Young agri-env’t champions take center stage at PH Envnt Summit

CAGAYAN DE ORO, Philippines—Five young professionals advocating for sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation took center stage during the SEARCA-hosted Youth, Agriculture, and the Environment Session of the 3rd Philippine Environment Summit held on 27 February 2020 in this city.

The Environment Summit was co-organized by Green Convergence and the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to enhance convergence of various individuals and institutions to tackle issues in and accelerate solutions for sustainable development. Under the theme “Paradigm (re)Shift: Heeding Nature,” the plenary talks, breakout sessions, exhibits, and networking activities presented programs and projects that advance the country’s socio-economic development while protecting the environment.

The SEARCA-hosted session featured by-the-youth and for-the-youth initiatives that promote sustainable agriculture practices, environmental protection, and the circular economy.
DA-BAR, SEARCA to strengthen PH agri innovation system

SEARCA and the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR), Philippines are planning to further strengthen the enabling environment for agricultural innovation system and entrepreneurship in the country. This was discussed by Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, SEARCA Director, and Dr. Nicomedes P. Eleazar, DA-BAR Director, during their meeting on 18 February 2020 at SEARCA’s headquarters.

Also present at the meeting were SEARCA Deputy Director Joselito G. Florendo; Dr. Maria Cristeta N. Cuaresma, Program Head for Graduate Education and Institutional Development; Dr. Pedcris M. Orencio, Program Head for Research and Development; Dr. Romeo V. Labios, Technical Consultant for Partnerships; Ms. Corinta Q. Guerta, Technical Advisor to the Director; Dr. Rico C. Ancog, Technical Consultant for Project Development and Technical Services (PDTS); and Ms. Imelda L. Batangantang, Program Specialist, PDTS.

The DA-BAR has been a strong partner of SEARCA in research for development (R4D) projects in agriculture and fisheries in the Philippines since 1989. Together they implemented 35 R4D projects and jointly published 18 books, policy briefs, manuals, and other technical publications.

DA-BAR, SEARCA/ to page 4

Young agri-env’t champions/ from page 1

The speakers were Louise Mabulo, Founder of The Cacao Project and UNEP’s Young Champion of the Earth; Enzo Pinga, Business Development and Partnerships Head of ISILSA Ventures; Rein Hillary Carrascal, beauty queen and ambassador of Hapi LIFE Foundation; and Michelle Dagsaan, Higaonon youth representative of Samdhana Institute.

“SEARCA believes in the power of the youth. In the ASEAN region alone, one out of three belongs to the youth sector, which makes it a strong collective force to bring transformation in the agriculture and environment sectors,” said Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, SEARCA Director.

In a panel discussion, they emphasized the need to promote innovative and sustainable practices in agriculture and the environment, and the key roles of the youth in this endeavor. The speakers called for more engagement of and support for young people, particularly through funding and mentorship.

Mr. Sonny P. Pasiona, PDTS staff, provided an overview of Young Forces for Agricultural Innovation (#Y4AGRI) as SEARCA’s banner initiative for engaging and empowering young people—from kids to high school, university students, and young professionals—in agriculture and rural development (ARD).

The youth session is the first in an ARD Discussion Series that SEARCA is initiating as an avenue to tackle, solicit ideas, and establish collaboration with stakeholder groups on emerging and on-the-ground challenges for achieving sustainable agriculture and rural development. (Report from SPPasiona)

The youth speakers presented their best practices, challenges, and solutions to their respective projects. They also shared their motivations and personal difficulties in their advocacies especially at a young age.
**Former SEARCA Director and biotech champ conferred as national scientist**

MANILA, Philippines—President Rodrigo R. Duterte formally conferred the Rank and Order of National Scientist to Dr. Emil Q. Javier, former SEARCA Director and a biotechnology champion and advocate of agricultural modernization in a ceremony held on January 7 at Malacañang Palace.

The Order of National Scientist is the highest honor conferred by the President to a Filipino with outstanding achievements in science and technology.

Last August, the president released Proclamation 781 which recognizes Dr. Javier’s outstanding work in the field of agriculture and his contributions to the progress of science and technology in the Philippines and the world. It also highlighted Dr. Javier’s commitment to address the needs of the poor through modern science as well as the active role he is playing in informing the public about how science can be used to improve access to food and health, and in ensuring high safety standards in research and production of biotechnological innovations.

In his speech, Dr. Javier shared his great joy for the honor but said that it is mixed with pain and embarrassment of not having done enough.

"Mr. President, the joy is diminished by the painful reality that our farmers and fisherfolk remain impoverished and food insecure," Dr. Javier said.

However, he also expressed that the government’s current initiatives for the agricultural sector is giving hope that change is indeed coming, and that agriculture will finally receive the attention it deserves.

Dr. Javier called for tough political decisions and a more unified action for agriculture.

Dr. Javier is currently the Chair of the Coalition for Agriculture Modernization in the Philippines (CAMP) and is an advocate of using modern biotechnology for the benefit of the society.

Together with SEARCA Biotechnology Information Center, he authored policy briefs on the broad scientific consensus on safety of genetically modified organisms (GMO) technology and on the benefits of the CRISPR-Cas9 System.

**UC members dominate world ranking on oil palm int’l research publication**

The 2020 Elsevier Research Intelligence on Evidence-Based Policymaking in Indonesia named three members of the SEARCA-initiated Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC) as top publishers of scientific articles on oil palm research.

Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB) ranked first with 69 articles published. University of Göttingen ranked second with 42 articles and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) in third place with 24 articles. The three universities conducted a wide range of research on oil palm covering topics in sustainability, biodiversity, socioeconomics, and the environment.

For both IPB and UPM, the oil palm industry is vital in their country’s economy and plays a huge part of their export industry. It is also an important food source and can be used as feed, fuel or as chemical component. A study led by Thomas Guillaume on “Carbon Costs and Benefits of Indonesian Rainforest Conversion to Plantations” found that 85% of the global oil palm production can be found in Indonesia and Malaysia. A number of SEARCA scholars studying in IPB and UPM are conducting research on oil palm for their thesis. Results from these studies have also been presented in conferences by the scholars.

