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SEARCA celebrates 40 years, honors 'man of great sense'

SEARCA Director Arsenio M. Balisacan (left) and University of the Philippines Los Baños Chancellor Luis Rey I. Velasco (center) congratulate Sen. Edgardo J. Angara.

The ceremonies on 27 November 2006 at SEARCA Auditorium, with guest of honor Philippine Senator Edgardo J. Angara, capped the Center's yearlong 40th anniversary celebration.

On its 40th year, SEARCA continued to extend assistance to future leaders in agriculture and rural development and recognize the skills and talents of the people in the region by announcing the grantees of SEARCA's Seed Fund for Research and Training (SFRT) and awarding the winner of the Southeast Asian Photo Contest.

SFRT has nine grantees from Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Vietnam, and jointly Thailand-Philippines. (*Related story on page 8*)

With more than a hundred entries that vied to capture the theme "Science and Education for Agriculture and Development," three were proclaimed winners of the Southeast Asian Photo Contest. Dr. Nenita Desamero of the Department of Agriculture–Philippine Rice Research Institute bagged the first prize, taking home US$500. The two other winners were Dr. Ohnmar Khaing and Mr. Evangelino Famarin, second and third prize, respectively.

The event also saw the launch of SEARCA publications, namely: *Securing Rice, Reducing Poverty: Challenges and Policy Directions*; *Management of Colleges and Universities of Science and Technology*; *Southeast Asian Agriculture and Development Primer Series* (Myanmar and Singapore volumes); Policy Brief 2006 issues; and interactive multimedia e-books titled *Abstracts of SEARCA Scholars' Research: Trends Across the Decades*, *Sustainable Farm Practices*, *Sustainable Upland Practices*, *ASEAN Free Trade Area: Country Experiences*, *Water for Life*, *Women in Development*, *Agro-Industry: Spurring Rural Development and Global Competitiveness*, *Farm Efficiency: Models and Approach*, *Knowledge Management: Sharing Knowledge for Power*, and *Data and Information Management: Course Guides*. Complimentary copies of these publications together with a special award were given to Sen. Angara.

Full story on page 2

SEARCA celebrates / from page 1

SEARCA honored Sen. Angara for championing landmark laws and programs in education, health, and agriculture to help ensure such environment and the country's development. The Center agreed with Mr. Nick Joaquin, known as the Grand Old Man of Philippine Literature who described the senator as a "man of great sense."

In response, Sen. Angara commended SEARCA Director Arsenio M. Balisacan, whom the senator considered to be the "forefront scholar on poverty." The senator attributed the success of the launching of the Agriculture and Fishery Education Program to Dr. Balisacan, who was then deputy for policy and planning at the Philippine Department of Agriculture during the term of Sen. Angara as Agriculture Secretary.

Sen. Angara also expressed optimism that the region, with its vast and richly endowed agricultural land, could easily become the food granary of the world. The Philippines' rich natural resources, for instance, provide a wealth of agricultural products that can be pushed into the international market.

However, he said, the region must ensure that the quantities and qualities of its products meet international standards to derive competitive advantage.

The senator urged all stakeholders—governments, scientists, and the public—to strongly engage in establishing the central role of science and technology and engineering research and development in advancing human progress. He underscored the role of governments in formulating policies hospitable to a culture of innovation and creativity. He cited the Philippine Senate enacting a resolution for the creation of a commission to review the country's competitiveness, giving due priority to these foundational disciplines.

SEARCA celebrates / to page 12

Biotechnology can improve people's lives but must be exercised with restraint, expert says

Biotechnology through gene splicing, or isolating a gene from one organism and introducing it into another, can potentially, substantially help in the national drive for increased security, better health and environment, and increased industrial development.

Dr. Benigno Peczon, president and chief executive officer of the Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines (BCP), sees gene splicing as a superior technology, which must be harnessed for progress. While doubtless there is a need to ascertain that biotechnology does not harm health and the environment, restraint must be exercised in raising regulatory barriers to the point that costs to meet these barriers negate any advantages.

SEARCA invited Dr. Peczon to present a seminar titled "Biotechnology from a Developing Country Perspective" on 18 October 2006 at Yezin Agricultural University, Myanmar.

In this forum, Dr. Peczon explained that "cognizant of the potential of biotechnology, just about all, if not all, countries in Asia have invested in biotechnology. Growing competence and capability is evident in both the public and private sectors. Strong investment across the region is building up, combined with a dramatic increase in entrepreneurial interest. Activity in the biomedical area is particularly strong. Japan, Australia, South Korea, Singapore, China, and India have emerged as strong players. In the agricultural sector, China and India produce commercial quantities of Bt cotton. Since 2003, the Philippines has begun producing commercial quantities of Bt corn."

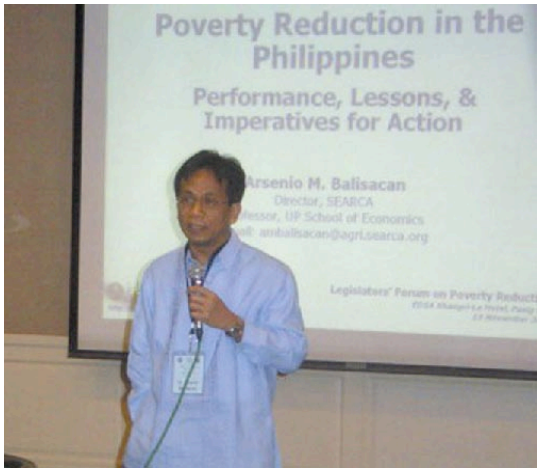
He outlined the policy developments that have led to the growth of biotechnology in the Philippines and its experience in this field. Dr. Peczon also highlighted the enablers for biotechnology such as community acceptance, creation of a national biosafety committee, and cooperation among stakeholders.

In the same forum, Mr. Khin Soe, director, Biotechnology, Plant Genetic Resources and Plant Protection Division, Department of Agricultural Research, Myanmar, discussed the current biotechnology status in Myanmar.

Mr. Soe said that the Myanmar government has designated agriculture as the main pillar of the economy and, as such,

Biotechnology / to page 15

Poverty expert recommends RP poverty reduction policies



Dr. Balisacan speaks before Philippine legislators in a forum held on 15 November 2006 in Manila.

The poverty crisis in the Philippines is more than a problem of slow economic growth, according to SEARCA director and poverty expert, Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan.

