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'Education is key to enduring growth' – SEARCA Director



Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan (inset), SEARCA Director, delivers his presentation on agricultural education and development during the policy forum of the 42nd SEAMEO Council Conference. Others in photo are (l-r): Dr. Edilberto de Jesus, SEAMEO Secretariat Director; H.E. Bambang Sudibyo, Minister of Education of Indonesia and concurrent SEAMEO Council President; Dr Sheldon Schaeffer, Director of UNESCO Asia Pacific Regional Office; and Dr. Alisher Umarov, Education Officer of the UNESCO Jakarta Office.

Evidence from empirical research shows that "education is key to enduring income growth, poverty reduction, and equity." This was one of the main points underscored by Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, before the Ministers of Education of Southeast Asian countries.

Occasion was the 42nd Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Council Conference held in Bali, Indonesia on 13-15 March 2007.

Dr. Balisacan was one of the three presenters during the Conference's policy forum. His presentation was titled "Higher Education in Rural Development and Poverty Reduction: Developing a Globally Competitive Agriculture Curriculum for Southeast Asia".

While Southeast Asia's performance in economic growth and poverty reduction during the past 25 years has been remarkable, it has not been uniform across countries in the region as well as within countries. Citing poverty statistics in Southeast

Asia, Dr. Balisacan indicated that nearly three-fourths of the poor in Southeast Asia live in rural areas and that the large majority of them are dependent on agriculture and agriculture-related industries. Agricultural and rural development is thus key to achieving broad-based growth and the Millennium Development Goals. "In the past three decades, agricultural and rural development had fueled poverty reduction, especially in rural areas," he said. However, the

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relative importance of agriculture in total output and employment has been rapidly declining.

For middle-income countries, he said that innovations serve as engines of agricultural growth and poverty reduction, and that the key driver of innovation is higher education and investment in R&D.

For low-income countries, on the other hand, Dr. Balisacan prescribed the adoption, imitation, and tinkering of existing technologies at the frontier, for which the key driver is basic education.

These concerns, on the one hand, and the challenges posed by globalization including agricultural

competitiveness, on the other, have led SEARCA to propose the conduct of a regional project that aims to enhance and strengthen the agricultural curricula of universities in the region.

Dr. Balisacan indicted that the proposal is also a response to a concern expressed by SEAMEO in 2005 on the need to establish a common curriculum and accreditation standards for the region in order to produce globally competitive graduates. He said that a recent survey of agriculture curricula of selected Southeast Asian universities conducted by SEARCA showed the following:

- There are stark differences across member countries as well within countries in terms of quality vs. quantity and local needs vs. national/regional/global concerns.

- There is mismatch of demand and supply. Programs are still mostly dominated by traditional or discipline-based agriculture and agriculture-related studies, even though there is declining enrolment in the traditional discipline-based programs.
- There is uneven distribution in faculty expertise among disciplines, which is in excess for the traditional programs while but lacking for the more innovative ones such as agricultural biotechnology, agriculture innovation and entrepreneurship and international agriculture.

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Education ministers to forge stronger regional cooperation for a competitive SEA agri curriculum

The 42nd SEAMEO Council Conference (SEAMEC) held back-to-back with the Second ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM) last March ended favorably with education ministers agreeing to forge stronger regional cooperation aimed at enhancing and strengthening the agriculture curriculum of universities in Southeast Asia.

During the 42nd SEAMEC, Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, made a presentation before Southeast Asia's Ministers of Education, titled "Higher Education in Rural Development and Poverty Reduction: Developing a Globally Competitive Agriculture Curriculum for Southeast Asia", to garner support for SEARCA's project that seeks to enrich the agriculture program of study in the region. (See story on page 1)

The discussion on the enhancement of the Southeast Asian agriculture curriculum recognized information and communication technology (ICT) as a potent tool in effecting better learning outcomes. The ministers saw ICT development and its integration in the curriculum as crucial to breeding competent graduates.

Also high in the ministers' discussions were quality assurance in higher education, rural development and promoting a Southeast Asian identity.

During the conference, Spain was formally accepted as an associate member of SEAMEO, joining Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Norway.

The 42nd SEAMEC was held on 13-15 March 2007 at Westin Hotel

Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia. H. E. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of Indonesia, keynoted. He noted SEAMEO's key role in supporting closer regional cooperation. The ministers proceeded to Royal Pita Maha in Ubud,

Indonesia on 16 March for the Second ASEM, a conference jointly organized by the SEAMEO and ASEAN.

Indonesian Education Minister Bambang Sudibyo assumed the presidency of the SEAMEO Council from Singapore Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam. The SEAMEO Council consists of the ministers representing the SEAMEO member states Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. Malaysia will host the meeting in 2008. (MAFABad)

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- There is hardly any cross-country accreditation practices.

The main objectives of the proposed regional project are three-fold:

- Develop curricular programs that will best meet inter-country developmental and socio-cultural needs
- Develop mechanisms for promoting academic synergy among institutions within and between national borders
- Identify scopes for inter-university accreditation of agriculture curriculum/ programs

The project would entail the conduct of ASEAN conferences/ symposia on issues and concerns in Agriculture Education Curricula; a survey of ASEAN universities offering agriculture education programs; expert consultations on approaches for effective formulation and implementation of agriculture programs for ASEAN universities; identification of areas for inter-university complementation (e.g., course accreditation); and presentation of output to education policymakers and university executives and other stakeholders.

Its expected outputs are guidelines on the establishment and implementation of more locally relevant and internationally competitive agriculture education programs for ASEAN higher education institutions as well as the establishment of more effective system of evaluation of agriculture education programs; stronger intra-national and international collaboration among ASEAN member universities offering agriculture education programs; and above all, more globally competitive graduates in agriculture and agriculture-related disciplines. (LLTallafer)

SEARCA renews, makes European ties

SEARCA's top officials undertook a series of visits to four European countries on 20 May-3 Jun 2007 to reinvigorate SEARCA's partnerships there as well as forge new ones.

Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Director, and Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., Deputy Director for Administration, visited jointly or separately the following institutions: Ministry of Development Cooperation (DGIS) and Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC), both in the Netherlands; International Foundation for Science (IFS) in Stockholm, Sweden; International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) in Rome, Italy; and Centre International d'Etudes Supérieures en Sciences Agronomiques (SupAgro) and Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD) in Montpellier, France.

The SEARCA officials were joined by Dr. Luis Rey I. Velasco, Chancellor of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), who similarly sought to strengthen UPLB's ties with the aforementioned institutions.

At IFAD, Dr. Balisacan presented a seminar on "Chronic Poverty, Agriculture, and Policy Adjustment: Lessons from the Philippines" on 25 May. Based on his study using panel data from the Philippines, Dr. Balisacan showed that despite rapid urbanization in recent years, poverty is still largely a rural phenomenon and that the multi-dimensional aspects of deprivation are linked to agricultural performance. He underscore the need to reassert the agricultural development agenda to address chronic poverty. At the country level, a key to this agenda is domestic reforms, which involves: (a) sharpening the response of rural areas to market access opportunities (i.e., spatial integration of local economies, education, labor market policies) and (b) sustaining productivity growth and income diversification (R&D, governance).

The outcomes of the institutional visits include the following:

- Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between IFS and SEARCA (see story on page 6). Both institutions are interested in jointly managing a research grants program for young scientists in Southeast Asia.

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Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, presents tokens to Ms. Desiree Ooft of the Research and Communication Division of the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs during his group's visit to DGIS on 21 May 2007.

Policy workshop tackles challenges and consequences of Asian economy on agriculture

The increasing dynamism in the Asian economy due to globalization and changing external environment has brought to the limelight the threats and opportunities that developing countries in the region are currently facing.

This was the focal point of the policy workshop organized by SEARCA in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP), themed “Asian Economic Renaissance: Challenges and Consequences on Agriculture, Food Security, and Poverty” on 19-20 March 2007 at Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The workshop aimed to: (1) review lessons from emerging agricultural and rural development paradigms of successful Asian economies; (2) identify key policy issues, constraints, and potentials for the agricultural and rural development faced by the region; (3) explore key strategies to address fundamental policy issues and modalities by which transition economies and developing countries can adopt them; and (4) develop capacity building using the policy tools under the FAO RAP project GCP/RAS/188/JPN.

It featured a keynote paper by Dr. Purushottam Mubhary, Chief of the Policy Assistance Branch of the Food and Agriculture Organization Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP) on “Rapid Growth of Selected Asian Economies: Lessons and Implications for Agriculture and Food Security in the Region.” The presentation highlighted the successful development



The Policy Workshop participants pose for posterity.

experience of five select Asian economies (i.e., China, India, Vietnam, Thailand, and Korea), policy lessons derived from these successful experiences, and trade implications of such rapid growth on agriculture and food security in the region. Recommendations for sound domestic policies and reforms of institutions were brought out to enhance efficiency and competitiveness as well as to promote private-public partnerships.

Country papers from Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka underscored country-specific policy constraints and identified strategies to address them. The papers also discussed thematic issues on the importance of agriculture to economic growth, poverty reduction, and other development objectives, rural-urban gap, natural resource degradation and the market supply chain.

The workshop participants agreed that the key priority thematic challenges/issues in the Asian region are increased farm income and poverty reduction, sustainable natural resource management, and integration of small farm holders into the marketing revolution. Suggested mechanisms to appropriately address

these major issues/challenges include policy dialogues among expert groups and policymakers, capacity building, networking for closer regional cooperation, development of concept papers, and documentation of case studies.