University of Göttingen has partnered with IPB in various research projects on the Oil Palm Adaptive Landscape as well as the Global Challenges Research Fund’s Trade, Development and the Environment Hub. These two universities also partnered with different institutions in disseminating research on oil palm through summer courses available for international participants.

In 2018, UPM hosted the UC-FSCC Summer School on Oil Palm-Cattle Integration: A Transition Towards Sustainability in Food Security and Climate Change. This was jointly organized with Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) in Indonesia, another UC member, and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU) in Austria through the MS Food Security and Climate Change project funded by the European Commission’s ERASMUS+ program. The Summer School took the participants to Pahang and Negeri Sembilan to explore common agricultural practices of farmers and private companies operating oil palm-cattle integration vis-à-vis practices of oil palm plantation only.

Through the UC, all three universities have worked together to share academic expertise and resources, conduct collaborative research, and participate in faculty and student exchange programs for the development of the Southeast Asian region. Other members of the UC include Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) and Universitas Brawijaya (UB) in Indonesia, Kasetsart University (KU) in Thailand, University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) in the Philippines, Tokyo University of Agriculture (Tokyo-NODAI) in Japan, National Taiwan University (NTU) in Taiwan, and University of British Columbia (UBC) in Canada. (PGMuyco)
UPRHS youth program on agri gets SEARCA seed fund

SEARCA awarded a Seed Fund for Research and Development worth US$15,000 to the University of the Philippines Rural High School (UPRHS) for its Youth Program on Agriculture.

Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, SEARCA Director, announced the award at the fund-raising event called “Coming Home: Lemuel Cuento in Concert” held on 26 February 2020 at the D.L. Umali Auditorium of UP Los Baños (UPLB).

SEARCA was also a sponsor of the two-hour concert, which was also for the benefit of the UPRHS Youth Program on Agriculture. The concert featured internationally renowned tenor Lemuel Cuento, who is an alumnus of UPRHS and accompanied by Jesper Colleen Mercado on the piano. It also featured performances by the UPRHS Glee Club.

Dr. Gregorio said the seed fund is for the proposal that UPRHS submitted to SEARCA “to engage Grade 11 students, through research internships, and encourage them to pursue careers in agriculture, nutrition, and related fields.”

He said SEARCA’s support to UPRHS is in line with the Center’s upcoming initiative called Young Forces for Agricultural Innovation (#Y4AGRI).

#Y4AGRI aims to engage and empower young people in agricultural innovation—from young children, to high school, college, and young professionals. It intends to use awareness, appreciation, action, and alliance strategies to attract and mobilize the youth in agriculture that SEARCA calls “Young Agrinnovators.”

“In #Y4AGRI, SEARCA will work with institutions who can help us with our goal to engage and empower the youth in agriculture. That’s one of the reasons why SEARCA supported this concert,” Dr. Gregorio explained.

He added that SEARCA is raring to implement its 11th Five-Year Plan beginning in July 2020 with a renewed focus to alleviate the plight of the many stakeholders of the agriculture sector particularly farmers and their families, including the youth.

“SEARCA will also expand and transform its service portfolios and sphere of influence in the ARD landscape to specifically include non-traditional but equally important beneficiaries, such as K-12 schools, beyond higher education institutions that the Center has already been serving,” Dr. Gregorio said.

He emphasized that “we are gearing to facilitate all these efforts because SEARCA believes in the power of the youth.”

SEARCA also mounted an exhibit at the concert venue that showcased the winners of its recent Photo Content featuring youth agripreneurs in Southeast Asia. (LLDDomingo)

DA-BAR, SEARCA/ from page 2

During their meeting, Dr. Gregorio shared with Dr. Eleazar the keystones of SEARCA’s 11th Five-Year Plan starting 2020. A major area of synergism between the current priorities of SEARCA and DA-BAR can be the strengthening the capacity of farmers and farmers’ organizations in production costs reduction, farm production efficiency, and increasing their capacity to actively engage in value-adding activities. Dr. Eleazar also discussed the Technology Business Incubation (TBI) of DA-BAR.

Dr. Eleazar also visited the completed wing of the Southeast Asian AgriMuseum and Learning Center on Agricultural and Rural Development that was funded by DA-BAR through its Research Facilities Development Grant Program.

SEARCA is fine-tuning the design of said learning facility into a Southeast Asian hub for agricultural research innovations for the next generation. (LLDDomingo)
Japan academe-industry-gov’t interconnectivity models explored for potential replication in SE Asia

NAGOYA, Japan—Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, SEARCA Director, was graciously received by Prof. Dr. Seiichi Matsuo, President of Nagoya University (NU), and his cabinet during his visit on 12 February 2020.

The visit aimed to further strengthen the SEARCA-Nagoya University collaboration on joint scholarship support, academic and research cooperation, and academe-industry-government interconnectivity implementation to revitalize the agriculture sector in the Southeast Asian region.

Through its 11th Five-Year Plan, Dr. Gregorio envisions SEARCA to be a gateway to the future of agricultural development by building an open innovation and open science spaces that will serve as the venue for future trends and opportunities for agriculture and rural development in Southeast Asia for the next 10 years.

He stressed that “this re-imagined, transformational strategy is built on the premise that advancements in agricultural technology, coupled with a changed policy and social consciousness, are fundamentals in changing the agricultural and rural development landscape.”

As part of its strategy, SEARCA actively explores various models on academe-industry-government interconnectivity implemented by advanced countries in the world. Of particular interest is the case of NU, which has long been systematically wielding strong industry-academe partnership in strategically advancing its curricular programs and research and development work.

Being located in the Aichi Prefecture, a major industrial hub in Japan, NU has been supporting the automobile, aerospace, ceramics, and other industries through the conduct of basic researches. In turn, the private sector also infuses necessary funds for university researches to pursue cutting-edge technological studies, thereby further complimenting the support given by the government. The active collaboration of NU with the industry sector also ensures the strong matching between university curricular programs with the human resource demand of the work sector.

