcomed the opportunity for the ASEAN Secretariat, IFAD, IFPRI, SEARCA, and Grow Asia to engage value chain actors and strengthen the cooperation between the private sector and governments. He was happy to note that the project is also looking at maize as this is one of the region’s priority commodities, together with livestock and crops for food security and nutrition under the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and the Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region (SPA-FS). (LAMCarandang)

From left: Ms. Aniq Fadhilla, Mr. Devesh Roy, Mr. Manmeet Ajmani, Dr. Pedcris M. Orencio, Dr. Joseph Arbiol, Dr. Pham Quang Minh, Dr. Pramod Kumar Joshi, Mr. Jimmy B. Williams, Dr. Fabrizio Bresciani, Mr. Grahame Dixie, Mr. Reginald Lee, Ms. Bernice Anne C. Darvin, Ms. Loise Ann M. Carandang, and Ms. Yacinta Esti
SEARCA scholars from multi-country study posts get training

SEARCA conducted two training-workshops for its scholars enrolled at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) in Indonesia, and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) in January 2019.

Both held at SEARCA, the training-workshops were in Data Analysis and Experimental Designs on 7-11 January and in Writing Thesis and Dissertation Proposals on 9-11 January.

Eleven SEARCA scholars participated in the five-day training-workshop on data analysis and experimental designs. Conducted by lecturers from the UPLB Institute of Statistics, the learning event provided the participants a thorough discussion of the design techniques for experiments, appropriate survey questionnaire, methods of probability sampling for surveys, statistical analysis, and the use of infographics in data presentations. They also had exercises to appreciate and apply learnings from the lectures.

The participants also visited the cassava experimental station of the UPLB Institute of Plant Breeding for a demonstration of an actual experimental design. They noted the proper spacing of each crop and number of crops per plot to obtain a good result for the experiment.

On the other hand, Dr. Evelyn Mae T. Mendoza, UPLB Professor Emeritus and National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) Academician, mentored 17 SEARCA scholars in the training-workshop on thesis and dissertation proposal writing. With her were lecturers from the UPLB College of Development Communication.

The training-workshop introduced the basic principles of writing thesis and dissertation proposals to help the participants transform their research topics into a full research proposal. The learning event was a mix of lectures, discussions, presentations, and critiquing of the participants’ outputs.

The UPLB Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Extension coordinated both training-workshops, which are part of SEARCA’s staple training offerings for its scholars to help build their capacity to do quality research and assist them in completing their degrees on time.

DILI, Timor-Leste—SEARCA conducted a short course on cropping system models and its implications for climate impact modelling for 27 junior lecturers and researchers of Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa’e (UNTL) on 14-18 January 2019.

Dr. Perdinan, Lecturer and Researcher at the Department of Geophysics and Meteorology, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB), Indonesia, served as resource person for the five-day course.

The short course was funded by the Food Security Center (FSC) of the University of Hohemheim, which is part of the “EXCEED” program of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). SEARCA is a strategic partner of the FSC in Southeast Asia.

Organized and led by SEARCA’s Graduate Education and Institutional Development Department, the short course is part of the Center’s Institutional Development Assistance (IDA) to UNTL.

Through its IDA program, SEARCA helps young and strategic higher education institutions with core competencies in agriculture and development disciplines. As such, SEARCA targets agricultural universities that are lagging in academic capacities but are strategically located in economic growth areas and expected to play a vital role in its country’s economic development.
Two-level English course conducted for SKU lecturers

SAVANNAKHET, Lao PDR—A two-level English Training Course was organized by SEARCA for a select group of lecturers from Savannakhet University (SKU).

Held on 11-22 March 2019, the course was divided into beginner and intermediate levels to cater to the needs of the participants. It consisted of modules on writing and grammar, pronunciation improvement, conversations for social and academic situations, and reading and vocabulary enrichment.

The opening ceremony was led by Dr. Sitha Kemmarath, SKU Vice President for Research and Postgraduate Studies and a SEARCA scholarship alumnus, and Dr. Maria Cristeta Cuaresma, SEARCA Program Head for Graduate Education and Institutional Development.