In his presentation titled "Poverty Reduction in the Philippines: Performance, Lessons, and Imperatives for Action," before Philippine legislators, Dr. Balisacan said that despite high income per capita, the country has shown sluggish performance in reducing poverty incidence mainly because progress is not only regionally uneven but also regressive, benefiting high-income groups more.

"It is crucial to keep in mind the lesson from the Asian experience that poverty reduction is fastest with sustained agricultural and rural development," he said.

He showed that Philippine agricultural performance in the past two decades has been pathetic. There has been failure to secure sources of productivity growth and income diversification due to poor governance and neglect of the basics—research and development (R&D), infrastructure, education, and information—accompanied by the high "cost of doing business" in the rural areas.

He mentioned rapid population growth as another obstacle, sharing with the audience the "Tale of Two Countries," a comparison of the Philippines and Thailand, which were similar in most geographic, demographic and economic positions 30 years ago. He pointed out that had the Philippines followed Thailand's population growth path in the past three decades, the Philippine poverty incidence would have been 5.5 percentage points less. That is about 3.6 million more people would have been brought out of poverty. Dr. Balisacan outlined that one pathway to poverty reduction is having a rapid and improved quality of economic growth—that is pro-poor and broadly-based—through: 1) focus on agricultural and rural/ regional development by means of public investment in productivity-enhancing support services such as R&D and irrigation, and 2) empowerment of human capital in terms of improved access to education, health, and technology. He recommended that national government spending on poverty reduction be focused on rural infrastructure, R&D, basic education, basic health and family planning services, targeted feeding programs and food stamps, and capacity building for local government units. On the other hand, he suggested less government spending on public works equipment and livelihood programs (except for short-term disaster relief), post-harvest facilities, tertiary education and health care, and food price subsidies.

In response, the Philippine legislators in the frontline of the "war against poverty," expressed their commitment to support pro-poor growth and development programs to achieve the goal of halving the proportion of families in poverty and hasten reduction of absolute poverty and hunger in the country. These are Rep. Catalino Figueroa (Committee on Poverty Alleviation), Rep. Arrel Olaño (Committee on Rural Development), Rep. Edgar Espinosa (Committee on Priority Provinces), Rep. Rodante Marcoleta (Committee on Millennium Development Goals), and Rep. Juan Edgardo Angara and Rep. Danilo Lagbas (Committee on Rural Development).

The "Legislators' Forum on the Microeconomics of Poverty Reduction" was held on 15 November 2006 at EDSA Shangri-La Hotel, Manila, Philippines. It was organized by the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) headed by Mr. Domingo Panganiban, former Secretary of the Philippine Department of Agriculture.

NAPC also presented at the forum its proposed policy priorities, which included: 1) Senate Bill 1139/House Bill 404 or the Fisheries Department Bill, 2) Basic Sector Representation, 3) Land Administration Reform Agenda Bill, 4) National Land and Water Use Code, and 5) Magna Carta for Microfinance. The legislators' forum is part of NAPC's poverty reduction action planning workshops. (LGSoliven)

(Editor's note: The true worth of research and human resource development can be seen when their results are used to create the desired impact. As SEARCA continues to spearhead programs and projects seen as vital to poverty reduction and food security
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fo formulation and design.)

Agriculture and Rural Development in Asia in the Next Decade* (Part 1 of 2)

IRRI's Future Research Themes

Dr Robert Zeigler
Director General
International Rice Reseach Institute

Asia is rice and rice is Asia. In the next 10-20 years, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) will look into four main themes or major challenges: (a) poverty alleviation; (b) sustaining and maintaining the environment; (c) human health and nutrition; and (d) the scientific capacity required to address these challenges.

Poverty alleviation

Asia has the world's largest concentration of the poor. Asians mostly live in rainfed rice environments. Rainfed rice is subjected to abiotic stresses, such as droughts, sporadic/unpredictable rainfall, and, paradoxically, submergence/flooding. Previously, these areas were intractable to research, but with the revolution in genomics, IRRI believes that they are on the verge of being able to develop the technologies that would make these systems more productive and more reliable. Increasing the productivity in these systems will go a long way in reducing poverty, not through simply generation of income by rice but by affording opportunities to farmers – i.e., allowing them the dependability of the sustenance and the flexibility to grow other cash crops, off-farm employment, etc. So, the revolution in genomics is seen as being an important, new tool to allow IRRI to provide flexibility to farmers and get them out of that poverty trap.

Sustaining and maintaining the environment

The rice-growing environment is undergoing tremendous changes, and IRRI is studying the impact of the environment on rice and that of rice on the environment. There are a number of challenging issues such as integrated pest management, integrated nutrient management, water saving technologies – these are very intensive technologies in terms of knowledge and time. The real challenge then is to understand how to get farmers to go to their fields and monitor their crops; there are many alternatives to their time. The opportunity costs of some of the intensive management systems are going to be a big challenge.

There are a lot of social forces driving changes in the rice systems. Particularly, water shortages and labor availability are driving toward a major shift in the way rice is grown (e.g., more direct-seeding than transplanting). Water saving technologies will change the chemistry of the rice soils. As we see these changes taking place, the way that rice interacts with the environment will change dramatically – going from a continuously flooded, 2-3 rice crops a year over many areas to a cycle that has aerobic crops such as maize, vegetables, etc. in them, which may change the chemistry such that greenhouse gas emissions from these paddies may dramatically increase. The challenge is to understand the quantitative nature of these changes and the kind of impact they might have on the environment, and to develop mitigation strategies before the changes have taken place.

Nutrition and health

Malnourishment continues to affect large areas of Asia, where majority of its people are rice eaters. IRRI hopes to contribute to the health of these people by improving the nutritional value of rice (e.g., micronutrient and vitamin composition), which can be achieved through major investments in biotechnology. Thus, there is a need to address up front how the fruits of biotechnology can actually reach the farmers' fields using socially accepted ways. Increasing brown rice consumption across the region is also another area to consider.

Scientific capacity

The first three areas mentioned require very sophisticated research approaches, which have to be done in partnership with institutions around Asia. However, IRRI is concerned that the research capacity specific to agricultural challenges is dwindling. Launching a major effort to rekindle the scientific capacity of the next generation of rice scientists across Asia may be necessary.

Related to scientific capacity, IRRI has had an explosion of knowledge about rice. There has been a revolution in rice science over the past decade, not only in genomics but also in crop physiology, crop performance, and in other areas. As an institution, IRRI is committed to organizing that knowledge in a way that people could use it. Moreover, the next generation of rice scientists can tap into that knowledge/information and apply it.