Furthermore, of the total 13 Nobel Laureates won by Japanese nationals, six were scientists from NU. This major milestone were greatly attributed to carefully planned industry-academe-government collaboration pursued by the university such as in the case of Professor Ryoji Noyori and Professor Isamu Akasaki who were awarded for advanced research on “studies on asymmetric synthesis” and “basic studies on LED technology,” respectively.

As related by the NU officials, the industry-academe-government cooperation continues to be increasingly important in establishing new processes from the creation of intellectual property to its utilization with the aim of contributing towards social well-being.

As SEARCA embraces an open innovation culture, it sees reaching out to innovation ecosystem as one of the strategies to respond to persistent challenges in agricultural and rural development, and in re-imagining its purpose and position in the development world.

In the coming years, SEARCA intends to facilitate the partnering up of players and actors of the innovation community in the Southeast Asian countries such as incubator houses, venture capital funders, universities and other research institutions, as well as startups, small and medium enterprises, and corporations. (RCAncog)
Innovator-leaders are the heart of Agriculture 4.0 - SEARCA Director

TOKYO, Japan—As technology-dependent workflow increasingly becomes the norm, some challenges posed by the Industrial Revolution 4.0 that educational institutions must address were tackled by Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, SEARCA Director, at the SEAMEO-University of Tsukuba Symposium VIII held on 13-14 February 2020.

Jointly organized by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and University of Tsukuba at its Tokyo campus, the symposium was themed “Education for Inclusive Growth of Society 5.0.”

In his talk on curricular imperatives in developing next-generation leaders of the agriculture sector in Southeast Asia, Dr. Gregorio noted that the challenges posed by IR 4.0 include “preference for technology over human labor, security issues, reliability and stability of technologies, and the reluctance of people to change.”

He said these challenges are largely ethical concerns that need to be addressed at the school level.

“Character education therefore becomes even more important as we usher in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution characterized by changes, innovations, and disruptions in the society due to the fast-paced innovation and technology development. While these innovations and disruptions would mean increased productivity and efficiency, it could in another way negatively affect social identities, values, and established ethics,” Dr. Gregorio explained.

“We need innovators with big hearts to be the heart of the Fourth Industrial Revolution,” he stressed that the best resource would be neither capital or labor but those people who can create new ideas and innovation.

“SEARCA’s vision for the agriculture sector, for instance, is towards the application of modern farm technologies and practices that will increase productivity and efficiency.” Dr. Gregorio said.

He said the pillars of modern agriculture are “organizing and managing agriculture as a business, changing the social structure through asset reform, and nurturing values respecting nature and community.”

Dr. Gregorio pointed out the need to transform small farmers into entrepreneurs and overcome problems of scale by concentrating in key production areas through industry-wide clustering and strengthening of cooperatives and farmers organizations.

Moreover, he explained that altering the social structure can be done by strengthening the role of agriculture for poverty reduction, empowering farmers and fishers, transferring property or usufruct rights to assets to farmers and fishers, and stimulating investments among owners and rights holders to make assets productive.

Dr. Gregorio also shared the values needed in character formation for the next-generation Agriculture 4.0 identified by the Center for Curriculum Redesign as follows: mindfulness, curiosity, resilience, fortitude, ethics, and leadership.

If capital, labor, and research & technology are the brain and brawn, innovator-leaders with those key values will serve as the necessary heart of the Agriculture 4.0.

He emphasized that character education should be delivered in a fresh, creative, and communicative context-specific approach rather than the usual teacher monologues.
A volcanic eruption did not deter leaders from higher education institutions (HEIs) in Southeast Asia from gathering at SEARCA to participate in the Leadership Development Program for HEIs in Southeast Asian held on 13-17 January 2020. The participants included presidents, vice presidents, deans and assistant deans, registrars, and department heads from colleges and universities in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Co-organized by SEARCA and the Singapore based The HEAD Foundation (THF), the program was designed as a capacity building workshop for administrators, middle and senior managers, and academic leaders of HEIs in Southeast Asia.

“It is not the strongest who would prevail, it is those who will adapt to change.”

This quote is true not just in biology but also for institutions, stressed Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, SEARCA Director, as he welcomed the participants. He said everyone needs to change or we naturally become extinct.

He noted that HEIs must not only follow the trend but be one step ahead, citing that HEIs in the region need to adapt to changes resulting from initiatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), among them the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) agenda and ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) initiative.

The executive program provided a platform for higher education leadership in the context of local and regional contemporary challenges. Environmental scans, design thinking, and strategic management exercises enabled the participants to identify and prioritize cross-cutting issues arising from rapidly changing needs of industry and the workplace.

Dr. Natarajan Varaprasad, Course Program Director, said the issues include having a relevant curriculum, addressing disruptive technologies, internationalization, adaptive learning and re-learning, and limited resources. He explained that HEIs today must deal with these issues while working in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment. Dr. Varaprasad served as a resource person and is managing partner and principal consultant of the Singapore Education Consulting Group LLP.

Nine modules comprised the executive course: (1) Challenges, Issues and Opportunities: Analysis of External Factors and Positioning of HEIs; (2) High-performance Leadership: Values and Ethics; (3) Strategic Management; (4) Design

Thinking; (5) Faculty and Staff Development in HEI; (6) Disruptive Technologies in Teaching and Learning; (7) Quality Assurance in Teaching and Learning; (8) ASEAN Mutual Recognition Framework Arrangements; and (9) Transitioning from Management to Leadership.

The other resource persons were Dr. Paul S. Teng, SEARCA Senior Fellow and Managing Director and Dean, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore; Dr. Calvin M. L. Chan, Director, SUSS Office of Graduate Studies; Dr. Felix Tan, Senior Lecturer, University of New South Wales Business School, Australia; and Dr. Supachai Yavaprabhas, Professor, Political Science at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

The participants prepared a strategic agenda for submission to their own HEI management, which will include action points embodying their take-home lessons on education and managerial leadership. These re-entry action plans focus on the priority needs of their institutions to keep in step with AEC 2025.

Participants were introduced to contemporary tools, like this Lego Serious Play kit used in design thinking for managing change and conflict in higher education institutes.