Dr. Cuaresma said the training is part of SEARCA’s Institutional Development Assistance (IDA) to SKU. By improving the participants’ English proficiency, she hopes that participants will be encouraged to pursue graduate studies in an international setting and contribute to the internationalization efforts of the university.

Dr. Khemmarath expressed appreciation for SEARCA’s continued support to SKU through the conduct of short courses and awarding of scholarships to a number of its lecturers.

Dr. Somphong Chanthavong, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Environment and Lao PDR’s representative to the SEARCA Governing Board, welcomed the SEARCA delegation. His faculty provided all the logistics needed for the course.

The training team was led by Asst. Prof. Emerita P. Cervantes, who has retired from the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), where she also served as Head of the English Division and Coordinator of the Language Instruction Towards Excellence (LITE) Program of the College of Arts and Sciences. With her for the training was Ms. Ann Michelle de Ocampo, a speech communication major.

SEARCA’s Graduate Education and Institutional Development Department manages the Center’s IDA program, which intends to empower and equip strategically located universities with the necessary resources to cater to the demands for human resources required to boost economic development in the region. SEARCA recognizes that different institutions have different systems, structures, and resources so that designs and interventions for IDA vary according to the specific needs of its partner beneficiaries.

Aside from SKU, IDA partner universities in the region include the Royal University of Agriculture in Cambodia, Yezin Agricultural University in Myanmar, the National University of Timor Leste, and Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry in Vietnam. (Report from MCNCuaresma)

UC members in QS Top 200 world university rankings in agri, forestry

All five founding members of the SEARCA-initiated Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC) are in the top 200 in the world in the subject areas of agriculture and forestry, according to the 2019 QS World University Rankings.

The QS World University Rankings is an annual publication of university rankings by Quacquarello Symonds (QS). Currently, the QS system consists of the global overall and subject rankings. The QS system names “the world’s top universities for the study of 48 different subjects and five composite faculty areas alongside five independent regional tables,” namely: Asia, Latin America, Emerging Europe and Central Asia, the Arab Region, and BRICS block (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).

Kasetsart University (KU) in Thailand, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), and Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB) in Indonesia rank among the Top 51-100, while the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) and Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) in Indonesia are in the Top 151-200 in world rankings for agriculture and forestry.

The QS World University Rankings use the following evaluation criteria: academic reputation (40%), employability of graduates (10%), faculty-student ratio as a metric for teaching quality (20%), citations per faculty as a metric of research quality (20%), international faculty ratio (5%), and international student ratio (5%). (Report from MCNCuaresma)
SEARCA participates in ASEAN meet on climate change, food security

BALI, Indonesia—SEARCA participated in the 8th Ad-Hoc Steering Committee on Climate Change and Food Security (AHSC CCFS) of the ASEAN held here on 28-29 March 2019.

Chaired by Dr. Pham Quang Minh, Head of Food, Agriculture and Forestry (FAF) Division, ASEAN Sectoral Development Directorate, ASEAN Secretariat, the meeting informed the AHSC of key climate change-related decisions at the Special 39th Senior Officials Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (39th-SOM AMAF) and 40th AMAF.

The meeting also provided updates on key initiatives on climate change from working groups. It discussed the ongoing study on the operationalization of the ASEAN Multi-sectoral Framework on Climate Change: Agriculture and Forestry towards Food Security (AFCC) and the stocktaking of the ASEAN Cooperation on FAF within the context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Potential collaboration with international partners was also explored.

Ms. Carmen Nyhria Rogel, SEARCA Program Specialist for Research and Development Department, presented SEARCA’s key initiatives on food security to address climate change in the ASEAN Member States (AMS).

She discussed SEARCA’s Umbrella Programs on Food and Nutrition Security for Southeast Asia (FANSSEA) and Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation for Southeast Asia (CChAMSEA). She also talked about SEARCA initiatives under Graduate Education and Institutional Development, Seed Fund for Research and Training, and Travel Grants.