The participants are: Mr. Tin Htut Oo (Myanmar); Dr. Arnulfo G. Garcia (SEARCA); Dr. Purushottam K. Muddhary (FAO RAP); Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan (SEARCA); Mr. He Changchui (FAO RAP); Dr. Josyline Javelosa (Philippines); Dr. Orachos Napasintuwong; Dr. Ramesh Chand (India); Mr. Wasantha Ekanayake (Sri Lanka); Dr. Fatimah Mohamed Arshad (Malaysia); Dr. Tirso Paris (Philippines); Ms. Jessaine Soraya Sugui (SEARCA); Dr. Nguyen Nga (Vietnam); Mr. Yong-Kyu Choi (South Korea); Mr. Oukham Phiathep (Lao PDR); Dr. Numchai Thanupon (Thailand); Dr. Hermanto Siregar (Indonesia); Dr. Sang Mu-Lee (South Korea); Dr. Donato Antiporta (SEARCA); Mr. Surasak Sompadung (Thailand); Dr. Sajjad Zohir (Bangladesh); Mr. Y.B. Thapa (Nepal); Ms. Saikwan Thoedkiatisak (FAO RAP); and, Dr. Lediviña Cariño (Philippines). (JCSugui)

SIGNINGS

SEARCHA, PhilRice, DA-BAR launch initiative to boost RP agriculture

A three-year research project that examines what is needed to boost the productivity of Philippine agriculture is underway. It is a joint initiative of the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR), the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), and SEARCHA.

DA-BAR, PhilRice, and SEARCHA signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) on 27 February 2007 at DA-BAR's office in Quezon City, Philippines, for a

Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCHA Director; Mr. Nicomedes Eleazar, DA-BAR Director; and, Dr. Leocadio S. Sebastian, PhilRice Executive Director sign the MOA while their respective witnesses look on.



three-year research project that will determine the nature, sources, and causes of productivity growth in Philippine agriculture.

The project is expected to result in research-based policy recommendations for government decision-makers and other stakeholders of the Philippine agriculture sector as well as various publications on agricultural productivity. The

proponents of the project—SEARCHA Director Arsenio M. Balisacan, PhilRice Executive Director Leocadio S. Sebastian, and DA-BAR Executive Director Nicomedes Eleazar—are expecting that the number of young researchers interested in empirical work on agriculture will increase at the end of the project.

The project will analyze systematically the determinants of agricultural

SEARCHA, PhilRice, DA-BAR/ to page 6

SEARCHA, academic/scientific institutions seal accord

SEARCHA signed on 23 May 2007 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the International Foundation of Science (IFS) for a five-year institutional collaboration in supporting strengthened research capacity in fields related to agriculture among young scientists in Southeast Asia.

Signatories were Dr. Michael Stahl, Director of IFS, and Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCHA Director. The MOU recognizes the complementary missions and mutual desire of the two institutions to bolster the participation and involvement of young scientists in scientific research relevant for agriculture in the region.

IFS, based in Stockholm, Sweden, is a non-governmental organization that assists young



Mr. Michael Stahl (seated, left), IFS Director, and Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCHA Director, sign the institutional MOU on 23 May 2007. Dr. Luis Rey I. Velasco (standing, left), UPLB Chancellor, and Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., SEARCHA Deputy Director for Administration, witness the event.

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**SEARCA, PhilRice, DA-BAR/
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productivity growth considering the impact of market globalization, domestic decentralization, new tools such as biotechnology, information and communication technology, and other institutional and government reforms that affect decision-making processes and behavioral responses of farmers. Also, this study seeks to examine the determinants of productivity

change over time.

Last year, SEARCA also collaborated with PhilRice and DA-BAR in a project that closely looked at the country's rice sector, with the view of ensuring its rice security. The project results were published in a book entitled "Securing Rice, Reducing Poverty: Challenges and Policy Directions." (Copies are available on SEARCA website: www.searca.org.) (LGSoliven)

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scientists from developing countries who have the potential for becoming the future research leaders and lead scientists in their nations. It is affiliated with 135 organizations in 86 countries, most of which are in developing countries.

Similarly, SEARCA signed partnership agreements in January-March 2007 with three institutions in undertaking programs, projects, and related activities of common interest, and to exchange scientific materials, publications, and information. These are National Taiwan University (NTU), Asian Institute of Management (AIM), and Universidad Nacional Timor Loros'ae (UNTL). (MAFABad)



Dr. Bao-ji Chen (second from left), Dean of NTU's College of Bio-resources and Agriculture, and Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 24 January 2007. The signing was witnessed by Dr. Paul Sun (seated leftmost), Board Chair, Asian Vegetable Research and Development Center, Dr. Ruben L. Villareal, former SEARCA Director, and (standing L-R): Ms. Nelia R. Belen, Head, Internal Audit Unit, SEARCA; Dr. Huu-Sheng Lur, Director of NTU's Center for Agriculture Education and Academic Exchange; and Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., Deputy Director-Administration, SEARCA.



Dr. Balisacan (second from left), SEARCA Director and Dr. Benjamin de Araujo e Corte-Real, Rector of NUTL, shake hands after signing the SEARCA-NUTL MOU on March. With them are Mr. Thiraphong Thangthirasunan (leftmost), President of Thailand's Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives, and Mr. Nimal Fernando, Lead Rural Finance Specialist, Asian Development Bank.



AIM and SEARCA signed the MOU for institutional cooperation on 29 January 2007. Signatories were Francis G. Estrada (second from right), AIM President, and Dr. Balisacan. The signing was witnessed by Dr. Saguiguit (left) and Prof. Mario Lopez of AIM.

THE POLICY AGENDA

(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

The Po

formulation and design.)

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

CGIAR's System Research Priorities (2005-2015)

Dr. William Dar
Director-General
International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics

Agriculture remains a reliable pathway to pro-poor growth. Improving agricultural productivity and sustaining natural resources can be of direct help to both the urban and rural poor through lower unit costs of production resulting in higher incomes for the rural poor and lower food prices for consumers. A dynamic and flexible environment is constantly evolving the world over to mobilize agricultural research to reduce poverty, food insecurity, and malnutrition.

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) is "a strategic alliance of countries, international and regional organizations, and private foundations supporting 15 international agricultural centers that work with national agricultural research systems and civil society". Its overall goal is to improve the livelihood of the low-income people in developing countries through reduced poverty, food insecurity, and malnutrition and to foster better institutions, policies, and sustainable management of natural resources of particular importance to agriculture and poor people. The goal is in consonance with the Millennium Development Goals.

The three overarching goals of the CGIAR system are poverty reduction, food security, and environmental protection. The Science Council-initiated process of System-level priority setting is in line with the CGIAR's aim to help develop a more cohesive and better focused, high quality research program with a consolidated focus for greater impact.

The System's Priorities reflect the mandate of the CGIAR to undertake research for development, and lay explicit focus on income generation among the poor, researches on drought, soil acidity, and temperature stress as well as on trade, markets, and food safety, and the application of modern molecular science, etc. The priorities are set so as to have measurable outcomes.

The research priorities of the CGIAR system for 2005-2015 are encapsulated in five priority areas and 20 priorities, as follows:

1. Sustaining biodiversity for current and future generations
 - Conservation and characterization of staple crops
 - Promotion of conservation and characterization of under-utilized plant genetic resources to increase the income of the poor
 - Conservation of indigenous livestock
 - Conservation of aquatic animal genetic resources
2. Producing more and better food at

lower cost through genetic improvements

- Maintenance and enhancement of yields and yield potential of food staples
- Tolerance to selected abiotic stresses
- Enhancement of nutritional quality and safety
- Genetic enhancement of selected high-value species

3. Reducing rural poverty through agricultural diversification and emerging opportunities for high-value commodities and products

- Increased income from fruits and vegetables
- Income increases from livestock
- Enhanced income through increased productivity of fisheries and aquaculture
- Sustainable income generation from forests and trees

4. Poverty alleviation and sustainable management of water, land, and forest resources

- Integrated land, water, and forest management at landscape level
- Sustained and well-managed aquatic ecosystems for food and livelihoods
- Improved water productivity
- Sustainable agro-ecological intensification in low- and high-potential areas

5. Improving policies and facilitating institutional innovation to support sustainable reduction of poverty and

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

SEARCA Director discusses chronic poverty at Bangkok Confab

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP) conducted on 28-29 June 2007 a regional inception workshop for a new joint program between FAO and the International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) on "Pro-poor Policy Formulation, Dialogue, and Implementation at the Country Level."

The program intends to assist eight Asian and Pacific countries in reducing poverty through enhanced institutional capacity to analyze, formulate, and implement pro-poor agricultural and rural development.

The regional inception workshop aimed to brief the program's national focal points on its features and discuss its implementation arrangements and workplan.

Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, was one of the resource persons. His presentation was titled "Poverty, Agriculture, and Pro-Poor Policy Formulation: Lessons from Southeast Asia."

Dr. Balisacan highlighted the diverse economic growth and poverty reduction performance of Southeast Asian countries. He noted the absence of absolute poverty in countries like Singapore, Brunei, and



Participants of the workshop, which includes Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan (second row, second from left), SEARCA Director.

Malaysia; the rapid progress made by others such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam in recent years; and the slow progress of Cambodia, East Timor, Lao PDR, and Myanmar among the low-income countries.