A third offering of this SEARCA-THF course for 2021 is in the works. The second run was held in January 2019. (Report from NARamos)

Innovator leaders/ from page 6

He added that parents and community involvement in the character education can also be an important dimension that needs to be explored.

Dr. Gregorio shared SEARCA’s initiative to establish school-plus-home gardens as a learning facility for students to understand the basics of farming through experiential learning activities while instilling in them the value of agriculture. Moreover, as recommended by SEARCA, teachers are beginning to integrate concepts of organic agriculture, nutrition, and climate change in the lesson plans in English, Science, Mathematics, and Technology and Livelihood Education of Grades 4 and 7.

“The emphasis on the plus in the S+HGP went beyond merely building gardens in children’s homes but resulted in having parents conscientiously getting more involved in the nutrition of their children,” Dr. Gregorio said. (LLDDomingo)
PhilRice and SEARCA renew ties to strengthen PH rice industry

MUÑOZ, Philippines—SEARCA and the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) have renewed their partnership to further collaborate and address challenges, particularly leadership development, in the country’s rice sector.

SEARCA is keen to contribute solutions to address regional and global challenges and elevate agricultural families’ quality of life. It will do so by enabling farming families to gain access to new and innovative financial services; adopt new, sustainable, resilient production technologies and systems; integrate with modern postharvest and logistics system; and gain entry to and operate in modern networks and markets.

Meanwhile, PhilRice is mandated to help develop high-yielding and cost-reducing technologies so farmers can produce enough rice for all Filipinos. Through its R&D work in its central and branch stations, PhilRice aims to improve the competitiveness of the Filipino rice farmer and the Philippine rice industry and transform it to be more profitable, resilient, and sustainable through responsive, balanced, environmentally sound and partnership-based research, development, and extension.

Under the three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on 20 January 2020, SEARCA and PhilRice commit to collaborate on activities that include joint research, capacity building activities, and knowledge and information exchange.

Signatories to the agreement were Dr. John C. de Leon, PhilRice Executive Director, and Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, SEARCA Director.

“SEARCA wants to build transformational leadership,” Dr. Gregorio said.

He explained that “in transforming our key partners, they will become the movers in transforming the farmers and the agricultural sector.”

Dr. De Leon said PhilRice and SEARCA “shall work together with other partners like DOST and PCAARRD on building more leaders for R&D institutions ready to face the new challenges in rice-based farm productivity.”

The signing ceremony was held after Dr. Gregorio’s presentation of SEARCA’s 11th Five-Year Plan in a seminar titled “2020: A Clear AgriVision for Tomorrow.” The seminar was attended by PhilRice executives and staff as well as students of the Central Luzon State University (CLSU).

Past SEARCA-PhilRice collaborations includes research on improving the agricultural insurance program to enhance resilience to climate change; on estimating the demand elasticities of rice in the Philippines; on nature, sources, and causes of productivity growth in Philippine agriculture; on assessment of Gulayan ng Masa Program of the Department of Agriculture (DA); and on value chain analysis of corn in the Philippines and benchmarking with other corn-producing countries.

SEARCA and PhilRice also jointly published a 12-volume monograph series that captured the findings of their collaborative project on “Productivity Growth in Philippine Agriculture” conducted with the DA-Bureau of Agricultural Research. The project analyzed the productivity growth in Philippine agriculture by measuring and disaggregating the sources of said growth over time using analytical approaches appropriate to Philippine conditions. It also identified policy and investment levers that could serve as basis for formulating strategies to promote agricultural growth in the country. The results and recommendations of this research may also be used in other countries of Southeast Asia, possibly contributing to agricultural and rural development in the region.
Project to help upscale carabao dev’t in PH completed

MUÑOZ, Philippines—SEARCA has completed the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC)-funded project titled “Building Capacity and Strengthening Partnership for Carabao Development Program (CDP)” conducted from April 2015 to December 2019.

Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, SEARCA Director, turned over the final report to Dr. Arnel N. del Barrio, PCC Executive Director, during his visit to PCC on 21 January 2020. With him was a team from SEARCA that included SEARCA Deputy Director Joselito G. Florendo.

The project had three components, namely: knowledge management (KM), capacity building, and enterprise development, which supported PCC in upscaling its implementation of the CDP.

A KM Strategic Plan for the PCC National Headquarters, its regional centers, and clientele was developed through the KM component.

Under capacity building component, nine local trainings and workshops were conducted for PCC officials, regional staff and Carabao-Based Enterprise Development (CBED) partners. These trainings and workshops updated their knowledge on technical writing, reviewing and editing of knowledge products (KPs), as well as widened their knowledge on financial management.

A national conference was held to launch and pre-test selected KPs produced by the project. An international conference on knowledge sharing was also organized to showcase the best practices of small- and medium-scale carabao farmers in Southeast Asia.

The project also assisted 17 cooperative-beneficiaries (13 in Luzon and four in the Visayas) under the enterprise development component through provision of equipment, tools, supplies, and vehicles needed for their CBEDs.

SEARCA and PCC are looking to continue their partnership through a second phase of the project to attract private investments for the cooperative-beneficiaries, develop CBEDs through technology innovations, and training of PCC staff to address competency gaps in business advising.

During their meeting, Dr. Gregorio and Dr. Del Barrio agreed to pursue the next phase of the project to focus on farm clusters organization, more outcome-based farm cluster managers training, and strengthened enterprise development in major agriculture corridors in the Philippines. (LLDDomingo/SGLQuiñones)

ASEAN-Swiss partnership celebrates gains in social forestry

JAKARTA, Indonesia—Officials and representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Bodies, the Embassy of Switzerland in Jakarta, ASEAN Member States (AMS) Leaders and Social Forestry Focal Points, development partners, academe and international research organizations, civil society organizations, and the ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC) partner organizations gathered here for the ASFCC closing event held at the ASEAN Headquarters on 25-26 February 2020.