Ms. Rogel also shared the initial gains of the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SF) Strategic Response Fund (ASRF) that is being managed by SEARCA as one of the implementing partners of the ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC). Nine projects in eight AMS were implemented under the ASRF Reserved Grants (Grant 1) and three grantees participated in conferences with support from ASRF (Grant 2).

Upon the request of the ASEAN Secretariat, SEARCA supported the development of “Stocktaking of ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals.” Dr. Roehlano M. Briones, Technical Consultant, presented the initial result of the stocktaking undertaking at the meeting.

The inputs and recommendations from the participants will aid in the preparation of the final draft that will eventually be submitted for endorsement by the relevant ASEAN bodies.

Dr. Doris Capistrano, ASFCC Regional Advisor, provided an update on recent developments on the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Framework on Climate Change: Agriculture and Forestry towards Food Security (AFCC) and ASFCC’s future support, including its transition phase. Likewise, other ASFCC implementing partners, namely: Center for Forestry Research (CIFOR), World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), Non-timber Forest Products-Exchange Program (NTFP-EP), and the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC), presented in the meeting their key initiatives on food security and climate change.

On the sidelines of the 8th AHSC CCFS, the AWG-SF Secretariat hosted a meeting of ASFCC partners on 30 March 2019 chaired by Dr. Capistrano. The partners discussed preparations for the Asia Pacific Forestry Week (APWF) in Incheon, Republic of Korea on 17-21 June 2019. The AWG-SF Secretariat and ASFCC partners will lead Stream 2: People and Forests Living in Harmony of the APWF. Under Stream 2, SEARCA will lead Session 5: Youth and Gender Inclusion in Forestry, the concept note of which was presented by Ms. Rogel.

Ms. Amy M. Lecciones, ASRF Regional Program Coordinator, informed the ASFCC partners that ASRF, under Grant 2, will support the participation of AWG-SF Leaders and Focal Point as resource speakers in the APFW. She also updated the partners on the progress of ASRF commitments to the place of action of the AWG-SF.

The ASFCC is a program funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to support the AWG-SF in addressing three inter-related issues confronting the region: food insecurity, poverty, and climate change. (Report from XGBCapila)
IKM Mentorship Program conducts lectures, study tour for second batch

SEARCA has successfully completed the 2nd Face-to-Face (F2F) Session for Batch 2 of the “Information and Knowledge Management (IKM) Mentorship Program: Communicating Agriculture and Fisheries Research for Inclusive and Sustainable Development (CAFIRSD)” held on 27 February-1 March 2019 at the SEARCA Headquarters.

The IKM Mentorship Program is one of SEARCA’s capacity-building projects funded by the Philippine Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR). It aims to facilitate improved agricultural and fisheries research reporting and knowledge management. Using a blended learning approach, the program combines online and face-to-face learning tools and methods.

“We hope this capacity building project will further enhance how DA and its attached agencies manage, utilize, and share the vast knowledge from its many research projects,” said Dr. Fernando C. Sanchez Jr., Chair of SEARCA Governing Board, in his opening remarks delivered by Ms. Nancy M. Landicho, Program Specialist and Officer-in-Charge of SEARCA Project Development and Technical Services (PDTS).

The 16 learners in Batch 2 come from the different regional offices of the DA-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and other DA-attached agencies.

Meanwhile, Ms. Julia A. Lapitan, Head of DA-BAR’s Applied Communication Division, delivered the opening remarks on behalf of Dr. Nicomedes P. Eleazar, BAR Director. In his opening remarks delivered by Ms. Nancy M. Landicho, Program Specialist and Officer-in-Charge of SEARCA Project Development and Technical Services (PDTS).

