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THE FRUITS OF DIVERSITY

Regional cooperation means greater reach, accomplishes more...
More minds contribute to a wider knowledge base...
There is strength in synergy and great growth in diversity.

Vietnamese government hosts SEARCA's 54th Governing Board Meeting

The 54th meeting of SEARCA's Governing Board (GB) was hosted by the Vietnamese Government, through its Ministry of Education and Training and Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, in the scenic coastal town in northern Vietnam renowned for the thousands of limestone formation that dot Halong Bay.

The SEARCA GB, the Center's highest policymaking body, is composed of one representative each of the member-countries of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), the Director of SEAMEO Secretariat, and the SEARCA Director. Usually, it meets once a year to assess the progress of SEARCA. It is presently chaired by the representative of Thailand, currently in the person of Mr. Veerasak Wongsombut, Secretary-General of the Vocational Education Commission.

All the SEARCA GB members were present in the 54th Meeting, except for the representative of Cambodia. Moreover, Timor Leste, the newest SEAMEO member, is still to name its representatives to the GBs of the various SEAMEO

...SEARCA's 54th GBM / to page 8

WHAT'S INSIDE

SEA policymakers attend study tour on biosafety in South Korea

Nine policymakers from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV) participated in the *"Study Tour on Biosafety for SEAMEO Member Countries"* conducted on 18-24 August 2009 at the Rural Development Administration (RDA) in Suwon, Republic of Korea.

The study tour was co-organized by the Korea FAO Association, RDA, and SEARCA. The Korea FAO Association funded the activity.

Designed for policymakers and decision-makers in CLMV, the study program was aimed at orienting the participants on biosafety principles and concepts and how the Republic of Korea practices them. It provided meaningful learning opportunities and practical knowledge in firming up biosafety framework and regulations.

Participants are shown the proper way to sanitize hands before handling agricultural produce during their visit to the National Horticultural Research Institute (NHRI) in Korea.

The study tour program had 12 lectures, with most of the resource persons coming from the various institutions under the RDA. They discussed the World Trade Organization, food security, genetically modified organisms/ living modified organisms (GMOs/LMOs), quality evaluation for agricultural products, environmental risk assessment of GMOs, and traceability system in Korea, among others. The study tour included several institutional and field visits that exposed the participants to Korean culture.

Participants learned that the Republic of Korea develops GMOs only for research and risk assessment but does not grow GM crops in open fields and in large-scale. Examples of these crops are rice, Chinese cabbage, peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, and grass for golf courses. To raise the public's awareness on GMOs, the Korean government adopts information, education, and communication campaigns. One of these is the establishment of the Korea Biosafety Clearinghouse (KBCH), which is being supported by the Ministry of Knowledge and Economy.

The KBCH's main work is to collect information on GMOs/LMOs from relevant institutions and raise public awareness on their pros and cons. Since Korea has a highly developed Information Technology society, the KBCH maintains a website where the public can post or raise their concerns for discussions.

Korea uses two systems that assure the quality of fruits and vegetables during growing, harvesting, postharvest handling, and fresh-cut processing, namely: Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP).

Toward the end of the study tour program, participants presented country situationers/reports on biosafety in their respective countries. They also developed action plans based on the lessons learned and insights they gained in the study tour as found relevant in their respective contexts. (NARamos)

International conference discusses agriculture and Asia's economic renaissance

The increase in food and fuel prices has made agriculture take center stage in public policy once again. Worldwide attention is focused on agriculture as issues of food security and poverty reduction continue to hound developing countries, especially in Asia, which is home to two-thirds of the world's poor.

"Recent global developments and concerns such as climate change, energy crisis, biofuels development, the "gene revolution," and increasing regional integration and globalization form the backdrop for the conference," Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Conference Chair and SEARCA Director, said. Occasion was the opening program of the Sixth International Conference of the Asian Society of Agricultural Economists (ASAE) with the theme "Asian Economic Renaissance: What's in It for Agriculture?"

"While the relative importance of agriculture in national income and employment has declined sharply in the past 20 years for most of the developing countries in the region, poverty remains largely a rural phenomenon. Fostering growth in agriculture is thus key to lifting rural inhabitants out of poverty," stressed Dr. Balisacan.

The conference held on 28-20 August 2008 at the Asian Institute of Management Conference Center, Makati City, Philippines, featured plenary and parallel sessions on the following: rural poverty, food supply and demand, trade, biofuels, agricultural biotechnology, climate change and agriculture, information and communication technology, global food chains, agrarian systems in Asia, and a special session on Philippine agriculture.

The Productivity Growth in Philippine Agriculture (PGPA) project – a collaboration among SEARCA, Philippine Rice Research Institute and Philippine Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Agricultural Research – was featured in a parallel session wherein two research studies of the ongoing project were presented and discussed.