Rapid urbanization, he said, has made poverty an urban phenomenon and that the relative importance of agriculture in total output and employment has rapidly declined, as in the case of the Philippines, minimizing the role of the agriculture sector in the economic growth. However, research clearly shows that the deep determinants of chronic poverty (e.g., education, health and asset reform) are associated with the agriculture and rural sectors. Hence, pro-poor policies need to focus on the development of these sectors.

Dr. Balisacan also underscored the neglect of basic infrastructure and weak governance, which are some stumbling blocks affecting agriculture and rural development.

Moreover, the high cost of doing business in the rural areas contribute to the weakening of these sectors.

He recommended that country-level reforms should focus on: (1) sharpening market access through spatial integration of the local economies, education, and labor market policies and (2) sustaining productivity growth and income diversification through R&D and governance. There is also a need to reform and reassert the agricultural development agenda to address the problems of chronic poverty.

The workshop participants discussed and identified the tentative thematic areas of the program and collaborating partners at the country level. They also agreed on the implementation process, tentative implementation plan, and monitoring and evaluation of the program. (LLTallafer)

22 Asians Participate in Environmental Economics Course

Twenty-two Asians representing eight countries participated in SEARCA's 3rd Executive Forum on Natural Resource Management (NRM): Environmental Economics for Decision-making, which was held at SEARCA on 25-29 June 2007. The Economy and Environment Program for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA) served as a collaborating organization, and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) was a co-sponsor.



Participants of the Third Executive Forum on Natural Resource Management: Environmental Economics for Decision-making.

The executive forum aimed to help mid-level resource managers and policymakers understand recent trends in global environmental problems such as climate change, biodiversity, and transboundary problems, as well as gain knowledge and appreciation of the tools of environmental economics and how they can apply these tools to inform their respective programs and policies.

It consisted of two major modules. Module 1 dealt with global and regional issues and covered the following topics: basic concepts in resource and environmental economics, economics of biodiversity, economics and science of climate change, and transboundary issues. Module 2 focused on methods

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- Agreement by DGIS to support (using savings of the completed Philippines-Netherlands Biodiversity Research Programme, which was funded by the Netherlands and carried out by SEARCA) an international conference on biodiversity to be conducted in February 2008. The Conference is expected to result in a resource book on biodiversity in Southeast Asia and a concept plan on a multi-country biodiversity program for selected countries in the region.

Moreover, DGIS is interested in working with SEARCA in implementing a small grants facility for cross-cutting issues in natural resource management.

- IFAD and SEARCA are exploring the possibility for the latter to serve as the nodal institution for project that will serve as a platform for

policy dialogue for rural poverty reduction in the Asia and Pacific Region.

IFAD has also invited SEARCA to participate in its regional initiative in capacity building for developing countries in Asia as well as to submit a concept proposal on a regional initiative on climate change, agriculture, and rural poverty.

- NUFFIC is willing to favorably consider SEARCA's proposal for a multi-year funding of scholarships for Southeast Asian nationals. Such scholarship could include "sandwich" or "picnic" exchanges with Wageningen University. Similarly, Wageningen University is willing to partner with SEARCA and UPLB on joint research, training, and graduate scholarship programs on subjects and areas of common concern related to development of Southeast Asia.
- SupAgro is willing to receive/host SEARCA's graduate scholars either through a sandwich arrangement or direct acceptance in its international master's and doctoral programs on areas relevant

to agriculture, environment, and development. Funding possibilities were discussed including counterpart funding schemes.

- CIRAD is keen on co-hosting/ sponsoring conferences aimed specifically at policymakers to present empirical data and research outputs as basis for informed policy formulation. It is also open to continue hosting SEARCA graduate scholars for the research phase of their academic programs. CIRAD scientists will act as co-advisors and may be able to source funds for the students' stay in France. Moreover, it would like to conduct collaborative projects on biofuels and food safety and provide its experts for SEARCA's consulting bids.

IFS and SupAgro are among SEARCA's potential new partners. The other institutions visited have had or currently have collaborations with the Center. Also, France and the Netherlands are associate members of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), to which SEARCA belongs. (LLTallafer)

Strengthen research on fishery, experts say

Fish accounts for 50 percent of the animal protein diet of people in Southeast Asia. Yet, agricultural research and development remains highly dominated by crops.

SEARCA held an International Conference on Fisheries and Poverty on 10-11 April 2007 at New World Renaissance Hotel, Makati City, Philippines, sought to understand the emerging challenges faced by the fishery sector vis-à-vis poverty reduction in the region and identify priority research agenda and policy directions. Around 57 participants from fishery stakeholders from Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Korea, Italy, United States of America, and the Philippines.

Themed "Poverty Reduction through Sustainable Fisheries: Emerging Policy and Governance Issues in Southeast Asia," the conference featured high quality review papers



Mr. Anto Sunaryanto (inset), Director of Aquaculture Business Development and Services, Directorate General of Aquaculture, Indonesia, presents his paper on the experience of Indonesia's aquaculture smallholders to the conference participants.

from experts to consolidate available knowledge and knowledge gaps, an introductory paper on issues on fisheries and poverty, and papers on the household perspective, fisheries as an economic sector, technologies and the supply chain, and status and governance of aquatic resources. By the end of the meeting, the participants were able to identify priority policy and research agenda for sustainable and pro-poor fisheries. Current statistics showing the decline in aquatic resources has pushed the alarm bell for scientists, policymakers, nongovernment organizations, and fishery experts. As fishery

trade and demand grows, the supply decreases due to exploitative human activities and changes in the environment. At the conference, fish experts agreed to intensify research on fishery and develop sustainability mechanisms for the said sector.

The conference was organized by SEARCA, in collaboration with WorldFish Center and Philippine Council for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development (PCAMRD). The papers presented and the inputs from the workshop will be transformed into a reference book on sustainable fishery management in Southeast Asia. (CNGRogel)

Agriculture for small islands discussed

Small islands are home to some of the most impoverished in the region. They generally have constricted economic and ecological spaces for adaptation and expansion of agricultural and non-agricultural development. They are unattended areas, as public and scholarly investments have been small, which can provide fertile ground for understanding the poverty-agriculture-environment linkages.

To address such research gaps, SEARCA and Silliman University (SU) in Dumaguete City, Philippines, decided to work together toward developing a program on small island systems

agriculture in Asia. The goal is to institutionalize scholarly and development attention on small islands as a unique economic, environmental, and sociocultural domain of rural poverty and human well-being.

Both institutions held a Roundtable on Small Island Systems (SIS) Agriculture in SU on 11 May 2007, as a takeoff point for the said agenda. Dr. Ben S. Malayang III, SU President and facilitator of the roundtable, gave a presentation titled "The Problematique of Small Island Agricultural and Natural Resource Systems - Would

it be worth our while to make SIS a legitimate focus and arena of Research and Development (R&D)?" He underscored the need to assess the probable costs of vis-à-vis the returns, and if such returns, if any, would significantly influence national development. He added that it is essential to find out the specific R&D focus on SIS agriculture as well as to strategically configure R&D programs.

The roundtable resulted in an agreement to undertake a conference

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4 Southeast Asians get SEARCA travel grants

SEARCA recently awarded travel grants to four Southeast Asians to present papers in international conferences. The SEARCA travel grants support the Center's mission to strengthen institutional capacity in agricultural and rural development through knowledge exchange.

The recipients of the grant are: Mr. Darius El Pebrian of Indonesia, and Dr. Elena E. Pernia, Ms. Olga Nuñez, and Ms. Jessica Villanueva, all of the Philippines.

Mr. Pebrian, Graduate Research Assistant at the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, Universiti Putra Malaysia, presented a paper titled "A New Integrated System Mechanization Concept for the Oil Palm Plantation Industry in Malaysia" at the International Conference on Crop Harvesting and Processing in Louisville, Kentucky, USA on 10-15 February 2007.

Dr. Pernia, Dean of the College of Mass Communication, University of the Philippines Diliman, presented a paper titled "Knowledge Management and Strategic Communication using ICT for Sustainable Agriculture: The Case of K-Agrinet" at the East West Center International Conference on 8 December 2006 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Ms. Nuñez, Professor at the Department of Biological Science, Mindanao State University, Philippines, participated in the Biodiversity Crisis on Tropical Islands Conference held on 11-13 June 2007 at Brunei Darussalam, where she discussed her paper "Distribution of endemic and threatened herpetofauna in Mt. Malindang range, Mindanao, Philippines."

Lastly, Ms. Villanueva, Instructor at the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, UPD, attended the International Green Energy Conference in Vasteras, Sweden, on 17-21 June 2007, where she presented the results of her study "Assessing the Role of Landcare in Enhancing the Adaptive Capacity of the Communities of Claveria, Misamis Oriental to Climate Variability."

The SEARCA Travel Grants Program, which funds up to a maximum of US\$1,200, is open to Southeast Asian nationals working in a development-oriented institution or graduate students of a reputable university in Southeast Asia. (LLDDomingo)

2007 SEAMEO Service Awardee

Ms. Susan V. Fernandez, Head of SEARCA's Management Services Unit, is the Center's SEAMEO Service awardee for 2007.

She, along with awardees from the other regional centers of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), were recognized during the 42nd SEAMEO Council Conference held in Bali, Indonesia on 13-15 March 2007. They received their Plaques of Appreciation from H.E. Bambang Sudibyo, Minister of Education of Indonesia and concurrent President of the SEAMEO Council.