***Excerpts from *Challenges and Priorities for Agricultural Research in the Next Decade*, SEARCA, Los Baños, Philippines, 2007.**

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SEARCA director suggests 2 channels to reduce poverty

SEARCA director and professor of economics, Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, says poverty may be reduced through two channels.

In his paper titled "Pro-poor Growth in the Philippines: Lessons and Imperatives for Action," Dr. Balisacan indicated that poverty can be reduced through sustained expansion of income or economic growth and redistribution of the society's income or economic opportunities.

According to Dr. Balisacan, the quality of growth can be improved by focusing on agriculture and rural development. He cited the Asian experience wherein poverty reduction is fastest when agricultural growth is rapid and sustained, through productivity enhancements. The linkage created by agriculture with the non-agricultural sector is fundamental to broad-based growth. However, much of the growth in Philippine agriculture has been rooted in intensive application of inputs rather than improvements in total factor productivity.

He argued that the Philippine evidence shows a weak response of poverty to growth. This implies that the country has to improve the quality of its growth and to identify key drivers to poverty reduction other than growth.

The other way of improving the quality of growth is to focus on deep determinants of poverty reduction, such as education, health, and asset reform. Dr. Balisacan noted considerable spatial disparity across the regions in the country, which could bring about social unrest and conflicts. These conflicts can retard economic growth and poverty reduction. Social conflict commonly arises from lack of access to human capital and access to productive assets and technology.

With the current situation and limited public resources, Dr. Balisacan proposed several legislative and executive actions to combat the poverty problem. These include investing in rural development infrastructure like roads, ports, small-scale irrigation systems, and agricultural research and development; investing in social services such as basic education and health; addressing population growth problem by expanding access to maternal healthcare and family planning services; and mobilizing the private sector, nongovernment organizations, and communities for rural development initiatives.

A major constraint to reducing poverty, however, is rapid population growth. In the 1970s, the Philippines and Thailand had similar demographic and economic structure. By 2000, the Philippines still has the same working age population as in the 1970s, burdened by an expanding young age population group. Thailand, on the other hand, has a rapidly growing working age population. Dr. Balisacan's study shows that the change in the demographic profile of Thailand accounted for about one-third of its growth in per capita income. The Philippines has an average economic growth that is only slightly higher than its population growth. If the Philippines had Thailand's population growth, poverty incidence would have been 5.5 percentage points less and about 3.6 million Filipinos would have been brought out of poverty.

Dr. Balisacan describes the economic performance of the Philippines in the past three to four decades as characterized by a pattern of boom and bust cycles, in which the poor are affected the most in every contraction of the economy. Add to this is the country's inability to exhibit high and sustained economic growth relative to its neighboring Southeast Asian economies. In recent years, this growth is also regressive, in that, while growth raises average incomes, it raises even more the incomes of the highest income group.

The poverty situation in the Philippines is bleaker when compared with the lower incidence of extreme poverty in Indonesia and Vietnam, although these two countries have lower per capita incomes. Further, poverty reduction in the Philippines has been sluggish relative to Vietnam and China. The Philippines started at a favorable rate in reducing the proportion of poor people in the 1990s, but this rate dwindled in 2000s—yielding the highest poverty incidence in the region in 2005.

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework Macroeconomic Stability Working Group organized the forum, which was held on 12 December 2006. (JSCSugui)

Upcoming Event

Asian economic policy workshop set for March '07 in Thailand

SEARCA and the Food and Agriculture Organization are organizing a policy workshop titled *Asian Economic Renaissance: Challenges and Consequences on Agriculture, Food Security, and Poverty* on 19–20 March 2007 in Chiangmai, Thailand.

The policy workshop sees the need to address the increasing dynamism in the Asian economy brought about by globalization and the changing external environment.

Countries such as China, India, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam have successfully integrated their economies into the international market and have achieved significant strides in their goal of food security and poverty reduction. Studies show that these countries, except South Korea, have anchored these achievements on agricultural and rural development. Developing countries see that it is imperative to understand the state of the world economy to fully address the major issues and harness the potentials for improving food security and poverty reduction in the region.

The workshop aims to review lessons from the emerging agricultural and rural development paradigms of successful Asian economies; identify key policy issues, constraints and potentials for the agricultural and rural development faced by the region; explore key strategies to address fundamental policy issues and modalities by which transition economies and developing countries can adopt them; and develop capacity building by using the policy tool developed by FAO-RAP.

policy workshop / to page 16

Myanmar agricultural officers seek SEARCA's assistance in biotech caravan

SEARCA organized a study tour on biotechnology on 11-12 November 2006 for three officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation of Myanmar and the Myanmar Academy of Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock, and Fishery Sciences.

The delegation was composed of Dr. Kyaw Than, vice president, Myanmar Academy of Science; Mr. Aung Htay Oo, staff officer, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries; and Mr. Win Mint, staff officer, Ministry of Forestry. The study tour provided them information and insights that they need to draft recommendations on further developing a biosafety framework for Myanmar.

The delegation visited a biotech maize farm in Pampanga and interviewed farmers on 11 November. They proceeded to the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija and asked its scientists about the development of rice biotechnologies.

On 12 November, the group met with Dr. Dolores Ramirez, member, National Commission on Biosafety of the Philippines, and Dr. Saturnina Halos, chair, Department of Agriculture (DA)-Biotechnology Advisory Team. Dr. Ramirez presented the development of the biosafety framework of the Philippines, amendments made, and its current structure and functions. On the other hand, Dr. Halos briefed the delegation on DA's regulatory policies and guidelines on genetically modified organisms, particularly on field trials, release to the environment, and direct use as food/feed. Also present were Dr. Benigno Peczon, president and chief executive officer, Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines; Dr. Arnulfo G. Garcia and Ms. Nyhria G. Rogel, manager and project development specialist, respectively, Research and Development Department, SEARCA; and Ms. Sonny P. Tababa, network administrator, Biotechnology Information Center, SEARCA.

The delegation also visited the Institute of Plant Breeding and the National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology of the University of the Philippines Los Baños as well as the International Rice Research Institute. They also visited the main office of DA in Quezon City where Ms. Alicia Ilaga, program director, briefed them on the National Biotechnology Program of the country.