International conference / to page 3

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International conference / from page 2

Dr. Leonardo Lanzona Jr., Professor at the Department of Economics at the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines presented "Human Capital, Economic and Total Factor Productivity Growth in the Agriculture Sector", where he discussed the effects of households' investment decisions in education, as a component of human capital, to agricultural total factor productivity. Dr. Lanzona's paper seeks to determine how agricultural growth can be better explained by including education in growth models, recognizing that labor in different agricultural activities may be qualified by varying levels of education.

Dr. Agnes Rola, Dean of the College of Public Affairs at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) presented "Can Soil Conservation Practices Improve Upland Corn Productivity? An Analysis of Long Term Trends in Southern Philippines", which focuses on the effect of soil erosion, the most prominent externality of upland corn production, on agricultural productivity. A two-stage econometric analysis will be conducted; using data on plot level input-output data, soil conservation practices of farmers as well as data on agricultural economy of the upland village. Dr. Asa Jose U. Sajise, Ms. Dieldre S. Harder, and Mr. Joe Marvin Alpuerto are also part of Dr. Rola's research team.

Dr. Roehlano M. Briones, the Project Manager, served as the session chair while Dr. Michael M. Alba, Technical Adviser, served as the discussant.

The PGPA project aims to determine the nature, sources and causes of agricultural productivity, and to identify policy levers that can increase the productivity growth for the sector. It was launched on March 2007 and will end in 2010.

Some of the plenary presenters were as follows:

- Professor Peter Timmer (Stanford University and Center for Global Development, US), "International Best Practice in Food Policy"
- Professor Keijiro Otsuka (Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development, Japan, and Former Chair of the IRRI Board of Trustees), "Agricultural Growth and Poverty Reduction in Rural Areas of Asia"
- Dr. Mark Rosegrant (International Food Policy Research Institute), "Climate Change and Asian Agriculture"
- Dr. Prabhu Pingali (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), "The Green Revolution Forty Years Later: Lessons Learned and Unfinished Business"
- Professor James Roumasset (University of Hawaii), "Rethinking Agricultural Development: New Challenges and Issues in Rural Poverty Reduction"
- Professor Jikun Huang (Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy, Beijing), "Prospects of Chinese Agriculture and the Implications of the Chinese Economic Miracle to Asian Agriculture"
- Dr. Shabd Acharya (Institute of Development Studies, India), "Indian Agriculture and Food Security: Current Concerns and Lessons"

H.E. Arthur C. Yap, Philippine Secretary of Agriculture, encouraged all sectors, including agricultural economists and policy makers, to unite "to effectively address and surmount said global dilemma, primarily to cushion the adverse impacts on our respective economy and countrymen, particularly the poor and marginal among us."

During the conference, Dr. Balisacan was named President-Elect of ASAE. His term as President commences in 2011. He is the first Filipino to be so elected.

Established in 1991, ASAE is an association of agricultural economists and other professionals with special interest on agricultural economic issues and affairs. The ASAE secretariat is hosted by the Korea Rural Economic Institute based Seoul, Korea. Every three years, ASAE conducts an International Conference participated in by agricultural economists, development practitioners, policymakers, academicians, researchers, and students from all over the world. Since the first conference in 1993, ASAE has organized several activities and five conferences. The first conference was held in Seoul (1993), the second in Indonesia (1996), then India (2000), Malaysia (2002), and Iran (2005).

The Sixth ASAE International Conference was organized by ASAE, in collaboration with SEARCA and the Philippine Agricultural Economics and Development Association (PAEDA). It was supported by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, World Bank, The Asia Foundation, Central Bank of the Philippines, Bureau of Agricultural Research of the Philippine Department of Agriculture, Philippine Agricultural Credit Policy Council, Philippine Rice Research Institute, Wiley-Blackwell, SL Agritech Corporation, Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development, and Agricultural Economics Society of Japan. More than 300 participants attended the event. (MAFAbad, with reports on PGPA from PMVCasal)

Some of the participants, resource speakers, and organizers of the Sixth Asian Society of Agricultural Economists Conference.

Improved *Abaca* cultivar developed

Longer, stronger, and sturdier. These are the characteristics of the fiber of the abaca (*Musa textilis* Nee) cultivar that Dr. Antonio G. Lalusin and his team led by Dr. Evelyn Mae T. Mendoza sought to develop.

A healthy abaca plant.

Abaca plant infected with the bunchy-top virus.