Ms. Fernandez joined SEARCA as Programmer in 1986, rising through

the ranks and becoming the Head in 1992 of the former Computer Services Unit, whose functions had been expanded later and is presently called Management Services Unit (MSU).

Aside from the recognition ceremony, the awardees had a session to exchange information about themselves and their work. They were also treated to a tour of various places of interest in Bali.

The SEAMEO Service Award is conferred yearly to deserving staff members of the various units of SEAMEO. It was started in 2004. (LLTallafer)

Ms. Susan V. Fernandez, SEARCA's 2007 SEAMEO Service Awardee, receives the Plaque of Appreciation from H.E. Bambang Sudibyo, Minister of Education of Indonesia and concurrent President of the SEAMEO Council.



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in environmental economic analysis, particularly environmental and resource valuation.

Participants were leaders and resource managers/researchers from Bangladesh (1), Cambodia (1), China (1), India (1), Indonesia (1), Myanmar (2), the Philippines (13), and Thailand (2). They crafted action and policy plans applying the concepts of environmental economics on NRM.

Dr. Asa Jose U. Sajise of the College of Economics and Management, University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) served as the technical coordinator. Resource persons

included the following: Dr. Rodel Lasco, Philippine representative, World Agroforestry Center; Dr. Roberto Yap, SJ, Ateneo de Manila University; Dr. Rex Victor Cruz of the UPLB College of Forestry and Natural Resources; Ms. Mundita Lim, Director, Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); Dr. Marian de los Angeles, Senior Environmental Economist, Sustainable Development Division, The World Bank Institute; Dr. Herminia A. Francisco, director, EEPSEA; Dr. Bui Dung The, Senior Economist, EEPSEA; and Ms. Dieldre Harder and Ms. Anbeth Indab, EEPSEA researchers. (NARamos)

In Focus

Regional Experts' Consultation Meeting on Overcoming Obstacles to Agricultural Microfinance in Southeast Asia

Agri microfinance discussed in regional meeting

Some 50 heads of microfinance institutions, government finance regulators and policymakers, and agricultural economists and administrators attended the regional meeting on agricultural microfinance held on 1-2 March 2007 at the Heritage Hotel, Pasay City, Philippines.

Dubbed as "Regional Experts' Consultation Meeting on Overcoming Obstacles to Agricultural Microfinance in Southeast Asia," the two-day event was organized by SEARCA and the Center for Agriculture and Rural Development-Mutually Reinforcing Institutions (CARD-MRI) Development Institute, Inc.

The meeting served as a platform for exchanging views among experts and practitioners toward formulating policies and action in advancing agricultural microfinance in the Southeast Asian region. It focused on risk management, regulation and supervision specifically of credit unions and cooperatives, and governance and sustainability of microfinance institutions. The participants came up with recommendations or options to widen the frontiers of agricultural

microfinance and initiate a network of experts and practitioners who will advance agricultural microfinance in Southeast Asia.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Dr. Arsenio Balisacan, SEARCA Director, said that access to finance has become increasingly more important in a rapidly globalizing Asia where a huge potential to foster rural growth and reduce poverty by way of modern agricultural technologies lie dormant due to the farmers' inability to meet their financial requirements. He added that while microfinance has illustrated success in helping people out of the poverty trap as documented by development studies, most of these success stories remain limited to non-agricultural activities.

The challenges for development practitioners include finding out how microfinance can deliver the same success for agriculture, identifying the promoting factors and how can they be adapted in the context of small-hold agriculture, and developing the policy and regulatory framework that could best foster the development of microfinance for agriculture in the Philippines and elsewhere in the developing countries of Asia.

The regional meeting was co-sponsored by the Development Bank of the Philippines and the Land Bank of the Philippines. (MAFABad)

(See related stories on this spread)



Dr. Arsenio Balisacan, SEARCA Director, encourages participants to solidify efforts to open microfinance interventions to the agriculture sector.

Former Philippine President recognizes 'people power' as a force against poverty

The first woman president of the Philippines, whose headship steered the restoration of Philippine democracy, recognizes a new 'people power' that will mobilize people to lift themselves out of poverty through microfinance and micro-enterprise development.

At the opening ceremony of the Regional Experts' Consultation Meeting on Overcoming Obstacles to Agricultural Microfinance in Southeast Asia (see story on this spread), former President Corazon C. Aquino stressed the importance of seeking innovative ways to allow the benefits of micro-enterprise development to be accessible to the poorest of the poor and make an impact on the poorest of the poor. Mrs. Aquino zeroed in on the significance of microfinance in the agricultural sector and its role in improving the lives of small farmers and battling food scarcity in the nation. She acknowledged that the advantages of agricultural microfinance go beyond economic statistics. "Successful enterprises in agriculture and fisheries bear great potential as well for creating major beneficial impact on the food supply and on the nutrition and health of communities," she said.

To further illustrate the gains of microfinance, Mrs. Aquino highlighted the success story of Nobel Peace Laureate Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank. She related, "In 1986, Grameen took on the challenge of turning around a fisheries venture once run unsuccessfully by the government of Bangladesh. Starting from scratch with no prior background in fisheries, they got the ball rolling by enrolling staff in crash courses on fish farming and even sending some to China for

Former Philippine/ next page

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training in pond management and hatchery operations." Because the system worked in a way wherein members were also business partners who had the right to half of the profit, the community members united to put in their hard work and protected their livelihood from poaching.

She remarked, "Today, 20 years later, with so much external linkage opportunities and social concern waiting to complement the latent energy of 'people power' in communities, no obstacles to the successful entry of microfinance in any sector should be insurmountable." (MAFABad)

RP central bank governor supports micro-agri finance marriage

The Philippine microfinance industry continues to experience a rapid growth with 223 banks engaged in such activities with a combined loan portfolio of around 4 billion Philippine pesos provided to more than 660,000 borrowers. These figures show how pervasive microfinance in the Philippines is. However, Mr. Amado Tetangco, Governor of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP, or Central Bank of the Philippines), disclosed that there are still areas to conquer, among them is agricultural microfinance.

Mr. Tetangco made these remarks at the Regional Experts' Consultation Meeting on Overcoming Obstacles to Agricultural Microfinance in Southeast Asia (see story on this spread). He pointed out that microfinance as a methodology and technology has illustrated successes in the Southeast Asian region. He attributed these triumphs to two tenets: (1) Microfinance is typically linked to households and their



Hon. Corazon C. Aquino, former RP president (inset top) and Amado V. Tetangco, BSP Governor, keynote the Regional Agricultural Microfinance Confab.

enterprises and (2) Microfinance loans are characteristically used for additional capital to a growing business.

Explaining these tenets, Tetangco said that microfinance looks at the regular cash flow of the household and the enterprise to determine the specifics of the loan, thereby resulting in primary short-term loans with frequent payment. Usually, the loans are around small to average size. Access to larger loans may only be granted once the borrower has established a good repayment record. Through this, discipline among borrowers is developed and risks are lessened.

"In particular, cash flow lending and frequent repayments do not fit the seasonal nature of agricultural incomes. In addition, short-term financing, as well as the relatively small loan amounts, results in a lack of term financing, which is important to particular types of agricultural activities. The risks for both types of financing are also very diverse. Agriculture finance bears unique risks such as price and yield risks," he added.

These obstacles, however, are no dead-end. Mr. Tetangco prescribed the possibility of marrying microfinance's best practices with prominent features of agriculture finance "to create a product that addresses the needs of the agriculture sector, specifically the poor farming households."

It has been observed that many microfinance clients are also involved in some form of agricultural activity.

Challenges remain in agricultural microfinance

While most stakeholders recognize the value of microfinance to Asia, which has 1.2 billion rural poor depending on subsistence agriculture and suffer from poor nutrition and hunger, the successful entry of microfinance in the agricultural sector remains bombarded with challenges and obstacles, experts say.

Dr. Gilbert M. Llanto of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies enumerated some key issues that plague microfinance interventions in the agriculture sector. Among them are: (1) scarcity of collateral, (2) risks, (3) challenge of liquidity management, (4) absence of risk-reducing institution, (5) missing opportunities in the agriculture supply chain, and (6) regulation and supervision issues. Occasion was the Regional Experts' Consultation Meeting on Overcoming Obstacles to Agricultural Microfinance in Southeast Asia (see related story on this spread).

As the discussion zeroed in on risk management, Dr. Nimal A. Fernando, a principal finance specialist at the Asian Development Bank (ADB), said that external pressure, technical assistance, and a centralized risk information facility will help agricultural microfinance to flourish. In the past two decades, it has been observed that the foundation of microfinance is credit risk management by microfinance institutions (MFIs).

RP central bank/ from page 13

Agricultural workers maintain microenterprises due to the irregular agricultural income, so that they can still meet their consumption needs and other short-term household spending. Mr. Tetangco said that microfinance might be offered to this type of workers provided that the proven strategy in microenterprise lending is appropriately modified. "This way, the selection process is more attuned to the intricacies of the household, its microenterprise, as well as its agricultural activity," he expounded.

The central bank top official likewise underscored the importance of flexibility in terms of repayment schedules, delivery channels, and even collateral requirements, noting that some microfinance institutions that have catered successfully to the agricultural sector presented flexibility repayment schedules and payment options.