The visit was requested by Myanmar in relation to its country desire to acquire knowledge in developing a national biosafety framework, among other things, from the Philippine experience.
(CNGRogel)

Myanmar agriculture primer off the press

SEARCA has launched the Myanmar volume of the Southeast Asian Agriculture and Development Primer Series on 18 October 2006 at Yezin Agriculture University (YAU), Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

The primer series is part of the Center's commitment to advance the science and practice of agriculture and rural development in the region by providing readily available and accessible information, says Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, director, SEARCA.

It is part of a 10-volume series that aims to promote awareness on the state of agriculture in Southeast Asian countries—Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Myanmar volume is the third to come out after the release of the Philippine and Malaysian volumes.

Mr. Tin Htut Oo, director-general, Department of Agricultural Planning (DAP), Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation of Myanmar, is the author of this volume. During the publication's launch, he underscored the need for readily available and accessible information on agriculture that could help in the development of timely and appropriate projects that would ultimately redound to the upliftment of the agricultural and rural sectors. He thanked his staff and colleagues at DAP for the timely delivery of the volume. He also congratulated SEARCA for its worthwhile endeavors, the publication of the primer series, among them.

With a BS in Agriculture from the Institute of Agriculture in Mandalay and a Master's degree in agricultural economics from Ohio State University, the author specializes in agricultural development policy, rural development, and poverty alleviation. He has served as consultant for agricultural policy and planning projects of the Food and Agriculture Organization. Also, he has participated in various international fora as delegate, researcher, resource person, and visiting research fellow. He is currently secretary of the Myanmar Academy of Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock, and Fishery Sciences. A member of the SEARCA Governing Board, Mr. Tin Htut Oo is associated with several policymaking and advisory bodies in Myanmar and other countries.

The launch was held during a program jointly organized by Myanmar Academy of Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock, and Fishery Sciences and SEARCA. Officials and members of the science community and the university, representatives from the DAP, and SEARCA were present. Among them were Dr. Kyaw Than and Dr. Min Soe, vice presidents, Myanmar Academy of Science; Dr. Cho Cho Myint, pro-rector, YAU; Mr. Kyi Win, DAP; and Mr. Kin Soe, Department of Agricultural Research. Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan; Dr. Arnulfo G. Garcia, manager, Research and Development Department (RDD); Ms. Nyhria G. Rogel, project development specialist; and Ms. Leah Lyn B. Domingo, graduate scholarship specialist, all from SEARCA, participated in the said ceremony. (CNGRogel)

SEARCA co-spearheads 16th AAACU convention; new officers elected

SEARCA and the National Chung-Hsing University (NCHU) led the conduct of the 16th biennial convention of the Asian Association of Agricultural Colleges and Universities (AAACU) in Taichung, Taiwan, Republic of China.

Held on 26–28 October 2006, the convention carried the theme "Bioindustry in Agriculture Education and Research in Asia." Some 80 participants from within and outside Taiwan attended the convention.

During the AAACU board and council meetings held on 26 and 28 October, respectively, the results of election for the vacant positions in the board were approved and officially declared.

The new set of officers, which assumes leadership from November 2006 to 2008 are:. Dr. Jenn-Wen Huang from Taiwan, president; Dr. Pedro D. Destura from the Philippines, first vice president; Dr. Lee S. Yudin from Guam, second vice president; Dr. Candida V. Adalla from the Philippines, executive secretary/treasurer; and Dr. Yupa Hanboonsong from Thailand, Dr. Ruperto S. Sangalang from the Philippines, and Dr. Tsukasa Matsuda from Japan (immediate past president), board members.

SEARCA co-spearheads / to page 10

9 SFRT grants awarded for 2006/2007

Now on its second year, SEARCA's Seed Fund for Research and Training (SFRT) has nine new grantees from Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Vietnam, and jointly Thailand-Philippines.

The grantees are Dr. Damayanti Buchori (Institut Pertanian Bogor), Mr. Hendaru Djumantoro (Telepak Small Enterprise Community Development), Dr. Silinthone Sacklokham (National University of Laos), Mr. Assad d L. AbdullahBaunto (Philippine Social Science Council), Prof. Nimfa D. Montes (University of the Philippines), Ms. Maria Lea H. Villavicencio (University of the Philippines), Dr. Nguyen Trong Hoai (University of Economics), Dr. Dang Van Minh (Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry), and Dr. Narong Sompong (Kasetsart University) and Dr. Alexander G. Flor (UP Open University).

The awarding was held during the 40th anniversary celebration of the Center last 27 November. The grantees from the Philippines and Dr. Sompong of Thailand attended the awarding ceremony.

SFRT is open to Southeast Asian researchers and scientists with high-quality research and training background but without significant funding support.

Proposals should be innovative and in line with SEARCA's priority thrusts on agricultural competitiveness and natural resource management. They should have potential for attracting long-term funding support. SFRT provides a start-up fund of up to US$15,000.

Deadline of submission for the next set of grants is 1 August 2007. More information on SFRT may be looked up at www.searca.org. (JSCSugui)

SFRT grantees, (from middle to right) Dr. Nimfa Montes, Dr. Ma. Lea Villavicencio, Dr. Narong Sompong, and Dr. Alexander Flor, pose with (from left) SEARCA Deputy Director Gil C. Saguiguit Jr., Research and Development Department Manager Arnold G. Garcia, Director Arsenio M. Balisacan, Sen. Edgado J. Angara, and University of the Philippines Los Baños Chancellor Luis Rey I. Velasco (rightmost), who is also the Philippine representative to the SEARCA Governing Board.

SEARCA director vows to strengthen ties with Timorese Ministries of Education and Agriculture

Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA director, is determined to strengthen the Center's ties with Timor-Leste's Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports (MECYS) and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF).

This will be done through capacity-building and human resource development activities such as graduate scholarships, collaborative research, short-term training, and knowledge exchange in agriculture and rural development.

During Dr. Balisacan's visit to MECYS, Her Excellency Rosalia Corte-Real, minister, expressed her sincere appreciation to SEARCA and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for the scholarship assistance to Timorese faculty and research staff pursuing graduate studies in universities in Indonesia and the Philippines. She said MECYS would also be interested in sending its faculty members and staff for short-term training to enhance their skills.

SEARCA director vows / to page 15

Photo Gallery

Special award for the guest of honor and the SEARCA publications launched during the 40th anniversary celebration

Sen. Edgardo J. Angara receives a set of SEARCA publications from Director Arsenio M. Balisacan.