Photos courtesy of Dr. Antonio G. Lalusin

Dr. Lalusin, a Researcher at the Feeds and Industrial Crops Section, Institute of Plant Breeding (IPB), University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), presented the results of his team's research on the development of molecular markers in abaca for utilization in breeding for high fiber quality in virus-resistant cultivars at SEARCA's Agriculture and Development Seminar Series (ADSS) on 30 September 2008. The Department of Agriculture-Biotechnology Program Office (DA-BPO) funded the research, in collaboration with the Fiber Industry Development Authority (FIDA).

Abaca, a plant endemic to the Philippines, is a source of fiber internationally known as "Manila hemp." The fiber is extracted from the sheaths, the bottom part of the leaves that form the pseudo-stem.

Abaca is an important export crop and is a major dollar earner for the Philippines. The abaca industry continues to make a stronghold in both international and domestic markets, generating US$80 million annually from 1996 to 2000. In fact, the Philippines supplies 85 percent of abaca in the world market. As of 2008, abaca is cultivated in about 140,000 hectares in 52 provinces in the country.

The abaca fiber is versatile. It is made into ropes. It can also be handcrafted into bags, hats, decorative accessories, furniture, textiles, and papers. With the advent of modern technology, abaca is now used for the interiors of automobiles or as substitute for fiberglass. In the US, abaca enzymes are being used for cosmetics and other skin care products. It is environment friendly as it is biodegradable.

The biggest threat to the abaca industry, however, are deadly pests like Bracht mosaic, mosaic, and bunchy top. An abaca with bunchy top virus stops growing, producing no fiber.

The UPLB IPB research team noted that in the absence of new and improved varieties, the Philippine abaca industry relies solely on traditional ones. Varietal improvement gets limited attention, which is one of the reasons behind the decline in the abaca industry.

At UPLB, the abaca varietal improvement program started in the early 1950s, initiated by the UP College of Agriculture (UPCA) and the Bureau of Plant Industry. At the time, the emphasis was on varietal collection, classification, evaluation, establishment of disease observation nurseries, clonal selection, and intra- and inter-specific hybridization. Work centered on developing resistant abaca varieties. In the 1980s, IPB started the abaca breeding program. Several crosses were made and in 1986, the first six F1 hybrid between *Pacol* (an active variety of banana) and abaca were released. These hybrids have bunchy top virus resistance but with poor fiber quality. Since then, experimentation has continued. Now, BC2 populations are being evaluated for bunchy top virus resistance and fiber qualities.

The first batch of the IPB team's experiment used conventional breeding, assisted by molecular markers of the plant. "Determining molecular markers is similar to that of fingerprint matching. It is used to identify a particular genetic sequence," said Dr. Lalusin.

Dr. Lalusin's team succeeded in producing a bunchy top virus-resistant abaca strain. They now have abaca plants that contain almost 87.5 percent of abaca gene. The hybrids are not only resistant to the bunchy top virus but also have good fiber qualities and yield. Dr. Lalusin says six outstanding selections of the hybrids now exist. (NARamos)

Myanmar hosts technical workshop on biofuels

Participants of the technical workshop on biofuels held in Bagan, Myanmar on 29-30 September 2009.

SEARCA, Korea FAO Association, and the Myanmar Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation-Department of Agricultural Planning (MOAI-DAP) organized a technical workshop, with the theme "Towards a Balanced Food, Feed, Fuel Strategy," in Bagan, Myanmar on 29-30 September 2008. The workshop is an offshoot of the fifth policy roundtable titled "Biofuels Development: Challenges and Implications to Food Security in Transition Southeast Asia," also held in Myanmar earlier in April 2008.

The fifth policy roundtable emerged with a clear consensus on the need for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders to gain an understanding and appreciation of underlying implications of biofuels development to food security and sustainable use of resources. It recognized the imperative to 'get the balance right' in responding to rapid rise in energy price. Doing so requires formulation and application of a holistic analytical framework to inform policy and program choices.

The technical workshop discussed major elements of a balanced food, feed, and fuel strategy and explored applications to specific country situations. Specifically, it sought to: 1) engage participants in the evolution of an overall analytical framework for examining biofuels development options; 2) equip participants with workable tools to help them examine specific country plans or scenarios with regard to biofuels development; and 3) enable participants to undergo exercises on the application of tools

Local SEARCA BIC partners updated on biotech projects

Potential partners for the multi-location confined trial sites of papaya ring-spot virus-resistant (PRSV-R) biotech papaya and fruit-and-shoot borer virus-resistant eggplant (Bt eggplant) participated in a series of familiarization activities aimed to enhance their knowledge on these crop biotech products. The event was held on 29-30 July 2008 at Laguna, Philippines.

The participants were briefed by the research leaders from University of the Philippines-Institute of Plant Breeding (UPLB-IPB) on recent developments and activities regarding the two biotechnology projects. They also visited the biotech papaya site in Bay, Laguna.