The key to success in agricultural microfinance is to continue seeking novel ways for improvement and diversification, at the same time remain cautious in its use because the agricultural sector has its uniqueness and particular risk profile. This was what the BSP had in mind when it launched the Micro-Agri Product in 2006, wherein banks were permitted to extend microfinance to borrowers with small agricultural activities. These loans, like in any other microfinance activity, receive similar regulatory treatment, yet parameters were set to properly manage the risks associated with agriculture credit. This initiative leads the way for more banks to "serve the unmet needs of small farmers."

The BSP, said Mr. Tetangco, will remain persistent in finding better ways of providing access to credit to the agricultural sector as a means of meeting the food requirements of Filipinos and alleviating the quality of life of the agricultural workers. (MAFABad)

Challenges / from page 13

By the end of 2005, statistics showed that in the Southeast Asian region, there were 17.8 million clients, 10.6 million poorest, and 43 MFIs. Dr. Ganesh Thapa of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, Gaul in Rome, Italy) emphasized that beyond financial viability, sustainability also requires a clear strategic vision with governance mechanisms in place.

The discussions highlighted the success in agricultural microfinance of Thailand's Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC). BAAC's President and a SEARCA fellow Dr. Thiraphong Tangthirasunan shared that the success of agricultural microfinance in Thailand can be attributed to the establishment of a risk management committee and unit, a client-centric partnership strategy, and the philosophy of sufficiency economy.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to perfecting the agricultural microfinance industry. Thus, there is an increasing need for research in this area to provide better insights to this important agenda, which not only translates to better economics for farmers but also food security for the region and beyond. (MAFABad)

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on SIS Agriculture to bring together researchers, development practitioners, and the relevant government entities in analyzing the current body of knowledge and developing a responsive research agenda.

Other participants included: Dr. Angel Alcala, a former SU President and Head of Research, and selected SU faculty members; Dr. Rafael Guerrero III, Executive Director of the Philippine Center for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development (PCAMRD); Dr. Patricio Faylon, Executive Director of the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD); Dr. Nicomedes D. Briones, Professor at the UPLB School of Environmental Science and Management (SESAM); Dr. Felino P. Lansigan, Professor at the UPLB Institute of Statistics (INSTAT); and Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Director; Dr. Arnulfo G. Garcia, Research and Development Department (RDD) Manager; and Ms. C. Nyhria G. Rogel, RDD Project Development Specialist, all of SEARCA. (CNGRogel)

Vietnamese fellows appointed to key university posts

Seven Vietnamese fellows who are faculty members of Hanoi Agricultural University (HAU) in Hanoi, Vietnam have been appointed to key positions in the university. They all hold appointments, which started in January 2007.

The Vietnamese fellows and their new posts at HAU are:

- Dr. Nguyen Tuan Son, Associate Dean, Graduate School;
- Dr. Tran Dinh Thau and Mr. Pham Hong Ngan, both Associate Deans, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine;

- Dr. Mai Thanh Cuc, Chairman, Department of Rural Development, Faculty of Economics and Rural Development;
- Dr. Pham Van Hung, Chairman, Department of Econometrics, Faculty of Economics and Rural Development;
- Dr. Nguyen Thi Duong Nga, Vice Chairman, Department of Econometrics, Faculty of Economics and Rural Development; and,
- Ms. Tran Thi Lan Huong, Chairman, Department of Food and Nutrition, Faculty of Food Science and Technology.

As of 30 June 2007, SEARCA has 71 SEARCA fellows from Vietnam, nine of whom are faculty members of HAU. Moreover, five more HAU faculty members are ongoing SEARCA scholars. (LLDDomingo)

Two UP faculty members join SEARCA's Adjunct Fellows Program

Two faculty members of the University of the Philippines system recently joined SEARCA's Adjunct Fellows (SAF) Program.

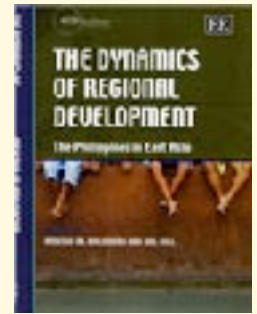
They are Dr. Melinda F. Lumanta, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration and Professor of Management and Development Studies, University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU), and Dr. Lisa Grace S. Bersales, Professor and Dean, School of Statistics, University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD).

Dr. Lumanta and Dr. Bersales, who will both serve as Adjunct Fellows for SEARCA's Training Department, are the first from their respective universities to serve under the SAF Program.

Dr. Lumanta, PhD in communication, will primarily provide technical assistance in strengthening SEARCA's endeavors in knowledge and research management in natural resource management (NRM), agriculture, biotechnology in Southeast Asia, and higher education. She will also help develop continuing education materials and distance learning endeavors.

Dr. Bersales, PhD in statistics, on the other hand, will provide technical assistance to bolster SEARCA's endeavors in the use of statistics in NRM and agricultural research in Southeast Asia. She will also help develop training materials on impact evaluation of development projects in NRM and poverty alleviation, as

SEARCA director co-authors book on regional development



The best decentralization policies to foster regional development and the mechanisms needed to boost the performance of economic devolution programs were identified in the book "The Dynamics of Regional Development: The Philippines in East Asia" published by Edward Elgar Publishing, United Kingdom. The book was edited by Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director and Professor of Economics of the University of the Philippines Diliman and Dr. Hal Hill, H.W. Arndt Professor of Southeast Asian Economies, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University. Both are also co-authors of the book.

The book examines the Philippines' regional dynamics and policies in its decentralization. By comparing the nation's experience with those of its neighbors, particularly China and Indonesia, this book aims to offer lessons and observations that are applicable not only in the country but also internationally.

"We hope that the lessons and observations here can be adapted and applied for more effective regional development and, in turn, better national development," the editors noted.

Dr. Peter Timmer of the Center of Global Development, USA, said, the book "integrates four of the 'hottest' themes in current development debates – globalization, decentralization, inequality and governance. By combining a broad East Asian perspective on these four topics with a deep analysis of the Philippines experience, the editors get the very best out of their comparative research framework. This is not your typical edited volume, with only an occasional gem amongst the filler – the entire volume really holds together. Balisacan and Hill have clearly exercised a firm analytical and editorial hand, demonstrating, as does the analysis in the book, that firm, competent central leadership is crucial for decentralization to work."

The book may be obtained from the Edward Elgar Publishing website www.e-elgar.com, and later this year, from Ateneo de Manila University Press.

well as develop and conduct relevant training courses on impact evaluation of technology/livelihood-based R&D projects. The SAF Program is aimed at providing UP staff members with opportunities for research and capacity-building initiative that advance their research

and professional interests along SEARCA's priority thrusts. SEARCA emphasizes research and capacity enhancement toward agricultural competitiveness and effective natural resource management in Southeast Asia. (NARamos)

SNAPSHOTS

Mr. Sun-bok Lee (fourth from left) of South Korea's Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Mr. Chae-moon Cho of the Korea FAO Association (in coat) visited SEARCA on 22 June 2007. With them are some SEARCA officials.



French Ambassador to the Philippines, H.E. Gerard Chesnel, visited the Center on 19 February 2007.



Agribiotech students of Tokyo University of Agriculture visited the Center on 22 February 2007 to learn more about SEARCA. The visit is part of TUA's regular study tour program for its students.

Philippine plant species named after SEARCA fellow

A Philippine plant species, *Hoya buotii* Kloppenburg, has been named in honor of Dr. Inocencio E. Buot, Jr., a SEARCA fellow, in recognition of his contributions to the conservation of Philippine biodiversity.

Dr. Buot is an associate professor at the Institute of Biological Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB). He finished his MS in Botany at



Photo by Dr. Monina Sitar, UPLB

***Hoya buotii* Kloppenburg, named after Inocencio Buot, Jr., PhD**

UPLB in 1987 under the SEARCA Graduate Scholarship.

Hoya buotii Kloppenburg was discovered in the wilderness of Mount Banahaw, Sierra Madre mountain range, Philippines. Hoya is a genus of 200–230 species of tropical climbing plants belonging to the family Apocynaceae (Gentianales, Asterids) following the Angiosperm Phylogeny Group (2003). Common names for hoyas are waxplant, waxvine, waxflower, or simply hoyas. (LLDDomingo)

Filipino teacher, Malaysian journalist win SEAMEO research, journalism awards

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization recognizes yearly distinguished nationals of Southeast Asia who do outstanding research relevant to the region and to print journalists who carry out exceptional coverage of education issues.

A Filipino teacher and a Malaysian journalist were these year's awardees. They were recognized at the 42nd SEAMEO Council Conference in Bali, Indonesia held last 13-15 March 2007.

Mr. Julito Aligaen, a secondary school teacher, received the SEAMEO-Jasper Research Award, besting 11 entries from Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. He teaches at Asuncion National High School in Davao del Norte, Philippines. His winning paper is titled "Lifelong Learning System: Learner Centered School-Field-School," a three-year interdisciplinary research project detailing the Integrated Production and Pest Management - School-Field-School whose curriculum provides Filipino rural youth the knowledge and skills that give importance to sustainable agriculture and ecology.

The SEAMEO-Jasper Research Award, which is co-sponsored by the Government of Canada, includes a 20-day visiting fellowship in Canada and another 20-day visiting fellowship in Southeast Asian countries.