The deputy director, master of ceremonies...

The men and women of SEARCA

Students of the Philippine High School for the Arts perform Filipino folk dances.

SEARCA brings the outdoors inside through an eco-exhibit.

...and the first prize winner of the photo contest is Dr. Nenita Desamero.

(clockwise from top left) First, second, and third prize winners of the SEARCA Southeast Asian Photo Contest

SEARCA ADSS

The weekly **SEARCA Agriculture and Development Seminar Series (ADSS)** continues to be a venue for dynamic and vibrant discussion of scientific findings, research results, and perspectives within the purview of agriculture and development. It has had high-profile researchers and practitioners from the academe, government, and industry as resource persons. **Open to the public and held at the Center every Tuesday at 4 p.m.**, the ADSS is attended by students, academics, scientists, and other members of the Los Baños community and beyond. The following were the seminars held from **October to December 2006**.

Date	*Topic*	*Speaker*
10 Oct	CO_2 Capture and Storage	Dr. John R. Benemann, Manager, International Network on Biofixation of CO_2 and Greenhouse Gas Abatement with Microalgae, California, USA
17 Oct	Enhancing Compliance with Environmental Quality Standards in the Laguna de Bay Region through Public Disclosure	Dr. Cleofe S. Torres, Associate Professor and Dean, College of Development Communication, University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB)
7 Nov	Shifting Landscapes: The Making and Remaking of Village Commons in India	Dr. Rita Brara, Reader, Department of Sociology, University of Delhi, India
14 Nov	Global Advances in the Ecology and Management of Golden Apple Snails	Dr. Ravindra Joshi, Chief Science Research Specialist, Philippine Rice Research Institute
5 Dec	Livestock-Environment Interaction: Economic Valuation and Challenges	Dr. Nicomedes D. Briones, School of Environmental Science and Management, UPLB

SEARCA co-spearheads / from page 7

The group also approved the relocation of the secretariat from SEARCA to the University of the Philippines Los Baños College of Agriculture.

AAACU noted with appreciation, its newly constructed website, which is temporarily hosted on SEARCA's server.

In 2008, the University of Eastern Philippines will host the 17th AAACU convention to be held at the Manila Hotel. The proposed convention theme is "Government-Academe-Industry Linkage in Agriculture Education and Research in Asia."

The 16th convention was sponsored by AAACU and co-sponsored by NCHU–College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. (ECCedicol)

Dr. Tsukasa Matsuda (right), dean, Graduate School of Bioagricultural Sciences, Nagoya University, Japan and outgoing president of the Asian Association of Agricultural Colleges and Universities (AAACU), turns over the key of responsibility to Dr. Jenn-Wen Huang (second from left), incoming AAACU president and dean, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, National Chung-Hsing University, Taiwan, during the 16th AAACU Biennial Convention in Taichung, Taiwan on 26–28 October 2006. Looking on are (from left) Dr. Editha C. Cedicol, manager of SEARCA Graduate Scholarship Department, and Dr. Ricardo Wagan, president of Laguna State Polytechnic College, Philippines.

Tokyo University of Agriculture joins the UC

The Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (University Consortium or UC) welcomed the Tokyo University of Agriculture (TUA) in Japan as its fourth associate member.

Occasion was during the 19th University Consortium Executive Officers and Coordinators Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand held on 6–7 November 2006. The University Consortium has now nine members.

Founded in 1891, TUA takes pride of its continuing contribution to agricultural development in Japan as well as to Southeast Asian countries through education and research. A number of Japanese and Southeast Asians are currently engaged in TUA's academic exchange, research and educational activities. These are carried out through the Society for Agricultural Education-Research Abroad, which TUA established in 1978. Other societies established by TUA are the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science in 1978 and the International Society for Southeast Asian Agricultural Science in 1994. TUA has signed academic cooperation agreements with Kasetsart University in Thailand, Institut Pertanian Bogor in Indonesia, University of the Philippines Los Baños, Universiti Putra Malaysia, and Hanoi Agricultural University in Vietnam.

SEARCA initiated the University Consortium in 1989 to promote mutually beneficial cooperation among agricultural universities in the region, enabling them to utilize more fully and efficiently the scarce resources and expertise available in each country for top-quality graduate education and research. The University Consortium has provided an avenue through which SEARCA could enhance agricultural human resources in Southeast Asia. SEARCA has served as the Consortium Secretariat since 1989. (ECCedicol)

UC awards 7 thesis grants

The SEARCA-initiated Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC) has awarded thesis grants for school year 2006/2007 to seven Southeast Asian graduate students.

Two are studying at Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB), Indonesia; two at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Malaysia; one at Kasetsart University (KU), Thailand; and two at University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), Philippines.

The UC Thesis Grant provides limited funds to assist ongoing graduate students of any of the consortium and associate members in the preparation and production of thesis/dissertation manuscript.

The UC thesis grantees from IPB are Ms. Nor Sholekhah Damayanti, MS in Biotechnology, "Determination of Minimal Allergenic-Pollen Concentration for Injection Immunotherapy Application," and Mr. Lalu Solihin, MS in Tropical Marine Resources, "Economic Vulnerability of Resources Uses in Small Island Region (Case Study in Tourism Area of Gili Indah, West Nusa Tenggara Province)."

Pursuing their graduate programs at UPM are Ms. Sri Rahayu, PhD on Tree Improvement, "Effect of Genetic Variation on Growth and Gall Rust Disease Resistance in *Falcataria moluccana* (Miq.) Barneby & J.W. Grimes in Tawau, Sabah, Malaysia," and Ms. Tunung Robin, MS in Food Safety and Microbiology, "Isolation and Characterization of *Salmonella* Species from Street Foods and Clinical Samples."

The lone grantee from KU is Ms. Sureeporn Khemmook, MS in Watershed Management, "Differences in Soil Moisture Content and Water Availability in Various Water Systems under Different Land Use Types in Andaman Sea Coast: A Case Study of Ban Tung Soong Village in Krabi Province, Thailand."

The grantees from UPLB are Ms. Joy Elaine P. Kaligayahan, MS in Chemistry, "Extraction and Characterization of Inulin and Fructooligasaccharides from Yacon [*Smallanthus sonchifolius* (Poepp. & Endl.) H. Rob] and Arrowroot (*Maranta arundunacea L.*)," and Mr. Rico C. Ancog, MS in Environmental Science, "Expansion of Environmental Users' Fee System to Households for Enhanced Water Pollution Control in Laguna de Bay."