A biosafety orientation was also conducted to discuss biosafety framework and regulations in the Philippines and the food and environmental safety aspects of biotech papaya and eggplant. The participants also provided their comments and suggestions to improve the draft 'Question and Answer (Q&A)' fact-sheets for the Information Resource Kit of Biotech Papaya and Eggplant.

The event had 39 participants from the academe, local government units, Philippine government research and development organizations, private sector, and development organizations.

The activities were co-organized by SEARCA BIC with Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD), the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), and the Program for Biosafety Systems Southeast Asia (PBS SEA). (RBLapitan)

Agreement for Umali Award Trust Fund, signed

Signatories of the MOA on the creation of the Umali Award Trust Fund. (l-r): Dr. Emil Q. Javier, President, NAST, Philippines; Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director; and Ms. Nelia T. Gonzalez, President, DLUF.

SEARCA, the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) Philippines, and Dioscoro L. Umali Foundation (DLUF) signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) on the establishment of a trust fund for the D.L. Umali Achievement Award in Agricultural Development.

Signatories to the MOA were Dr. Emil Q. Javier, President, NAST, Philippines; Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director; and Ms. Nelia T. Gonzalez, President, DLUF. The signing ceremony was held on 24 July 2008 at Sofitel Philippine Plaza.

Launched on SEARCA's 41st Anniversary Celebration in November 2007, the Umali Award is expected to be given annually and comes with a cash prize of US$10, 000. The first Umali Award will be conferred at SEARCA's 42nd Anniversary Celebration on 27 November 2008.

The Umali Award intends to honor exemplary Southeast Asia nationals whose work in the region has provided exceptionally significant positive impact on the development of agriculture and the improvement of the quality of life in rural communities in the region. The award is for achievement along the full range of fields in agricultural development including, but not limited to, plant and animal sciences, land and water management, environment and natural resource management, technology development, social organization, food security, poverty reduction, economics and business, and policy and governance. (MAFAbad)

in support of country assessment of appropriate and balanced strategies.

The workshop's resource persons were:

- Dr. Mercedita A. Sombilla, Manager of the Consulting Services Department of SEARCA, "Options and Strategies for Integrating Rural Renewable Energy Production in the Greater Mekong Sub-region for Food Security and Poverty Alleviation: A Sub-Regional Framework." Her presentation was based on the result of a study conducted in the Greater Mekong Sub-region by the Asian Development Bank. It recommends that the way forward is to include analysis and evaluation studies (market/supply chain/ economic analyses, impact studies, food-energy simulation), pilot demonstration projects, research and technology development, and capacity building and training.
- Dr. Larry Wong, Senior Fellow at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, "Decision Framework for Strategic National Choices on Biofuel Development." He stressed the relevance of some form of localized, community-level biofuels development in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV). He said the development of a successful export-oriented biofuels sector involves much more than land availability, good climate, cheap labor, and preferential market access. There is a need for a pragmatic approach buttressed by an evolving analytical framework that allows for strategic decision-making coupled with the discipline and courage to make on-course correction and to get the balance of biofuel development right.
- Dr. Donato Antiporta, former Policy Adviser at the UN-FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and SEARCA Senior Fellow, "Policy Considerations and Concerns Related to Biofuels Development." He pointed out that CLMV countries differ in socioeconomic environment, potentials for development, nature of feedstock crops, and processing technologies and, therefore, these countries would have to plan for what fits their respective goals, comparative and competitive advantage. Among the policy considerations are national energy mix, pricing policy, potential for biofuel feedstock supply, public-private partnership, market opportunities, and incentives. One of the imperatives in setting the way forward is to assess and re-assess the implications of biofuel development on the strategic role of agriculture, food and agricultural prices, food security, equity and poverty, and environment.
- Dr. Tirso Paris, Professor at the College of Economics and Management, University of the Philippines Los Baños, "Benefits

Myanmar hosts / to page 14

Thesis Abstracts

SPATIAL INTEGRATION OF RICE MARKETS IN VIETNAM

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The study examined the extent, pattern, and degree of spatial integration of rice markets in Vietnam. The dynamic relationship of rice export prices in Vietnam and Thailand was analyzed and the impact of rice trade policies on the integration of the domestic rice market and in the export market was assessed.

Monthly retail rice prices covering the period 1986-2005 were gathered from Vietnam's General Statistics Office and the Price-Market Research Institute; weekly rice export prices of Vietnam and Thailand were obtained from Vietnam's Ministry of Trade and the United States Department of Agriculture. The Johansen cointegration and various tests in the cointegrated system and the method of estimating common long-memory components were applied.