Since 2011, the ASFCC has addressed the interlinked issues of food security, poverty, and climate change, particularly in forested landscapes in Southeast Asia, through cooperation and partnership activities with AMS. Funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the ASFCC has worked closely with the ASEAN Social Forestry Network, an intergovernmental platform for policy learning and knowledge exchange which became the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SF) in 2016. Complementing this focus on social forestry, the ASFCC supported the development and implementation of the ASEAN Multisectoral Framework on Climate Change: Agriculture and Forestry towards Food Security (AFCC), a cross-sectoral policy platform for issues relating to climate change and food security.

ASFCC activities were implemented through its five partner organizations: SEARCA, Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP), and the Center for People and Forests (RECFTC).

SEARCA managed the AWG-SF Strategic Response Fund (ASRF), which provided funds to AMS Leaders and Focal Points to enable them to respond to immediate needs or catalyze strategic action to address emerging issues, opportunities or other situations that may not have been anticipated but to which the AMS’ response is critical. In more than six years, the ASRF supported 28 projects in eight AMS. It also provided six travel grants to AMS and partners to present papers in various fora.

The closing event celebrated the achievements of the ASEAN-Swiss partnership through ASFCC over 10 years as well as formally closed the program. It disseminated ASFCC research results, outputs, and key messages, and encourage donors and development partners to build upon ASFCC’s work. It also facilitated the shaping of the ASFCC’s work. It also facilitated the shaping of the ASEAN-Swiss partnership/ to page 11
SEARCA joins KU forum on higher ed, sustainable dev’t

BANGKOK, Thailand—SEARCA participated in the Kasetsart University (KU) Academic Forum themed “Higher Education and Sustainable Development: Facing Realities and Implementing Change,” which was the highlight of KU’s 77th anniversary celebration on 2-3 February 2020.

KU is a founding member of the SEARCA-initiated Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC) and as such has been a strong partner of SEARCA since 1989.

SEARCA Deputy Director Joselito G. Florendo and Ms. Leah Lyn D. Domingo, Public Relations Specialist, represented SEARCA at the forum, which sought to promote educational alliances among universities from various parts of the world in keeping with KU’s foremost goals to establish “Knowledge of the Land.”

The forum also provided a venue for discussions on the initiatives that universities and other institutions in Thailand, Indonesia, Finland, Canada, Korea, Japan, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have undertaken to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition to keynote presentations, there were also two panel discussions: one tackled the changing roles of universities in providing education on the SDGs, while the other focused on research and innovation to achieve SDGs.

Other UC member universities represented at the forum included Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB), Indonesia; University British Columbia (UBC), Canada; and Tokyo University of Agriculture (Tokyo NODAI).

Dr. Rickey Yada, Dean of the UBC Faculty of Land and Food Systems, talked about the role of universities in co-creating urban sustainability in his keynote presentation.

On the other hand, Prof. Dr. Arif Satria, IPB Rector, gave a presentation as one of the panelists in the panel discussion on research and innovation to achieve SDGs. With him as panelist was Dr. Sutkhet Nakasathien, Dean of the KU Faculty of Agriculture and Thailand’s representative to SEARCA’s Governing Board.

Dr. Chongrak Wachrinrat, Acting President of KU, presided over the opening program and interacted with the participants throughout the forum and the networking banquet in the evening.

As part of KU’s 77th anniversary celebration, the delegates to the forum also took part in a ceremony honoring the three founders of KU on the main campus on 2 February 2020. They also visited KU’s Kamphaeng Saen Campus where they were received and given a briefing by Dr. Anuchai Pinyopummin, Vice President for Kamphaeng Saen Campus and KU administrators. The delegates also visited the Rice Science Center and the laboratory for Medicinal Cannabis Research at Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science on said campus, as well as world heritage sites in Ayutthaya province. (LLDDomingo)

Members of the Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC) initiated by SEARCA are among the top universities from emerging economies with the participants throughout the forum and the networking banquet in the evening.

Dr. Sutkhet Nakasathien (center), Dean of the KU Faculty of Agriculture and Thailand’s representative to SEARCA’s Governing Board, moderates the panel discussion on research and innovation to achieve SDGs. His co-panelists are Dr. Arif Satria (right), IPB Rector, and Dr. Bart Lambregts of the KU Faculty of Architecture.

UC members rank high among top universities from emerging economies

The THE Emerging Economies University Rankings measured the universities based on the five criteria: Industry Income, Citation, Teaching, International Outlook, and Knowledge Exchange.

The list features the 533 best universities from 47 countries. The London Stock Exchange’s FTSE Group categorized these countries as “advanced emerging,” “secondary emerging” or “frontier.” The National Taiwan University (NTU) is the 8th best university, while the University of the Philippines (UP) ranked 70th and Universiti Putra Malaysia, 106th.

Universities that placed after 200 are given ranges instead of rankings.

Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) in Indonesia placed among the universities in the top 251-300. Kasetsart University (KU) in Thailand and Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB) in Indonesia also landed in the top 301-350. Universitas Brawijaya (UB) in Indonesia was also listed in the 501+ range.

The THE Emerging Economies University Rankings measured the universities based on the five criteria: Industry Income, Citation, Teaching, International Outlook, and Knowledge Exchange.

Among the criteria, IPB ranked the highest among the UC members in terms of Industry Income with scores of 70.7, besting even NTU with a score of 65.4 in this criterion.

In fact, among the five criteria, Industry Income is where NTU, IPB, UGM and KU scored the highest. On the other hand, UPM scored the highest in International Outlook with 69.3, while UP scored the highest in Citation with 86.9. (LLDDomingo)
SEARCA alumnus bags engineering excellence prize

MANILA, Philippines—Dr. Ruel M. Mojica, an agricultural engineer and SEARCA alumnus, was awarded the Manila Water Foundation (MWF) Prize for Engineering Excellence for his invention “Bravura,” a microcontroller-based roasting machine to increase the financial viability of low-income coffee farmers and cooperatives.

MWF is the sole recognizing body in the country that pays tribute to engineers who have made a difference in the lives of the Filipino through their inventions that tackle development issues in the environment, water, sanitation, and sustainability.

The Bravura Coffee Roasting Machine is the cheapest known vertical coffee roasting machine which was constructed in partnership with a local manufacturer. The machine is beneficial for farmers as they could market roasted coffee and pursue professional coffee production rather than just sell their raw beans.