On the other hand, Ms. Yap Lih Huey, a Malaysian, bagged the SEAMEO-Australia Press Award. She is an assistant editor of the



Photo by SEAMES

Mr. Julito Aligaen (right) was awarded the SEAMEO-Jasper Research Award. With him are H.E. Bambang Sudibyo, Minister of National Education, Indonesia and SEAMEO Council President (left), and Mr Dave Denine, Parliamentary Secretary, Department of Education, Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (center).

Asian News Network, an online news network of 14 newspapers in Asia based in Bangkok, Thailand. Her winning article selected from 10 entries received from Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, is titled "A Lost Generation across Asia's War Zones." It narrated the plight of Myanmar refugee children in search of education in Thailand. The article, which appeared in the Jakarta Post and the Philippine Daily

Inquirer, was cited for its engaging description of young people in need of education, one of their most basic rights, and for highlighting the power and importance of education.

The prize for the SEAMEO-Australia Press Award, which is co-sponsored by the Government of Australia, includes a three-week paid visit to Melbourne, Australia and internship with newspapers.



Photo by SEAMES

Ms. Karen Yap Lih Huey (right), accepts the plaque of recognition from Ms Susan Bennet, Branch Manager, International Cooperation Branch of the Department of Education, Science and Training, Australia (center), and H.E. Bambang Sudibyo, Minister of Education of Indonesia and SEAMEO Council President (left).

GRADUATE THESIS ABSTRACTS

Forest Land-Use Change in Ngoc Phai Commune, Cho Don District, Bac Kan Province, Vietnam (1990-2005)



Dam Viet Bac
Vietnam
University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB)

The study characterized and evaluated This study aimed to determine forest land-use change (FLUC) for the last 15 years (1990-2005) during Doi Moi (Renovation) era in Ngoc Phai Commune, Vietnam. Village surveys were conducted to gather biophysical and socioeconomic characteristics of the study site. Key informants' interviews using semi-structured questionnaires were undertaken to determine the driving forces of FLUC.

For the period 1990-1998, the total area of forest degradation was 199.31 ha, measured by the transformation from dense to open forest. Forest restoration, on the other hand, covered 108.30 ha, of which 100.01 ha of shrubs converted to open forest and 8.29 ha of open forest to dense forest.

For the period 1998-2005, forest degradation totaled 560.64 ha broken down as follows: dense forest to shrubs, 290.25 ha; dense forest to paddy field, 7.16 ha; and dense forest to grassland, 16.68 ha. Forest restoration for the same time period covered 657.91 ha (93.99 ha annually). A total area of 169.24 ha was converted from open to dense forest and 415.86 ha of shrubs to open forest and 72.71 ha to dense forest.

In unallocated areas, high rates of forest disturbance still existed due to

distance from the residential areas and difficulty in controlling wood extraction and slash-and-burn activities and cattle ranching. Agricultural expansion is a result of change in purpose of land use and cropping system in the commune. Besides, soil erosion is one of the reasons for change in land user's decision on cropping patterns. Moreover, population growth is considered as one of the contributing factors to FLUC in Ngoc Phai due to increase in food demand.

However, the forest restoration in the research site marked a great achievement. National policies, market conditions and active participation of the local people in forest enrichment and forest protection contracts played an important role in the rapid changes in forest restoration. The local people were granted better land-use rights and ensure forest resource protection. The most positive impact of the program is the reduction of the slash-and-burn activities. Forest plantations and sustainable agroforestry systems were applied and eventually resulted to increased income for the local people thereby reducing the impact to forest resources.

Community Dialogue, Collective Action, and Social Change in Community Integrated Pest Management in a Selected Village in Cambodia



Ker Monthivuth
Cambodia
UPLB

This study tried to gain an understanding about communication as a dialogic process working together with collective action to bring about social change in an integrated pest management (IPM) community in a selected village of Cambodia. Two groups of farmers were interviewed using structured questionnaires: 15 IPM Club members and 28 non-IPM Club

members selected using convenience sampling. Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed using theme analysis and descriptive statistics.

The processes of community dialogue and collective action in the institutionalization of IPM FFS included: (a) recognition of the problems; (b) identification and involvement of leaders; (c) clarification of perception; (d) vision and objective; (d) assessment of current status; (e) options for action, consensus on actions, and action plans; (f) assignment of responsibilities; (g) mobilization of organizations; and (h) implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

The IPM FFS empowered the farmers to effectively carry out community dialogue and collective action, thus enhancing outcome indicators of social change in terms of leadership competency, information equity, collective self-efficacy, sense of ownership, social cohesion, and social norms. Improving knowledge, attitude, perception, and practice, as well as enhancing human and social capital, can enhance mutual understanding and perceptual convergence leading to collectivism, which is the prerequisite for successful pest management and IPM institutionalization at the community level.

Alcohol Dehydrogenase Activity of *Cyperus rotundus* L. under Upland and Lowland Conditions



Jennifer T. Peña
Filipino
UPLB

Differences in morphology and biochemistry between upland and lowland *Cyperus rotundus* L. were investigated. The lowland ecotype was observed to develop longer and bigger

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root hairs, as well as greater tuber biomass. The bulk of carbohydrate reserve in the lowland tuber was in the form of soluble sugar, while that in the upland tuber was in the form of starch.

Alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH) activity was detected in the roots of both ecotypes upon germination in their respective habitats. Induction in enzyme activity was observed in both ecotypes after 24-hour hypoxia amounting to as much as 46.29-fold and 14.33-fold in upland and lowland ecotype, respectively. When hypoxia was prolonged to 48 hours, the upland nutsedge manifested a continuous rise in ADH activity, whereas, down-regulation was exhibited by the lowland counterpart.

Increases in soluble sugar were observed in the upland tuber during hypoxia, implying reduced utilization. Conversely, decreases in soluble sugar were evident in the lowland tuber upon germination and during hypoxia, the fold decrease being higher in the latter. Modulation in sugar utilization was manifested by the lowland tuber during prolonged hypoxia (48-hours) as a strategy to prevent early depletion of its carbohydrate store.

Starch metabolism was virtually passive in the upland tuber. On the other hand, increases in starch level were observed in the lowland tuber upon germination and during hypoxia, possibly because of reduced utilization during conditions of low oxygen availability.

It appeared that the tolerance of lowland *Cyperus rotundus* to hypoxia stems from its capacity to accumulate large amounts of soluble sugar, coupled with its remarkable ability to slow down its fermentation rate during prolonged hypoxia. It did so by down-regulation of its ADH activity and by exercising prudence in the release of its stored carbohydrate. Such concerted efforts ensured sustainability of substrate supply in the long run to avoid starvation that might otherwise lead to injury and eventual death of the plant.

SEARCA fellow to spearhead Trust Fund Mobilization for SEARCA Program

Mr. Thiraphong Tangthirasunan, a Thai SEARCA fellow and currently President of Thailand's Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC), has agreed to initiate the establishment of a Trust Fund that will provide sustainable and continuous funding for selected SEARCA activities. This was one of the major discussion points that arose during the visit to BAAC on 21 March 2007 by Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Director, and Dr. Arnulfo G. Garcia, Manager, Research and

Development Department, both of SEARCA.

Mr. Thiraphong said the Trust Fund may be primarily funded through contributions from the more than 1,000 SEARCA fellows. He views this initiative as an opportunity for SEARCA fellows to "payback" the Center after benefiting from the SEARCA scholarship program. Details of this proposal will be threshed out during the Fellows' international conference cum homecoming to be held in the Philippines in 2008.



Mr. Thiraphong (second from left) shows a sample product of BAAC's farm clients to Dr. Balisacan and Dr. Garcia.

DAAD offers small equipment grants to fellows

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) offers grants for the purchase of small equipment to recently graduated SEAMEO-DAAD fellows from developing countries who are conducting scientific projects at their home institutions upon their return home. Each grant is up to a maximum of 1,500 Euro (inclusive of tax), with expenses for transport and customs to be borne by the fellows.

To qualify for the grant, applicants must submit the following: 1) a description of the scientific project;

2) reasons for the necessity and importance of the small equipment and its intended use; 3) declaration of the applicant that he/she is able to carry out scientific research at the home institution and that the small equipment is needed for this purpose; 4) letter of acceptance of the home institution regarding the feasibility or achievability of the project; and 5) two valid quotations for the small equipment from different companies.

Applications must be sent within 12 months after the fellow's final examination and coursed through SEARCA's Graduate Scholarship Department for screening and endorsement to the designated DAAD Regional Office. Inquiries about the grant may be sent via email to gsd@agri.searca.org. (LLDDomingo)

GRADUATE EDUCATION

SEARCA awards 44 new graduate scholarships

SEARCA has awarded graduate scholarships for academic year 2007/2008 to 44 nationals of Cambodia (5), Indonesia (6), Lao PDR (5), Malaysian (1), Myanmar (5), the Philippines (8), Thailand (3), Timor-Leste (5), and Vietnam (6).

Of the total number of new SEARCA scholars, 35 will pursue their graduate studies at University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), while four will study at Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) in Indonesia. On the other hand, the University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD), University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV), Kasetsart University (KU) in Thailand, Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB) in Indonesia, and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) will each host one new SEARCA scholar.