The results showed a narrow extent of market integration in the domestic rice market. However, prices were transmitted well among the integrated rice markets, indicated by the Law of One Price (LOP) being upheld. The integrating factor showed that the supply side was the most important in shaping the long-run behavior of rice prices in Vietnam. No single market was found to be the price leader in the long run.

The rice export prices of Vietnam and Thailand were found to be cointegrated and these conformed with the LOP, but Vietnam was less active compared with Thailand in responding to changes in world rice price. While domestic reforms and rice trade policies had positive impacts on the integration of domestic rice markets, the removal of export quota played insignificant role in determining the relationship of rice prices in Vietnam and Thailand.

The study recommended improving the extent of domestic rice market integration in the country by focusing government assistance on the development of roads, communication, and other market-related infrastructure. Food policies should be first initiated in the supply regions and, in the short run, directly target the poor and mountainous areas. To improve its rice export price and become more active in the world rice market, Vietnam should (i) adopt modern postharvest technologies and develop better rice varieties, partly supported by a portion of rice export earnings; (ii) develop an integrated rice marketing chain from farmers to exporters; (iii) enhance the capacity to do rice market analysis and forecast; (iv) encourage rice-exporting enterprises to follow certain rules to avoid cut-throat competition; and (v) establish a system of rice standards and create a trade mark for Vietnamese rice.

ENDOGENOUS INSULIN-LIKE GROWTH FACTOR I (IGF-I) IN GROWTH AND REPRODUCTIVE PERFORMANCE OF BOARS (*SUS SCROFA* L.)

Percival P. Sangel
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Los Baños

Insulin-like Growth Factor I (IGF-I) is a 7.6 kDa, 70 amino acid residue peptide hormone that has been shown to be involved in the metabolic regulation of growth and reproduction in livestock. The present study was undertaken to quantify the concentrations of plasma free IGF-I in growing and senior purebred boars and determine whether the plasma free IGF-I concentration can be used as a selection criterion for growth and reproductive traits. A total of fourteen (n=14) Landrace boars were bled, weighed and monitored for ADG, backfat thickness and scrotal length at 15 and 24 weeks of age. Plasma samples were extracted from the blood and plasma free IGF-I concentrations were measured using the DSL 10-9400 Active free IGF-I Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent (ELISA) kit. Eleven (n=11) senior purebred boars (i.e. Duroc=2; Pietrain=4; Large White=2 and Landrace=3) were bled at the same period and the extracted blood plasma were also analyzed for concentrations of plasma free IGF-I using the same ELISA kit. Experimental Landrace boars data on live weight, ADG, backfat thickness and scrotal length were correlated with their levels of plasma free IGF-I. While data of semen characteristics and reproductive performances of the senior purebred boars were also correlated with their plasma free IGF-I levels.

This study has demonstrated a significant decrease (P=0.0001) in the circulating plasma free IGF-I concentration of Landrace boars from 15 to 24 weeks of age. Furthermore, correlation of plasma free IGF-I concentration with growth traits showed a positive association with ADG (r=0.72575) while negative associations were established with backfat thickness (r=-0.41236), scrotal length (r=-0.700016) and live weight (r=-0.57916). Plasma free IGF-I concentration was also found to be significantly higher (P=0.0097) in breeds of leaner body composition (i.e. Pietrain and Duroc vs Large White and Landrace) among purebred senior boars. More so, plasma free IGF-I showed no significant associations with the semen characteristics and reproductive traits except for the Litter Size Born Normal (LSBN) of the purebred senior boars. Results of this study suggest that circulating plasma free IGF-I is related to leaner body composition and to certain extent reproductive traits in swine.

HERITABILITY AND CORRELATION ESTIMATES OF SEMEN CHARACTERISTICS AND REPRODUCTIVE TRAITS IN VARIOUS GENETIC GROUPS OF MALLARD DUCKS (*ANAS PLATYRHYNCHOS* LINN.)

Carlito de Araujo Mali Code
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The study was conducted to estimate the heritability of and correlation among semen characteristics and reproductive traits in various genetic groups of Mallard ducks (Philippine Mallard, Pekin and Khaki Campbell). More specifically, the study aimed to a) evaluate semen characteristics such as semen volume, sperm motility, sperm concentration, semen pH, percent abnormal sperm, semen color and consistency; b) evaluate reproductive traits in terms of egg production, egg weight, fertility and hatchability; c) compare the semen characteristics and reproductive traits of the parental stocks with the F_1 progenies; d) correlate semen characteristics and reproductive traits; e) estimate the heritability of semen characteristics and reproductive traits; and f) estimate heterosis of semen characteristics.