Dr. Mojica was awarded a SEARCA Regional Professorial Chair Grant in academic year 2016-2017 for Bravura, specifically for his study titled “Socio-economic and Environmental Assessment of a Microcontroller-based Coffee Roasting Machine: Implications for Market Potential and Technology Commercialization.”

Prior to this grant, he was a recipient of a scholarship under the Cavite State University (CvSU)-SEAMEO SEARCA Graduate Scholarship Project in 2005 to pursue his PhD in Agricultural Engineering at the University of the Philippines Los Baños. Dr. Mojica currently serves as Vice President for Research and Extension at CvSU.

In creating Bravura, Dr. Mojica used a participatory approach to include the farmers’ capacity and cost limitations. Aside from the machine, training programs on coffee science, business operation, and marketing are also provided to farmers.

SEARCA’s thrust in the next five years is to promote inclusive innovation and academe-industry-government interconnectivity towards Agriculture 4.0 and inventions such as Dr. Mojica’s Bravura, which uplifts the life of the coffee farmers, affirm the Centre’s mission to provide human resource development in the region through graduate scholarships and grants.

SEARCA alumnna named state college president

MANOLO FORTICH, Philippines—Dr. Catherine Roween C. Almaden was named as the new President of Northern Bukidnon State College in February 2020.

Northern Bukidnon State College offers undergraduate courses, serving the human resource development needs of the Province of Bukidnon and Region X.

Dr. Almaden earned her PhD in development studies from the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) as a SEARCA PhD research scholar.

SEARCA funded her PhD dissertation on “Multidimensional Indicators of Adaptive Capacity of Rice-farming Households to Address Varying Conditions of Salt-Water intrusion in Northern Mindanao, Philippines.”

The SEARCA PhD Research Scholarship provides financial support to qualified Southeast Asian PhD students whose researches are relevant to the priority thrusts of SEARCA.

Dr. Almaden completed her MA in Economics in 2007 at University of San Carlos. She taught Macroeconomics, Economics of Development, Public Finance, Research in Economics, and Environment Economics at Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan since 1998. She became Dean of its Graduate School in 2019.

A prolific researcher, Dr. Almaden has published numerous journal and book articles as well as textbooks in the field of economics, ecology, mining, and water supply. She also does consultancy work in these areas with national, regional, and international institutions.

ASEAN-Swiss partnership/ from page 9

of strategic agenda and priorities for ASEAN cooperation on food, agriculture and forestry and social forestry beyond 2020.

The two-day event included two parallel technical workshops, a moderated panel discussion, and a high-level policy dialogue. An exhibit and knowledge fair showcased ASFCC outputs and research results and feature products and services from NTFP-based community enterprises.

SEARCA was represented by Mr. Joselito G. Florendo, Deputy Director for Administration; and Dr. Pedcris M. Oencio, Program Head; Ms. Carmen Nyhria G. Rogel, Program Specialist, and Ms. Rochella B. Lapitan, Program Support Staff, all of the Research and Development Department; and Ms. Amy M. Lecciones, ASRF Regional Program Coordinator.
Farmers convene for biotech forum

To enable farmers to make informed decisions on products of modern biotechnology, the SEARCA Biotechnology Information Center (BIC) organized a Farmers’ Forum on Biotechnology held on 19 December 2019 at the SEARCA headquarters.

Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, SEARCA Director, expressed his desire to engage with the participants and encouraged them to think critically and be open to information about genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

“Don’t be afraid of modern biotechnology. This activity is meant to clarify misconceptions about GMOs so we should take this opportunity to learn more about it,” he said.

The event gathered more than a hundred vegetable farmers from the provinces of Laguna and Quezon. The forum introduced them to agricultural biotechnology and its products like Bt eggplant.

Scientists from the University of the Philippines Los Baños-Institute of Plant Breeding (UPLB-IPB) are currently developing a genetically modified eggplant that contains a gene from the soil bacterium Bacillus thuringiensis. Inserting the Bt gene into the eggplant protects the plant by making it resistant from the eggplant fruit and shoot borer, which is the most damaging pest of eggplant in South and Southeast Asia.

With this GM crop, exposure of farmers and consumers to potentially harmful pesticides are reduced while increasing yield and ensuring farmer income.

The forum also included a discussion on the projected socioeconomic impacts of Bt eggplant, the government’s safety regulations for products of modern biotechnology, and a demonstration of the Simple Nutrient Addition Program (SNAP) Hydroponics planting system. (JCCBarradas)

New video series highlights clamor of Filipino farmers for Bt eggplant

The SEARCA Biotechnology Information Center (BIC) released “The Bt Eggplant Story,” a new video series that documents the development of Bt eggplant in the Philippines and highlights the clamor of farmers for the release of the genetically modified (GM) crop.

Eggplant farming is a major source of income but the current situation puts farmers, consumers, and the environment at risk. Eggplants are susceptible to the eggplant fruit and shoot borer (EFSB), causing about 73% yield loss annually.

To address this problem, scientists from the University of the Philippines Los Baños-Institute of Plant Breeding (UPLB-IPB) are currently developing a GM eggplant that contains a gene from the soil bacterium Bacillus thuringiensis. Inserting the Bt gene into the eggplant protects the plant by making it resistant to EFSB.

Potential farmer-adopters from eggplant-producing provinces in the country expressed support for Bt eggplant and its approval for commercialization.

Proponents of the Bt Eggplant Project from UPLB-IPB also discussed the development of the crop and its health and environmental benefits.

Experts from the academe and the government likewise spoke about the country’s rigorous biosafety regulatory process that ensures the safety of GM products before being released in the market.

The Bt Eggplant Story consists of six videos. It was produced in partnership with Feed the Future South Asia Eggplant Improvement, Department of Agriculture-Biotechnology Program Office, and Greenbug Media Productions. (DJOMedina)

SE Asian grad students/ from page 14

was noted. Dr. Maria Cristeta N. Cuaresma, SEARCA Program Head for Graduate Education and Institutional Development, recognized this as something to be improved and can be a topic of a separate training.