Scholars at UPLB

The new SEARCA scholars who will pursue their graduate studies at UPLB are:

Cambodians:

- Mr. Pheak Sothea and Ms. An Ny, both PhD in Community Development. Mr. Sothea is Lecturer at the Royal University of Agriculture (RUA), while Ms. Ny is Social Services Coordinator at the Centro Italiano Aiuti all'Infanzia in Phnom Penh.
- Mr. Duk Deyha, PhD in Food Science and Technology. He is Lecturer at RUA;
- Mr. Nov Vatthanak, Master of Public Affairs in Local Governance and Development. He is Executive Assistant to the Deputy General Director of the Ministry of Rural Development;
- Mr. Pheak Thearith, MS in Development Communication. He serves as an official staff at the Council of Ministers of the Government of Cambodia;

Indonesians:

- Ms. Sasanti Widiarsih, MS in Plant

Breeding. She is Researcher at the Center for Application of Isotopes and Radiation Technology (PATIR-BATAN), National Nuclear Energy Agency;

- Mr. Yayan Sanjaya, PhD in Entomology. He is Lecturer and Researcher at the Indonesian University of Education;
- Mr. Panji Deoranto and Mr. Agus Setiadi, MS in Agricultural Economics. Mr. Deoranto is Lecturer at Brawijaya University, while Mr. Setiadi is Lecturer at the Faculty of Animal Agriculture at Diponegoro University;
- Ms. RR Devita Anggraeni, PhD in Veterinary Medicine. She is Lecturer, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Universitas Gadjah Mada;

Laotians:

- Mr. Outhai Soukky, PhD in Agronomy. He is Head of Educational and Technical Division at Luangprabang Agriculture and Forestry College;
- Mr. Linglong Sithixay, MS in Agricultural Economics. He is Technical Officer at the Department of Agriculture, Planning Division, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry;
- Mr. Keopeth Phoumphon, MS in Environmental Science. He is Lecturer at the Irrigation Engineering Department, Faculty of Engineering, National University of Laos;
- Mr. Vanthieng Phommasoulin, MS in Horticulture. He is Technical Officer at the Agricultural Technical Division, Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry;

Myanmar:

- Mr. Myat Thu and Ms. Aye Aye Myint, both PhD in Entomology. Mr. Myat is Assistant Manager at the Myanmar Perennial Crops Enterprise, while Ms. Aye Aye is Assistant Lecturer at the Department of Entomology and Zoology, Yezin Agricultural University;
- Mr. Kyaw Wai Naing, MS in Horticulture. He is Assistant Supervisor at the Vegetable and Fruit Research and Development Centre of the Myanmar Agricultural Service;

- Ms. Khin San Nwe, PhD in Agronomy. She is Senior Research Assistant at the Department of Agricultural Research in Yezin;
- Ms. Thanda Tin, MS in Plant Breeding. She is Assistant Supervisor at the Plant Biotechnology Laboratory of the Myanmar Agricultural Service;

Filipinos:

- Mr. Eduardo F. Roquiño, MS in Agricultural Economics. He is Instructor 1 at the University of the Philippines Visayas-Tacloban College.
- Ms. Mary Ann U. Baradi, PhD in Agricultural Engineering. She is Senior Science Research Specialist, Philippine Rice Research Institute-Batac Experiment Station;
- Mr. Robert A. Rodolfo, PhD in Forestry. He is Instructor 1 at Kalinga Apayao State College;
- Mr. Florante Victor M. Balatico, PhD in Agricultural Economics. He is Assistant Professor at Cagayan State University;
- Mr. Artemio A. Martin, Jr., MS in Soil Science. He is Instructor 1, Isabela State University;
- Mr. Jay Ronel V. Conejos, MS in Animal Science. He is Instructor 2, Animal and Dairy Sciences Cluster, College of Agriculture, UPLB;
- Mr. Charlie Batin, MS in Forestry. He is Science Research Assistant at Mariano Marcos State University;

Thais:

- Ms. Supranee Sritumboon, PhD in Soil Science. She is Agronomist at the Land Development Department, Region 5 Office in Khon Kaen;
- Ms. Suwisar Ketin, MS in Agricultural Economics. She is Subject Matter Specialist at the Department of Agricultural Extension-Rayong Province Office;
- Ms. Prapitpan Anupunt, PhD in Community Development. She is Subject Matter Specialist at the Department of Agricultural Extension-Bangkok Office;

Timorese:

- Mr. Agostinho da Costa Ximenes, MS in Agronomy. He is Research Assistant

SEARCA awards/ to page 21

at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries;

Vietnamese:

- Ms. Ngo Thi Thanh Truc, PhD in Environmental Science. She is Lecturer at the School of Economics and Business Administration at Can Tho University;
- Mr. Nguyen Duc Tung, MS in Entomology. He is Lecturer and Researcher at the Entomology Department, Hanoi Agricultural University (HAU);
- Mr. Do Truong Lam, MS in Agricultural Economics. He is Lecturer at the Faculty of Economics and Rural Development, HAU;
- Mr. Nguyen Thanh Son, PhD in Environmental Science. He is Lecturer at An Giang University; and
- Mr. Ho Viet The, MS in Plant Breeding. He is Lecturer at Nong Lam University.

Five of the 35 new scholars who will pursue their graduate programs at UPLB were awarded SEARCA scholarships to pursue the two-month Summer Program for Economics, undertaken from April to May 2007, which is an admission pre-requisite to the MS in Agricultural

Economics program at UPLB. Those granted the two-month scholarship were Mr. Deoranto, Mr. Setiadi, Mr. Sithixay, Mr. Roquiño, and Ms. Suwisar.

Scholars in Other Study Posts

Meanwhile, the four new scholars who will pursue their MS programs at UGM, who are all Timorese, are as follows:

- Mr. Alipio De Almeida, MS in Veterinary Medicine. He is Lecturer and Head of Agriculture Laboratory, Faculty of Agriculture, National University of Timor-Leste (NUTL);
- Mr. Gil da Conceicao, MS in Agricultural Economics. He is also Lecturer at the Faculty of Agriculture, NUTL;
- Mr. Dedisio Jose Lay Ximenes, MS in Soil Science. He is a staff at Healthnet International-TPO; and
- Mr. Julio Vicente, MS in Livestock Science. He is a Agricultural High School Teacher, Curluli Senior High School under the Research and Extension Center, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries;

The other scholars who will each pursue their graduate programs in a different study post are:

- Ms. Maria Ulfar Muchtar Christianty, Indonesian, MS in Agro-Industrial

Technology at IPB. She is Chief of Research, Organization of Small-scale Farming Empowerment;

- Mr. Somsanong Liththamalay, Laotian, MS in Agricultural Extension at KU. He is Technician at the Rice Seed Multiplication Center of the National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Services, Lao PDR ;
- Ms. Leng Min See, Malaysian, MS in Animal Genetics at UPM;
- Mr. Francis Fletcher M. Freire, Filipino, PhD in Marine Biology at UPD. He is Assistant Professor 1 at the College of Arts and Sciences, University of Southeastern Philippines; and
- Ms. Hoang Hai Thanh, Vietnamese, MS in Aquaculture at UPV. She is Lecturer at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.

Of the 44 new scholars, nine are initially supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), while the rest are funded by SEARCA.

The new scholarship grants bring to 1,196 the total number of graduate scholarships that SEARCA has awarded to nationals of the 11 SEAMEO member countries, including Timor-Leste. To date, SEARCA has 112 scholars whose graduate programs are ongoing, including the new scholars. (LLDDomingo)

SEARCA has six new PhD research scholars

SEARCA has awarded PhD research scholarships to six Southeast Asians: Indonesian (1), Filipinos (4), and Thai (1) to enable them to conduct their doctoral dissertation and complete their doctoral degrees on topics focused on any of SEARCA's priority thrusts under the broad themes of promotion of agricultural competitiveness and natural resource management.

Ms. PK Dewi Hayati, Indonesian, is pursuing her PhD in Genetics and Plant Breeding at Universiti Putra Malaysia. Her research is titled "Genetic Studies of Acid Soil Tolerance in Maize (*Zea mays* L.)." Ms. Hayati is Lecturer at the Faculty

of Agriculture, Universitas Andalas, Indonesia.

The Filipinos pursuing their PhD at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) and University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD), and their fields of study, research topics, and home institutions are:

- Mr. Tito M. Cabili, PhD in Environmental Science at UPLB on the topic "Small Island Ecosystem Productivity and Livelihood Strategies in Capul, Northern Samar, Philippines." He is Assistant Professor II at the College of Education, University of Eastern Philippines;
- Ms. Beatriz C. Jadina, PhD in Soil Science at UPLB on the topic "GIS-Aided Biophysical Characterization of a Landscape in Relation to Landslide Occurrences." She is Assistant

Professor IV at the Department of Agronomy and Soil Science, Leyte State University, Philippines;

- Ms. Aurora S. Jose, PhD in Community Development at UPLB on the topic "Assessment of Community Vulnerability to Environmental Changes in Caliraya Watershed, Laguna, Philippines." She is Planning Officer III at the Planning and Management Information Unit, Environmental Research and Development Bureau, Philippines; and
- Ms. Rosemarie G. Edillon, PhD in Economics at UPD on the topic "Demystifying Social Capital." She is Vice President and Executive Director of the Asia-Pacific Policy Center based in the Philippines.

hunger

- Science and technology policies and institutions
- Making international and domestic markets work for the poor
- Rural institutions and their governance
- Improved research and development options to reduce rural poverty and vulnerability.

The five priority areas, in addition to reflecting a comprehensive approach to poverty alleviation, have an explicit focus on income generation among the poor and an additional emphasis on market research.