Data on semen characteristics were analyzed following a 3 x 4 factorial split plot in a completely randomized design (CRD) with the genetic groups as the main factor and the time of collection per week as the subplot factor. Data on percent fertility and heritability were analyzed following a one-way ANOVA in a completely randomized design (CRD).

The semen characteristics of the Philippine Mallard were found to be better than the Pekin and Khaki Campbell. Moderate to high heritability estimates were noted on sperm concentration, semen pH and semen volume. Semen volume was found to be negatively correlated with sperm motility and semen pH but positively correlated with sperm concentration. Semen pH was positively correlated with percent abnormal sperm. Relatively low heterotic effects were noted on semen characteristics.

Snapshots

The 15th batch of Bio-business Practice students from Tokyo University of Agriculture (TUA) visited SEARCA on 4 September 2008. A total of 328 students have been given briefing by SEARCA since TUA has collaborated with the University of the Philippines Los Baños and SEARCA. They were briefed by Ms. Maria Angela F. Abad (inset), SEARCA's Public Relations Specialist.

Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan hands a plaque of appreciation to Dr. Dennis P. Garrity (right), Director-General, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF). Looking on is Dr. Rodel A. Lasco, Philippines Country Coordinator, ICRAF. Dr. Garrity spoke on "Agroforestry, Rural Livelihoods, and the Future of Global Land Use" at SEARCA's Agriculture and Development Seminar Series on 5 September 2008. The seminar was a joint collaboration between SEARCA and ICRAF Philippines.

SEARCA staff, led by the Sports Committee, participated in the foot parade as part of the celebration of the 393rd Foundation Day of the Municipality of Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines.

Dr. Ir Gatot Hari Priowirjanto (third from left), Director of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Open Learning Center (SEAMOLEC), accompanied by officials of the Indonesian Embassy in Manila, visited SEARCA on 23 September 2008. The delegation was received by Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., Deputy Director for Administration, and Dr. Maria Celeste H. Cadiz, Manager of SEARCA's Training Department.

Ms. Isabelle Epaillard (third from left), Scientific Attache, and Ms. Marie Aurousseau (second from left), Academic Attache, from the French Embassy, visited the Center on 30 September 2008 to learn more about the Center's programs and activities. France was admitted as the first associate member of SEAMEO in 1973.

The Center received visitors from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo, AECID) on 18 July 2008. Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, led the briefing.

AECID was particularly interested in water research and other areas of possible collaboration. In 2006, Spain was accepted as an Associate Member of SEAMEO.

Ms. Claire Young, Senior Transnational Analyst, Australian Office of National Assessments (ONA), met with Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, on 22 September 2008.

As an ONA Analyst, Ms. Young produces analytical assessments concerning international political, strategic and economic matters to assist the Prime Minister and the Australian Government in policy formulation.

...SEARCA's 54th GBM / from page 1

centers. Observers from Malaysia and Thailand were also present.

The Meeting's opening ceremony was graced by His Excellency, Prof. Dr. Tran Van Nhung, Vice Minister of Education and Training (MOET) of Vietnam. He shared his country's accomplishments in its agriculture sector, particularly how it has transitioned from being a food-importing to a food-exporting country. The education official partly attributed this success to SEARCA, which has been providing graduate scholarship and other capacity-building services to Vietnam (see speech excerpts).

Related to this, on behalf of MOET, Vice Minister Nhung officiated a simple ceremony conferring on SEARCA the Certificate of Merit, in recognition of the Center's contribution to Vietnam's human resource development, particularly of the agriculture sector. A similar certificate was also given to the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), where many Vietnamese have pursued graduate studies in agriculture. A number of them had been SEARCA scholars.

Moreover, Vice Minister Nhung also awarded Medals for the Cause of Education to the top officials of SEARCA and UPLB, namely: Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Director, and Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., Deputy Director for Administration, both of SEARCA, and Dr. Luis Rey I. Velasco, Chancellor of UPLB.

The opening ceremony was likewise highlighted by the launch in Vietnam of a SEARCA publication titled *Southeast Asian Agriculture and Development Primer: Vietnam*. Written by Dr. Nguyen Tri Khiem of An Giang University, the primer describes Vietnam's agriculture and its significant contributions in bolstering the country's overall economy. It features the primary agricultural commodities produced for the import and export market; the market trend; government interventions and policy reforms with profound impact on the development efforts; and public investment and research and development, which, if addressed properly, could potentially boost the agriculture sector.

The 54th GB Meeting's agenda items included the following: SEARCA's Accomplishment Report: FY 2007/2008; Results of the Graduate Scholarship Program Impact Assessment; Draft Ninth Five-Year Plan (FY 2009/2010-FY 2013/1014); Financial and External Auditor's Report; and Report on the 43rd SEAMEO Council Conference and 2008 SEAMEO Center Directors Meeting. (LLTallafer)

EXCERPTS OF 54TH GB MEETING SPEECHES:

WELCOME REMARKS

by Arsenio M. Balisacan
Director, SEARCA

In behalf of SEARCA, I would like to express our deepest thanks to the Government of Vietnam… for the tremendous support provided in organizing this meeting.