To qualify for the grant, the thesis/dissertation of the applicant must be in line with UC's strategic priorities—sustainable management of natural resource systems; food and agriculture policy; biotechnology in agriculture; food and health; information and communication technology, bioinformatics; and data management in agriculture.

To date, 180 students of UC members have availed of thesis grants.

SEARCA initiated the UC in 1989 to promote mutually beneficial cooperation among agricultural universities in the region, enabling them to utilize more fully and efficiently the scarce resources and expertise available in each country

UC awards / to page 12

7 Southeast Asians get SEARCA Travel Grants

SEARCA has awarded travel grants to five Filipinos and two Indonesians to present papers in international conferences on topics along the Center's twin thrusts of natural resource management and promotion of agricultural competitiveness toward food security and poverty reduction in the region.

The Filipino grantees, their institutional affiliations, and titles of papers and conferences are:

- Dr. Damasa M. Macandog, associate professor, Institute of Biological Sciences, University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), "Modelling the Dynamics and Impacts of Agroforestry Adoption on Landscape Changes in the Uplands of Southern Philippines Using Multi Agent System (MAS) and Role Playing Game" presented at the Conference on Patterns and Processes in Forest Landscapes: Consequences of Human Management on 10–15 September 2006 in Bari, Italy;
- Dr. Michael D. Pido, professor and director, Center for Strategic Policy and Governance, Palawan State University, "Role of Political Leadership in Coral Reef and Coastal Resource Management: Experiences and Lessons from Puerto Princesa City, Philippines" presented at the International Tropical Marine Ecosystems Management Symposium held on 15–20 October 2006 in Cozumel, Mexico;
- Dr. Minda C. Mangabat, chief, Crops Statistics Division, Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, "Agricultural Trade in the ASEAN Region: Challenges for Enhancing Cooperation and Integration" presented at the 5th Japan Economic Policy Association Conference held on 2–3 December 2006 in Shibuya, Japan;
- Dr. Asa Jose U. Sajise, assistant professor, Department of Economics, UPLB, "The Ecological and Economic Aspects of the Multifunctionality of Agriculture," presented at the 9th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Ecological Economics (ISEE) held on 15–18 December 2006 in New Delhi, India; and
- Dr. Josefina T. Dizon, associate professor, Institute of Community Education, College of Public Affairs, UPLB, will also present her paper titled "Households' Willingness to Pay for Protected Area Conservation" also at the 9th Biennial Conference of the ISEE.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian grantees, their institutional affiliations, titles of papers, and titles of conferences are:

- Dr. Budi Setiawan, chairman, Graduate Program of Agricultural Engineering Sciences, Department of Agricultural Engineering, Institut Pertanian Bogor, "Effectiveness of Pitcher Fertigization System on Bush Pepper Plants," presented at the 7th International Micro Irrigation Congress held on 10–15 September 2006 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and
- Mr. Ahmad Maryudi, lecturer and researcher, Faculty of Forestry, Universitas Gadjah Mada, "Assisting Small Community Forest Growers Benefit from Certification" presented at the 2nd Southeast Asian Natural Resources and Environmental Management Conference on 21–23 November 2006 in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.

Southeast Asian nationals working in a development-oriented institution or graduate students of reputable universities in Southeast Asia are eligible to apply for the SEARCA Travel Grants, which is up to a maximum of US$1,200.

Intended to benefit qualified agriculture and agriculture-related professionals, social scientists, and graduate students, the travel grant provides limited support to qualified applicants who will present scientific/policy papers in international or local scientific fora. The topic of the paper must be along the thrusts of SEARCA and has regional relevance.

The travel grant aims to promote the dissemination of scientific knowledge/information vital to agriculture and rural development. It also enables grantees to find a venue for discussing with other scientists and scholars developments in their respective disciplines. SEARCA may also produce articles or publications out of the grantee's presented paper, whenever appropriate and feasible.

The SEARCA Committee on Travel Grants evaluates applications on a quarterly basis. The committee convenes every third week of the last month of every quarter. Applicants must make sure that the dates of travel must fall at least within the quarter following the evaluation period. (LLDDomingo)

UC awards / from page 11

for top-quality graduate education and research. Hence, the UC has provided another avenue through which SEARCA could enhance agricultural human resources in Southeast Asia. SEARCA has served as the consortium secretariat since 1989. (LLDDomingo)

SEARCA celebrates / from page 2

The half-day event was attended by foreign dignitaries, executives from Philippine government offices, the academe, researchers in agricultural science and rural development policy in Asia, SEARCA scholars and fellows, recipients of various awards and grants, and former SEARCA officials. Intermission numbers were performed by a group of students from the Los Baños, Laguna-based Philippine High School for Arts. (ARObmerga)

Graduate Thesis Abstracts

Species-site Compatibility Analysis Using Pair-wise Ranking Approach with GIS for Logged-over Areas in Kraya Commune, Santuk District, Kampong Thom Province, Cambodia

Koy Ra
Cambodia
University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB)

The study characterized and evaluated the biophysical and socioeconomic conditions of the Kraya Commune as well as formulated and developed a model that would measure species-site compatibility to help guarantee the success of the reforestation program in the commune. The study also documented the criteria used and examined the consultative process with the various stakeholders in generating weight/ranks for their choice of reforestation species, and provided recommendations to policymakers and planners for the successful rehabilitation of the degraded forest areas.

Local people were interviewed to find out their perception of the reforestation program, preferred tree species to be planted, and the constraints that may be encountered. Focus group discussions with 20 representatives from different villages in the commune were conducted to develop scales and weights on the various criteria for plant growth as well as the constraints for the reforestation program using the pair-wise comparison method. The ecological requirements of the preferred tree species and the site characteristics were obtained from secondary data. Site characteristics and species requirements were matched using ArcView 3.2 GIS (geographic information system) to analyze the species-site compatibility for the top five preferred tree species: *D. alatus* Roxb., *H. odorata* Roxb., *T. javanica* Bl., *P. macrocarpus* Kurz., and *A. cochinchinensis* Pirre. The seed supply of these priority species was also determined by the local people.