The CGIAR also carries out cross-cutting research on particular topics or regions through Systemwide programs, challenge programs, etc. To the CGIAR, capacity-building of partners, reflecting its partnership approach, is a key activity to meet its overall goals. The challenge, however, is for the CGIAR's partners in the national agricultural research systems to increase their respective capacity for resource allocation.

Implementing the priority research will require that the CGIAR augment its role as catalyst, integrator, and disseminator of knowledge in the overall global agricultural research system. These roles help build common frameworks for all players to conduct research in the most cooperative and efficient manner. ■

Challenges in Development Efforts: UNCAPSA Perspective

Dr. Taco Bottema
Director

United Nations Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Secondary Crops' Development in Asia and the Pacific

It is well known that the UN system has made a gallant attempt to streamline and unify development goals worldwide. This drive has resulted in the millennium goals of which there are eight.

The impact and meaning of agriculture and agricultural research is largely captured under the first of the UN Millennium Goals (MDGs) "Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger". The target is to halve, before 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US\$1 a day.

It is important to note, though, that the impacts of income, food, nutrition, and food security cut across all MDGs relating to health, diseases, mortality, and education. After all, if people are hungry, they cannot be expected to succeed in anything.

The United Nations Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Secondary Crops' Development in Asia and the Pacific (UNCAPSA) seeks to contribute to the first of the millennium goals and focuses on the alleviation of poverty. The choice of secondary crops (crops grown after rice, or non- rice food and feed crops) as the avenue of impact is very appropriate because in Asia, poverty is centered in the rural areas. It may be observed that in its previous incarnation as the Regional Coordination Centre for Research and Development of Coarse Grains, Pulses, Roots and Tuber Crops in the Humid Tropics of Asia and the Pacific (CGPRT) Centre, UNCAPSA focused on improved income through the avenue of the CGPRT crops.

It would be a simplification to say that the change in goal and mandate is cosmetic. The alleviation of poverty in rural areas has many more sides to it than just the improvement of income through the cultivation of crops. Also, there are many agencies dealing with the alleviation of poverty in general, and in rural areas.

Framing goals within the context of the MDGs make sense because donors tend to believe in them since they unify all efforts. One of the functions of the MDGs is to generate renewed political interests in development questions that besiege everybody. I think they have succeeded, up to now, not in the least because they include forward-looking targets. In our joint field of agriculture, we have the chance to overcome the spectre of donor fatigue, which slowly broke the loyal decades-long support to agriculture in the 1990s.

Nevertheless it is, also in retrospect, very difficult to understand why the Washington consensus led to the neglect of the role of agriculture and agricultural research. Maybe the perception of agriculture by international organizations is swinging back again to a proper recognition of its role in development.

It is very important in the coming decade that agriculturists seek to create realistic expectations from the donor community, as well as, in the targeted areas regarding their efforts because if we succeed in doing this, donor interest – and far more importantly, government interest - is likely to become more stable.

In the past, agriculturists may have overstated and overestimated the impact of agriculture investment because of the early and large contributions of the green revolution to development, especially in Asia. Also, the need for continuous support may not always have been clear to donors.

If we now turn toward the future, in the coming decade, agriculture research will have to address a large number of issues. There is no need to re-emphasize the importance of genetically modified varieties, the quest for environment responsible technology, pest and disease control, and, more in general, to the continuing need for improved technology. There is the very important, new and dynamic sub-sector of biofuel, which has some potential to expand income in poor areas.

One thing has become even clearer in recent years than was already known, the continuing downward pressure on prices. This pressure, in my view, can be expected to continue also for the high value crops and products. The niche markets of yesterday are commodity markets of tomorrow. There are many implications for certification systems, trade and so on.

The recent doubling of energy prices has once more woken us up to the persistent

importance of risks and uncertainty in the region, and of course, to the new opportunities in biofuel, through ethanol, oils and bio-gas.

One of the most important characteristics of agriculture is that it is on-the-ground business; it is location specific. This means that even though technologies may be defined at the central level, the test of reality is always location specific. This means that agriculture effort and local technology assessment will continue to be vital to increase productivity.

In this connection especially in Asia, the current process of decentralization is of vital importance. The nexus of development lies now almost entirely in the folds of local governments, district governments, etc., most of which have little or no capacity. These are among our target groups in the coming 5-10 years. This sort of work needs to be done through partnerships. There are a lot of non-government organizations (NGOs) now. In India alone, they number around 500,000. To find out which NGOs are really reliable is not an easy job. Regional, local, and national governance will be of increasing importance in the coming years. In many marginal and isolated areas, especially in forested areas, governance is said to be of low quality, because of lack of resources and capacity.

Looking at the future, it is very important to recognize that the demographic structure of the population in virtually all countries in Asia and the Pacific has gone through structural change, while the economies of the less developed countries have not yet completed a process of modernization. The fact of the matter is that throughout Asia, the rural populations are aging rapidly and that this will result in a long-term reduction of available rural labor. It will be important to study the structural effects of this change. There will be many, but not all negative.

At the same time, the economies in developing countries of Asia and the Pacific are coping with a huge unemployment and under-employment problem, the magnitude of which is almost impossible to address in a rational manner. While poverty is still dominant in rural areas in Asia at present, it seems likely that urban poverty may increase in the coming years, unless solutions can be found for employment. CAPSA will be looking at long-term dynamics in rural poverty by using panel data in conjunction with life- and family histories

Let us not forget the wise words of Don Paarlberg who said, "Hunger is a 100-year-old problem, tackled with five-year development plans, three-year projects, and one-year budget allocations." If there is one lesson that I feel we all should have learned, it is the need for persistence and continuity in improving agriculture and the alleviation of rural poverty. ■

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Ms. Witchuda Srang-iam, Thai, is pursuing her PhD in Natural Resources Management at the University of Michigan, USA. Her research is on "Biodiversity Knowledge and the Management of Rice Diversity in Thailand: Toward the Interplay of Material and Cultural Knowledge." Ms. Srang-iam is Architect at the Design Division, Land Reform Area Development Bureau, Agricultural Land Reform Office, Thailand.

Meanwhile, two PhD research scholars have completed their dissertation and graduated from UPLB in the second semester of school year 2006/2007, both with a doctoral degree in Agricultural Economics. They are Ms. Marilou P. Lucas, Assistant Professor II at Mariano Marcos State University, Batac, Ilocos Norte, Philippines and Ms. Norma U. Gomez, Assistant Professor IV at University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato, Philippines.

Ms. Lucas' dissertation is "Economic Assessment of Risks Associated with

other collaborating organizations for this forum were Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Regional Open Learning Center (SEAMOLEC), Southeast Asian Regional Center for Tropical Biology (BIOTROP), Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), and the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB).

The resource persons for the executive forum included:

- Dr. Percy E. Sajise, Regional Director of the Regional Office for Asia, the Pacific and Oceania – Bioversity International;
- Dr. Doris Capistrano, Director of the Forests and Governance of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR);
- Dr. Ma. Victoria O. Espaldon, Dean of the University of the Philippines Los Baños, School of Environmental Science and Management (UPLB SESAM);
- Dr. Nicomedes Briones, Professor, UPLB SESAM
- Dr. Parikesit, Lecturer, Institute of Ecology, University of Padjajaran, Indonesia; and,
- Dr. Asa Jose U. Sajise, Senior Lecturer of Economics, College of Economics and Management, UPLB

(MAFABad)

Different Rice-based Cropping Patterns in Northwest Luzon, Philippines. Ms. Gomez's dissertation is titled "Economics of Groundwater Use for Irrigated Rice in Selected Municipalities of Pulangi River Basin."

Ms. Lucas and Ms. Gomez are the first SEARCA PhD research scholars to obtain their doctoral degrees. (LLDDomingo)

Short-term Training

2nd Executive Forum on NRM focuses on sustainability issues



The participants and resource persons of the Second Executive Forum on NRM.

The second offering of the Regional Forum for Executives: Natural Resource Management (NRM) in a Globalizing Asia was held on 4-8 June 2007 in Jakarta, Indonesia. It was participated in by NRM leaders and decision-makers in the region. It focused on enhancing the region's capacity to develop and implement policies and programs in NRM research and development and academics.

The executive forum covered topics on the millennium development goals and NRM in Asia; current status and trends in NRM; environmental governance; conflict management in NRM;

environmental and resource valuation; environmental leadership; and participatory action and research planning.

The Regional Forum for Executives series aims to craft environmental sustainability consciousness among policymakers in the Southeast Asian milieu. It is designed as a learning forum for executives to gain better understanding on the status of natural resource in the region and the role of NRM versus the

demands of globalization.

The second forum featured a field trip to Ciliwung River Basin in West Java, to showcase some working models of NRM strategies/systems that are employed and understand the enabling sociopolitical and economic environment for such systems. Ciliwung River Basin is a conservation area, cultivation area, farmland, settlement area and industries area. It is also a source of clean water, irrigation and drainage (flood control). The participants' culminating workshop involved NRM Research, Action and Policy Planning. They drafted their group resolution and action plan afterwards.

The second forum, organized by SEARCA and Regional Office for Asia, Pacific, and Oceania - Bioversity International, addressed the need to preserve the sustainability of Southeast Asia's natural resources, while meeting the demands of its growing population. Aside from SEARCA and Bioversity International, the

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The SEARCA Diary

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The forum participants go to the Ciliwung River Basin in West Java to visit a mosque site, tea garden, and Megamendung farmer, during their field trip.