Vietnam has been a member country of SEAMEO from the very start. However, the country, along with Cambodia and Lao PDR, began receiving special attention from SEARCA since the early 1990s, particularly in terms of participation in the Center's capacity-building programs.

The development of Vietnam in the past three decades has been tremendous… This country is one example of how much impact a broad-based economic growth can make on poverty reduction. Certainly there is still poverty, but the rate and the commitment by which it is being reduced should serve as a model for the other developing countries in the region.

Seeing this brings a strong degree of satisfaction and encouragement to us at SEARCA, knowing that in some ways we have contributed to this development. It validates that agriculture and rural development are key to achieving inclusive growth among developing countries.

In this meeting, we will apprise the SEAMEO member countries, through their country representatives to SEARCA, on how SEARCA has carried out its mandate on agricultural and rural development the past fiscal year. We will also be presenting our strategic five-year plan, which aims to help address various agriculture and rural development concerns buffeting Southeast Asia at present and in the future.

OPENING REMARKS

By Dr. Dang Kim Vui
Rector, Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, Vietnam; and Vietnam's Representative (outgoing Chair), SEARCA GB

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you all to the Opening Ceremony of the 54th GB Meeting held here at the beautiful Halong Bay, Vietnam. I would like to wish you all good health, happiness, and a great success to our meeting.

In the past two years, SEARCA has successfully implemented its work plan, which was approved by the Governing Board. Those achievements have contributed to sustainable rural development with market orientation. …SEARCA has a policy of prioritizing countries with limited resources such as Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Myanmar for human resource development. Furthermore, SEARCA has carried out successful information exchanges via the Internet. As a result, scientific papers have been publicly distributed among country members. …SEARCA has worked actively with country members to seek international cooperation projects…

In the past two years, I have had the privilege to be the GB Chair; I have received great support from the GB members and especially from the Director of SEARCA. I take this opportunity to express my special thanks to all the GB members, and the Director and staff of SEARCA who supported me in successfully implementing my tasks. Now my term as chairman has finished, I would like to hand over my tasks to the representative of Thailand.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by Dr. Prof. Tran Van Nhung
Vice Minister,
Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam

It gives me great pleasure and honor to be at this Opening Ceremony of the 54th Governing Board Meeting of SEAMEO SEARCA in Halong City, home of Halong Bay, a World Heritage recognized twice by UNESCO. On behalf of H.E. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Thien Nhan, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Education and Training of Vietnam, and myself, I would like to warmly welcome all of you.

From a food-importing country, Vietnam has emerged as a food-exporting country with diversified and high-quality agricultural products. In 2007, Vietnam exported 4.5 million tons of rice and had been a leading country in exporting some of the agricultural products like cafe, rubber, cashew nut, etc. These achievements resulted from the contribution of many workers, technicians, researchers and lecturers including those people who have benefited from the master's and doctoral scholarships of SEAMEO SEARCA in recent decades…

As an agriculture country, despite the remarkable achievements in producing and exporting agricultural products, Vietnam needs to strive for higher productivity and wider application of new technologies; and to change its product structure in order to meet the demand of the market and to increase its competitiveness. To make those things happen, the role of human resource is vital in researching, applying, and transferring technologies. In this regard, I would like to encourage the cooperation between higher institutions of Vietnam with SEARCA in conducting research, in technology transfer, and in graduate education and training…

On this occasion, the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam has decided to award Medals for the Cause of Education and Certificates of Merit to SEARCA and the University of Philippines Los Baños (and their leaders) in recognition of their contributions to the human resource development of Vietnam, particularly the agriculture sector. We look forward to receiving the continued support and assistance of the Center and other higher educational institutions in the region in educating and training the agricultural personnel of Vietnam. The quality of the human resource is the very key factor that determines the competitiveness and effectiveness of the production process in every country.

54th GB PHOTO GALLERY

Members of SEARCA's GB and meeting observers pose for posterity with famed Halong Bay as backdrop.