The training was spearheaded by SEARCA’s Graduate Education and Institutional Development Department (GEIDD). Through GEIDD, SEARCA has been organizing training workshops for its scholars to better equip them to accomplish their academic requirements and prepare them for their future roles as champions of inclusive agriculture and innovations for development. (Report from PGMMyco)
**SEARCA renews 20-year commitment to support PH biotech info center**

Fully committed to continuing the delivery of credible, science-based information on agricultural biotechnology for Southeast Asia, SEARCA has renewed its 20-year partnership with the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) for the Biotechnology Information Center (BIC) in the Philippines. Signatories to the memorandum of agreement are SEARCA Director Glenn B. Gregorio and ISAAA Southeast Asian Center Director Dr. Rhodora R. Aldemita.

SEARCA and ISAAA jointly established the SEARCA BIC, which serves as the Philippine biotechnology information node that is part of the Global Knowledge Center on Crop Biotechnology.

As such, SEARCA BIC is part of ISAAA’s global network of BICs which respond to information needs, promote and advance a broader public understanding of crop biotechnology, and monitor the local agri-biotech environment.

“Researchers have developed a lot of technologies aimed at boosting farm productivity, meeting the challenges in food security, and improving lives of farmers. The use of biotech crops is one solution that science offers us,” Dr. Gregorio said. Since 2000, the SEARCA BIC has been actively reaching out to various stakeholders from different sectors in the Philippines and the Southeast Asian region. It has carried out knowledge sharing and capacity building initiatives to create an enabling environment that will unleash the potential of biotechnology for agricultural development.

“SEARCA stands by its long commitment to help farmers understand the science and enable them to make well-informed decisions about these technologies,” Dr. Gregorio asserted. Dr. Aldemita affirmed that “SEARCA is one of our active collaborators in the region and we are very pleased that we are continuing our joint knowledge sharing initiatives that would hopefully lead to maximizing the potential of biotechnology to benefit various stakeholders, particularly resource-poor farmers in developing countries.” (Report from JCCBarradas)

**MS in global agri tech and genomic science scholarship application now open**

Scholarship application for the inaugural run of the Master Program in Global Agriculture Technology and Genomic Science (ATGS) at the National Taiwan University (NTU) is now open to Filipinos and nationals of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. The MS scholarship program is a collaboration of NTU and SEARCA.

The NTU-SEARCA Joint Scholarship Program for Global ATGS aims to cultivate agricultural professional talents, encourage academic excellence, and promote the research and development of agriculture within Southeast Asia.

The program also provides an opportunity for internship and field visits in line with NTU’s efforts to connect with industries and promote hands-on training. The program’s curriculum is interdisciplinary to develop global bio-agricultural talents that are responsive to the needs of the agriculture sector and with advanced knowledge and practical skills on contemporary agriculture.

Offered by the NTU International College, the Global ATGS aims to provide a deeper understanding on smart farming technology, genome science research, and breeding science and technology.

Keystone courses include global agriculture technology foresight, mathematical method for life science, and scientific writing.

Under Digital Agriculture Technology, students will explore the application of blockchain technology in agriculture, process control for smart farming, plant factory, smart technology applied to livestock production, and agriculture waste treatment engineering.

In Genome Science, discussions will be on genetics and genomics, crop genomic breeding, advanced plant molecular biology, core biotechnology: DNA, RNA, and protein, special topics in poultry production, and medicine and products processing.

The program is offered in English. It requires students to finish their thesis and at least 24 credits of coursework which includes 12 credits of compulsory courses and 12 credits of elective courses to earn the degree.

Prior to collaborating on this joint scholarship, SEARCA and NTU have worked together in other academic activities under the auspices of the Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC). SEARCA initiated the UC in 1989 and has since served as its secretariat, while NTU is a UC associate member. (Report from MCNCuaresma)
Transform farmers to agripreneurs - SEARCA Director

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines—“Agriculture must be treated as a business and that it must be market-centric,” Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, SEARCA Director, stressed in his keynote address at the 33rd Anniversary celebration of the Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Training Institute-Cordillera Administrative Region (DA-ATI-CAR) held on 30 January 2020. The theme was “Vibrant Agriculture and Fishery Extension Towards Masaganang Ani at Mataas na Kita.”

“We need extension people to explain newly developed technologies, including upgraded breeds of crops, and to be catalysts in changing the farmers’ mindset,” Dr. Gregorio reiterated.

In his keynote address titled “Climate Change and the 4th IR Readiness through Extension and Innovation on Farming Technologies,” Dr. Gregorio emphasized that SEARCA is working with partners such as ATI to make a difference in agriculture in Southeast Asia and in the Philippines in particular.

“We don’t just need a hero now, what we need are partners,” Dr. Gregorio declared.

He talked about SEARCA’s partnership with ATI-CAR in implementing the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-funded project “Supporting Smallholder Farmers in Asia and the Pacific Region through Strengthened Rural Advisory Services (SAAS)” from June 2016 to February 2020. The project aims to empower smallholder farmers through access to effective and demand-driven agricultural advisory services.

Dr. Gregorio also shared SEARCA’s strategic plan in the next five years starting July 2020, explaining that at the very heart of it is its key strategy to transform the agriculture sector by changing the farmers’ mindset to that of “agripreneurs” through the use of technologies and engaging SEARCA’s key partners, such as extension workers from ATI and local and national government leaders, in bridging science and technology to the farmers.

SEARCA also presented ATI-CAR with its newly launched publications, namely: “Gender Dimensions of Climate Change Research in Agriculture” and “Compendium of Climate-Resilient Agriculture Technologies & Approaches in the Philippines.” (SGLQuiñones/LLDDomingo)

SE Asian grad students train in thesis proposal writing

SEARCA and the University of the Philippines Los Baños-Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Extension (UPLB- OVCRE) jointly organized a three-day Training on Writing Thesis and Dissertation Proposals attended by 25 graduate students.