In the Kraya Commune, the tree species were mostly non-commercial class. The area has five soil types, which are deep and acidic. It is flat to gently sloping with low elevation. Annual rainfall ranged from 1,400 mm to 1,800 mm. Most people in the commune are farmers and forest resources are an important source of their livelihood. The relative weights showed that the priority tree species was 0.201. Soil depth and soil types accounted for 0.198 and 0.171, respectively. In addition, the relative weights of soil pH, slope, rainfall, elevation, and seed supply were 0.065, 0.022, 0.146, 0.033, and 0.164, respectively. The majority of the area was highly compatible with all species, except for *T. javanica* Bl.

Using pair-wise ranking approach, analysts can translate qualitative survey into quantitative value that can be performed without bias. This method can save time and resources. The ecological requirements of tree species and site condition, however, need further study.

Isolation, Purification and Characterization of a Lectin from *Synapta* sp.

Ma. Theresa P. Loreto
Philippines
UPLB

A survey was conducted on 32 species of marine invertebrates collected from three Philippine provinces: Leyte, Samar, and Batangas, as source of lectin. Among the non-food invertebrates, *Synapta* sp., class Holothuriodea, family Synaptidae, gave the highest agglutination titer; hence, it was chosen for further purification.

Purification was done by gel chromatography using Sephadex G-200 and affinity chromatography using fetuin-agarose column. The molecular weight (MW) of gel chromatography purified lectin was ~51 kDa while that of the affinity chromatography purified lectin was ~37 kDa. SDS-PAGE, under reducing and non-reducing conditions, gave a single sharp band with a MW of ~28 kDa and ~40 kDa, respectively. Both lectins are human blood type non-specific and agglutinated sheep, goat, and chicken erythrocytes. The glycosylated nature of both lectins was verified by PAS staining, total carbohydrate content, and gas chromatography. Addition of divalent metal cations, calcium, and magnesium increased the activity. The lectins are temperature-dependent, had optimum activity at 10°C–20°C, and exhibited maximum stability at pH 5–10. Both lectins also possess antibacterial and larvicidal properties but had no seed germination inhibitory property. Analysis of the N-terminal amino acid sequence of the affinity chromatography purified lectin revealed distantly related homologies to several organisms.

Characterization of the Sub1 Locus Conferring Submergence Tolerance in the Rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) Variety 'Goda Heenati'

Moe Moe Oo
Myanmar
UPLB

Molecular markers for submergence tolerance would accelerate breeding progress by increasing selection efficiency. Resistance to submergence stress is an important breeding objective in areas where rice cultivars are subjected to complete

Thesis abstracts / to page 14

Challenges / from page 4

Looking at these technological challenges, it is clear that policy implications and issues are completely interwoven with all of the above. There is a tremendous opportunity, and it is absolutely essential for the technical scientist to work very closely with the economists, social scientists, and policy specialists to make sure that technical solutions are right and that they fit within the policy context and, therefore, would stand a much better probability of being adopted. ■

Policy Responses to Emerging Challenges in Agricultural Research: The WorldFish Perspective

Dr. Mahfuzuddin Ahmed
Director, Policy, Economics and Social Science
WorldFish Center

The shifting paradigm and emerging challenges in agricultural research in the next 10 years include: 1) diminishing natural resources; 2) globalization; 3) global policy shifts; and 4) increasing role of science and technology.

By 2015, WorldFish Center hopes to address the problems of poor people and their environment by achieving the following:

Poor people

- To produce, consume, and trade a disproportionately higher amount of fish
- To get back, acquire, and hold resource rights in fisheries and aquaculture
- For fishing- and fish farming-dependent communities, to graduate out of poverty in proportionately larger numbers.

Poor people's environment

- Restored stocks in small-scale fisheries
- Increased and sustained resource value
- Reduced resource use conflicts.

Policy responses shall focus on the following concerns:

Going beyond mere fishing

- Harnessing of multi-level benefits from the agriculture, fisheries, and other rural sectors
- Fish as an entry point for integrated coastal and rural community development
- Resource rights and good governance
- Intra- and inter-sectoral coherence and comprehensiveness of policies

Technologies for wider adoption of aquaculture

- Technologies that address the broad spectrum of users, systems, practices, and species
- Technologies that harness the vast areas of rice paddies and many newly created seasonal and perennial water bodies.

In the course of its operation and to effectively achieve its goals, WorldFish Center conducts a critical analysis of dilemmas and issues facing it. Basic questions include:

- How relevant and useful are WorldFish Center's research programs?
- How upstream and how downstream should WorldFish Center be in its strategies and actions?
- Can WorldFish Center's research address poverty reduction and environmental protection sufficiently and simultaneously?

Finally, partnerships are very important in achieving greater impact on poverty and hunger. By sharing objectives and resources, and with complementary skills and roles among researchers, faster and better results are obtained, knowledge is shared, and learning is improved. All these will eventually create greater impact on the reduction of poverty and hunger. ■

Thesis abstracts / from page 13

inundation for a week or more. The characterization of Sub1 genes would lead to a better understanding of the mechanism of rice submergence tolerance, and facilitate introduction of Sub1 into susceptible rice cultivars through transformation. 'Goda Heenati', one of the few rice cultivars showing submergence tolerance, has been reported to possess a major gene different from Sub1, the locus controlling tolerance in FR13A and other tolerant cultivars.

To understand if the Sub1 locus plays a role in controlling tolerance in 'Goda Heenati', an F2 mapping population was derived from a cross of M-202 (a submergence susceptible *japonica*) and 'Goda Heenati' (a submergence-tolerant *indica* variety) was constructed through PCR-based SSR markers. A total of 164 F3 families were screened for submergence tolerance. The map was constructed by using 85 microsatellite markers. Only 46 markers were available to construct a linkage map for the 12 chromosomes. This map had a total length of 753.6 cM with an average interval size of 16.4 cM. With the constructed SSR map, four markers were associated with quantitative trait loci for submergence tolerance at seedling stage in chromosome 9 with high LOD peaks 18.42, 14.89, 19.41, and 23.22 at marker loci Rm316, RM464, SSR1, and RM219, respectively. These loci could explain 62.8%, 40.6%, 83.7%, and 84.3% of the phenotypic variation. The location of the QTLs was the same as that of AFLP211 and AFLP303, two AFLP (amplified fragment length polymorphism) markers co-segregating with Sub1 in a high-resolution linkage map established previously.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that the major QTL identified for 'Goda Heenati' was one of the alleles at the Sub1 locus, and that Sub1 is the major determinant of submergence tolerance in all rice cultivars with submergence tolerance identified so far. The sequence of candidate genes in 'Goda Heenati' would probably give an idea of which gene sequences were associated with submergence tolerance. This would be useful information in determining the mechanism of action of the Sub1 gene.