The learners also joined one-on-one consultations to finalize their article and video plans with their respective mentors who come from the UPLB College of Development Communication. They also visited the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Study tour to KM institutions
Also part of the 2nd F2F was a study tour to development organizations with successful KM programs. Dr. Maria Monina Cecilia A. Villena, SEARCA Program Head for KM, shared their experience in developing a KM System for SEARCA and how KM plays a key role in inclusive and sustainable agricultural and rural development (ISARD). The learners also visited the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) and theAsian Development Bank (ADB).

The next F2F of the IKM Mentorship Program will be held in April 2019 to tackle videography and online media for communicating agri-fishery research results. (SPPasiona)

SEARCA scholar tackles organic farming sustainability in Aussie confab

SYDNEY, Australia—Ms. Sekar Wulan Prasetyaningtyas, a SEARCA scholar pursuing PhD in Agribusiness at the Institut Pertanian Bogor in Indonesia, presented her paper titled “The Application of Soft System Methodology in Designing the Sustainability Strategy for Organic Farming in Indonesia” at the Sydney International Business Research Conference (SIBRC) 2019 held here on 23-25 March 2019.

Ms. Sekar’s paper used soft system methodology as a tool for change. Stakeholder analysis was used to generate knowledge about the relevant actors in the farm, understand their behavior, intentions, interrelations, and the influence these bring on the decision-making process. Using these sets of information, she developed strategies in managing the farm, facilitating the implementation of farm objectives, and assessing the feasibility of future policy direction.

As part of its efforts to disseminate research results widely, SEARCA supports the participation of its scholars in international conferences or the publication of their peer-reviewed papers in scientific journals. (MCNCuaresma)
Myanmar lensman bags 2018 SEARCA Photo Contest top prize

A Myanmar photographer bagged the top prize of the 12th SEARCA Photo Contest, which had the theme “Managing Climate Uncertainties and Scarce Water Resources.”

Besting over a thousand other entries from 10 Southeast Asian countries was the photo by Kyaw Zaw Lay.

Victor Diaz Kintanar of the Philippines and Dikye Ariani of Indonesia won the second and third prize, respectively.

The photo by Kyaw Zaw Lay of Myanmar showcases a common Myanmar ceremony that is nonetheless a significant part of their culture, which reflects the staunch spirit of charity by sharing a basic resource—water.

“Water donation” in Myanmar, especially of potable water, is elevated to an organized approach of sharing drinking water, especially to people and communities in arid regions that seasonally experience drought.

Apt for the theme “managing climate uncertainties and scarce water resources” of the 2018 SEARCA Photo Contest, the first prize winning photo gives a glimpse of culture-specific interventions that help mitigate effects of water scarcity to people, which may have been aggravated by climate change.

The second prize winner is a photo of a farmer walking in an unundated cornfield destroyed by the flood caused by tropical storm “Queenie” (international name Sinlaku) in Langtad, Argao, Cebu, Philippines.

The third placer is an image of the Cisauk lake located at the Cisauk area in Sukamulya, Bogor, Indonesia, which is close to some poor villages such as Dandang, Sukamulya, and Cibitung. The people who live around the lake also use the water from the lake.

Another Myanmar photographer bagged the People's Choice award, which goes to the shortlisted photograph that gets the most number of likes on SEARCA’s Facebook page.

Aung Kyaw Tun’s photo of the Irrawaddy River during low tide in the summer creates interesting patterns. Even then, fishing boats venture into the river that has scarce water during the season.

A total of 276 professional and amateur photographers from Southeast Asia submitted entries to the SEARCA Photo Contest of 2018.

Held annually since 2006, the SEARCA Photo Contest is launched every September. Submission of photos runs until December and final judging happens every January.

The annual SEARCA Photo Contest is open to all Southeast Asian nationals, and photo entries should be taken within Southeast Asia. First place photo receives USD 800, second place gets USD 500, third place receives USD 300, and People’s Choice gets USD 200.

Eight professional photographers and development professionals from Asia, Australia, Africa, and America served as judges in the latest contest.

The winning photos and others in the shortlist are displayed online at the SEARCA website (LLDDomingo with report from MBCadiz).