The resource persons were Dr. Evelyn Mae T. Mendoza, UPLB Professor Emeritus from the College of Agriculture and Food Science (CAFS) and National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) Academician; Dr. Pamela A. Custodio, Assistant Professor at the UPLB College of Development Communication (CDC); and Dr. Rico C. Ancog, Associate Professor at the UPLB School of Environmental Science and Management (SESAM), UP Scientist III, and 2019 Outstanding Young Scientist.

Participants were SEARCA scholars from Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB) in Indonesia, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), UPLB, and IRRI Affiliate Research Scholars who are writing or preparing to write their thesis and dissertation.

Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, who is also a NAST Academician and UPLB Professor, shared his tips on thesis and dissertation writing based on his own experience. He reminded the students to keep it simple and to become good re-writers.

The training covered the research process, crafting the introduction, citing and writing the literature review, writing the conceptual and theoretical framework, quantitative and qualitative methodology, ethics in research, formatting, writing the proposal, and presenting tables and charts. Dr. Mendoza also discussed how to publish in journals and avoid predatory journals and conferences.

The output of each participant was presented and critiqued by the resource persons and fellow trainees.

The participants’ inability to complete their presentation within the prescribed time limit
Agent-based modeling using GAMA platform training held

SEARCA and the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD) jointly conducted a training-workshop on modeling using geographic information systems (GIS) and agent-based modeling applications (GAMA) held 10-14 February 2020 at SEARCA’s headquarters.

GAMA is an open-source platform developed by an international consortium of research teams under the IRD/Sorbonne Université International Research Unit UMMISCO (Unité de Modélisation Mathématique et Informatique de Systèmes Complexes).

GAMA integrates a dedicated modeling language and provides a simulation development environment that allow modelers to build spatially explicit, multi-agent simulations that can be used for a wide array of applications, including land-use planning and management, agriculture and forestry, ecology, traffic engineering, public health, and disaster risk management.

The training participants were 25 faculty members, researchers, and graduate students from the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB); a researcher of the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute; and a graduate student at Ateneo de Manila University.

The training aimed to enable participants to discover and understand environmental threats through the design of models of increasing complexity under different economic or climatic scenarios and adaptation planning, and build on these models to explore and compare realistic strategies of adaptation at the individual, collective or institutional scales. The focus was on the application of GAMA in investigating phenomena of concern related to environment and agriculture, particularly in exploring and designing adaptation strategies to address salinity intrusion in the Vietnam Mekong Delta.

Speaking on behalf of SEARCA Director Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio, Mr. Joselito G. Florendo, SEARCA Deputy Director for Administration, emphasized that the GAMA platform could provide participants with insights and valuable information in developing information-based strategies and policy regulations to address common concerns regarding the environment, agriculture and forestry, and disaster risk reduction, among others.

He added that the training workshop is the latest among the many collaborative capacity-building activities and research projects initiated by SEARCA in partnership with the Embassy of France in the Philippines.

In his message, Mr. Jean-Jacques Forte, Cultural and Cooperation Counsellor of the Embassy of France in the Philippines, stressed the importance of the highly theoretical concepts learned during the training as well as the concrete applications of agent-based modeling that participants could adopt in their own field of specialization.

This was affirmed by Dr. Alexis Drogoul, Vietnam-Philippines Country Representative of IRD, who cited the gains of exploring the use of computer-based methodologies to model and simulate complex systems related to agriculture, especially in using these tools to support decisions of land-use planners amid threats such as climate change and salinization. He said the training may also open opportunities to discuss common research projects.

The tools introduced were applied to a concrete case study involving the interplay between shifting land use and various socio-environmental factors (e.g., farmer’s behaviors, seawater intrusion) in the Ben Tre province in the Mekong Delta.

There were also discussions on building the environment, incorporating decisions and interactions of agents, and designing simulations and experiments in GAMA.

The last three days were devoted to a facilitated workshop wherein participants were tasked to design and write models based on different scenarios.

Fundamental theoretical underpinnings of GAMA modeling as well as its main features and real-life applications were discussed. There was also walk-through of the GAMA modeling process using Schelling’s segregation model as illustrative example.

The tools introduced were applied to a concrete case study involving the interplay between shifting land use and various socio-environmental factors (e.g., farmer’s behaviors, seawater intrusion) in the Ben Tre province in the Mekong Delta.

There were also discussions on building the environment, incorporating decisions and interactions of agents, and designing simulations and experiments in GAMA.

The last three days were devoted to a facilitated workshop wherein participants were tasked to design and write models based on different scenarios.

Dr. Benoit Gaudou, researcher at IRD’s UMMISCO Lab, and Mr. Arthur Brugière, Data Analysis and Computer Modeling Engineer at IRD Vietnam, joined Dr. Drogoul as resource persons for the lectures and as facilitators for the hands-on workshop. Meanwhile, Dr. Nathaniel C. Bantayan, Professor of Forest Management at the Institute of Renewable Natural Resources, College of Forestry and Natural Resources, UPLB, and Dr. Maria Art Antonette D. Clarino, Associate Professor at the Institute of Computer Science, College of Arts and Sciences, UPLB, served as technical coordinators of the training workshop.

(Report from CRBuendia)
Filipinos sweep 2019 SEARCA photo contest

Four Filipinos won five of the six top prizes in the 13th SEARCA Photo Contest, which focused on the theme “Cultivating Southeast Asia’s Youth Agripreneurs.”

The winners are Mariano Sayno, first prize; Phan Thi Khanh of Vietnam, second prize; Jose Ramos, third prize; and Christopher Andres, People’s Choice Award. Jaime Singlador bagged the SEARCA Director’s Choice and the Philippine Department of Education Secretary’s Choice, both new special prize categories.

The winning photos were among the 762 entries submitted by 235 professional and amateur Southeast Asian photographers from 10 countries from September to November 2019. Although most of the entries were from the Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Vietnam, entries from Thailand and Laos made it to the top 15 finalists.

The top three winners received cash prizes of $1,000, $800, and $500, respectively, while the winners of the SEARCA Director’s Choice and DepEd Secretary’s Choice received $500 and the People’s Choice Award, $200.

The winning photos and the rest of the finalists may be viewed at https://photocontest.searca.org/. (Report from MBCadiz)