3 Filipinos awarded PhD research scholarships

SEARCA has awarded PhD research scholarships to three Filipinos pursuing their doctoral degrees at the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

The PhD research scholars, their home institutions, fields of study, and titles of research are as follows:

- Ms. Marilou P. Lucas, Mariano Marcos State University, Agricultural Economics, "Economic Assessment of Risk Associated with Different Rice-based Cropping Patterns in Northwest Luzon;"
- Ms. Nila B. Oñate, Camarines Sur State Agricultural College, Agricultural Engineering, "Engineering Aspects Covering the Operation of an In-vessel Composting System for By-products of Agricultural Processing Center;" and
- Ms. Norma U. Gomez, University of Southern Mindanao, Agricultural Economics, "Economics of Groundwater Use for Irrigated Rice in Selected Municipalities of Pulangi River Basin."

This new scholarship program provides PhD students the opportunity to use the resources and facilities available at SEARCA and its network of universities for their research. It also intends to help PhD students produce quality research papers for publication and enable them to work with SEARCA's research and development department on mutually identified areas of concerns/interests in agriculture and rural development. The research scholars are required to spend two months at SEARCA and present a seminar related to the research.

The PhD research scholarship is open to any graduate student pursuing a PhD in agriculture or related sciences from any SEAMEO member country. The applicant's research must focus on any of SEARCA's priority thrusts under the broad themes of promotion of agricultural competitiveness and natural resource management. The deadlines for applications are 1 February and 1 September. (LLDDomingo)

Biotechnology / from page 2

development of science and technology in the sector is very important. Recent breakthroughs in biotechnology have provided tools that can increase the efficiency of breeding methods and allow unconventional approaches to crop improvement. Current biotechnology research activities include tissue culture-based technologies, biochemical-based technologies, molecular biology-based technologies, which have yielded the development of short-duration cultivar of Yar-2 upland mutant rice, induction of moderately drought tolerant mutant lines in groundnut, and moderately red-hot diseases tolerant mutant line in sugarcane, as well as DNA fingerprinting in 33 rice varieties.

Mr. Soe further stated that although Myanmar is still far behind in the production of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), safety of transgenic material is a major concern. Biosafety regulations and management of agricultural GMOs have been initiated in the country since 2004. With funding from the United Nations Environmental Program and the Global Environment Facility, the country is now developing the National Biosafety Framework for the Union of Myanmar.

This forum was a joint activity of SEARCA and Myanmar Academy of Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock, and Fishery Sciences. (CNGRogel)

SEARCA director vows / from page 8

On the other hand, the MAFF minister, His Excellency Estanislau Aleixo Da Silva, expressed that MAFF would like to send its research and management staff to universities to pursue Master's degrees not only in agriculture and related sciences such as animal science, agronomy, plant breeding and horticulture, but also in veterinary sciences, forestry, fisheries, statistics, economics and management particularly financial management and administration. He said that the MAFF would like to strengthen the capacities of its personnel to prepare them for leadership positions in the near future. Dr. Da Silva proposed a scheme whereby Timorese SEARCA scholars take their courses in the university, then return to Timor-Leste to conduct their studies so that the research problems would be location-specific.

Dr. Balisacan and Dr. Editha C. Cedicol, manager of SEARCA's Graduate Scholarship Department, were in Timor-Leste on 1-4 October 2006 to interview nominees for the SEARCA scholarship. Present also during the interview was Dr. Aurelio Da Guterres, vice-rector for international relations of National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL).

During Dr. Balisacan and Dr. Cedicol's courtesy call on UNTL rector, Dr. Benjamin de Araujo e Corte-Real, rector said that UNTL would like to collaborate with SEARCA in developing the expertise of its faculty members and researchers through graduate scholarships, collaborative research, and short-term training. He thanked SEARCA and the DAAD for giving scholarships

SEARCA director vows / to page 16

Former FAO policy adviser, development economist named Visiting Research Fellows

SEARCA's Visiting Research Fellow (VRF) Program has appointed Dr. Donato B. Antiporta and Dr. Nobuhiko Fuwa as fellows.

Dr. Antiporta is currently the regional representative for Asia of the non-profit foundation called Euro-Asian Center for Policy Studies and Management. He had worked with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for about 26 years in various capacities and served as senior policy adviser of FAO's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) in Bangkok, Thailand until his retirement in 2006.

While with FAO-RAP, he was strongly involved in the development of a policy tool in assessing household impacts of policies and programs on food security and hunger. Policy experiments through this tool have been applied in Indonesia and the Philippines. He has been actively engaged as member of SEARCA's Seed Fund for Research and Training Evaluation Committee for 2006/2007 and contributed to the design of the Asian Economic Policy Workshop to be held in March 2007.

Dr. Fuwa, on the other hand, is associate professor of agricultural economics at the Graduate School of Science and Technology of Chiba University in Japan. He previously served as an international research fellow at the Social Sciences Division of the Philippine-based International Rice Research Institute and was a consultant at the World Bank's Gender and Development Group, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network. His research interests are in poverty, rural development, household decision-making, and gender and development. He is working on a SEARCA-funded book that traces the country's changing political economy and explains how its influence on policy reforms and institutions affect the development outcomes of the agricultural and rural sectors since the 1960s. Also, he served as technical editor of the forthcoming book titled *Reasserting the Rural Development Agenda: Lessons and Emerging Challenges in Asia*.

The appointment of the two fellows are expected to help raise the quality of the Center's staffing profile and strengthen links with the international research community.

The VRF is intended for researchers, within and outside Southeast Asia, doing research along SEARCA's priority thrusts on agricultural competitiveness and natural resource management. (JSCSugui)

policy workshop / from page 6

The workshop is funded by the FAO-RAP project GCP/ RAS/188/JPN. High-level officials, researchers, and policymakers from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, South Korea, and China are expected to participate in the workshop. (JSCSugui)

SEARCA director vows / from page 15

to UNTL faculty members and suggested that MS scholars serve the country first after completion of their study programs before taking doctoral studies. Dr. Balisacan proposed a signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between SEARCA and UNTL.

The SEARCA officials visited Timor-Leste to promote SEARCA's programs focused on agricultural competitiveness and natural resource management and to find out from the two ministries how SEARCA's limited resources could best benefit the human resource needs of the country. (ECCedicol)

The SEARCA Diary

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