Dr. Balisacan receives a token of appreciation from H.E. Prof. Dr. Tran Van Nhung

The meeting in progress

A picturesque view of Halong Bay

SPEAKERS AT THE OPENING PROGRAM

H.E. Dr. Tran Van Nhung

Dr. Dang Kim Vui

Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan

Country Representatives

Mrs. Pengiran Hajah Rosidah binti Pengiran Haji Metussin
Brunei Darussalam

Dr. Ir H Moehammad Munir
Indonesia

Dr. Sitha Khemmarath
Lao PDR

Dr. Nik Mustapha bin Raja Abdullah
Malaysia

Mr. Tin Htut Oo
Myanmar

Dr. Luis Rey I. Velasco
Philippines

Prof. Tan Teck Koon
Singapore

Mr. Veerasak Wongsombut
Thailand

Dr. Dang Kim Vui
Vietnam

Dato Dr. Ahamad bin Sipon
SEAMEO Secretariat

PHD RESEARCH SCHOLAR STARTS INTERNSHIP AT SEARCA

Ms. Astrid Meilasari-Sugiana, a SEARCA PhD research scholar, began her two-month internship at SEARCA on 7 July 2008. She is pursuing her PhD in Natural Resources Management at the Faculty of Land and Food Resources, University of Melbourne, Australia.

Ms. Meilasari-Sugiana is working on her dissertation titled "Community Dynamics in the Governance of Indonesia's Coastal Resources: Case Study of North and South Sulawesi." Her research aims to understand the dynamics of power relations and collective action along with their implications for facilitating the devolution of responsibility and the participative and inclusive governance of coastal resources. The research involves case studies of coastal resource governance policies, programs, and projects in North and South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Ms. Meilasari-Sugiana is Lecturer at Ahmad Dahlan University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. (LLDDomingo)

SEARCA ORIENTS NEW SCHOLARS AT UPLB

SEARCA, through its Graduate Scholarship Department, conducted an orientation meeting for new SEARCA scholars who are pursuing their graduate programs at the University of the Philippines Los Banos (UPLB) on 14 July 2008.

A total of 33 scholars attended the meeting, all of whom began their graduate programs in the first semester of School Year 2008/2009. The 33 scholars include two scholars awarded in June 2007 but who had deferred their studies for this school year.

Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., Deputy Director for Administration, gave the welcome remarks and an overview of the organizational set-up of SEARCA. Dr. Editha C. Cedicol, Manager, Graduate Scholarship Department, conducted the briefing on the SEARCA scholarship administration. An opportunity was also given to the new scholars to interact with representatives from the Center's core programs and selected administrative units. The representatives present were Ms. Nyhria G. Rogel, Project Development Specialist, Research and Development Department; Dr. Lorna C. Malicsi, Head, Knowledge Resources Unit, Knowledge Management Department; Mr. Lope Santos, Project Development Associate, Project Development and Management Department; Mr. Vicente C. Evan, Head, and Ms. Ma. Teresita D. Alvaro, Lodging Supervisor, both of Facilities Management Unit; and Mr. Ricardo A. Menorca, Head, General Services Unit. (LLDDomingo)

WORKSHOP ON UPLB STRATEGIC REVIEW, HELD

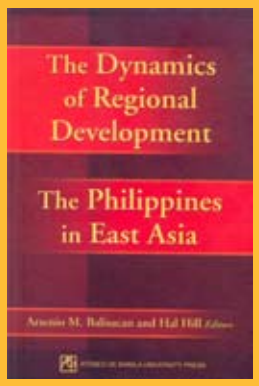
As part of the activities of the SEARCA-supported University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) Strategic Review, a workshop titled "UPLB Strategic Mapping Workshop: Towards Distinctive Excellence and Relevance" was held in Days Hotel, Tagaytay City on July 10-11, 2008. It provided a forum to discuss the future direction of UPLB in the context of a dynamic environment at the local, regional, and global levels.

Present during the UPLB Strategic Mapping Workshop were UPLB Chancellor Luis Rey I. Velasco (front row, 5th from left), the members of the external review panel chaired by Dr. Harold J. McArthur (front row, fourth from left), vice chancellors, college deans and associate deans, unit directors and other University officials. Also in attendance were SEARCA officials led by Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., Deputy Director for Administration. Drs. Federico Macaranas, Executive Director of the AIM Policy Center; Eduardo Sison, Chairman of the Board, MADECOR; and Percy Sajise, Former Regional Director, Regional Office for Asia, the Pacific, and Oceania, Bioversity International served as the workshop discussants. (MLChico)

SEARCA DIRECTOR SPEAKS AT COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, served as the Commencement Speaker at the Asian Institute of Management's 19th Masters of Development Management Commencement Exercises on 11 July 2008. As a recognized expert in development economics, Dr. Balisacan shared his thoughts on poverty in Asia and stressed the importance of the role of development managers in finding solutions to today's global issues.

BOOK BY SEARCA DIRECTOR RECOGNIZED



"The Dynamics of Regional Development: The Philippines in East Asia," a book jointly edited by Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director and Professor of Economics, University of the Philippines, and Dr. Hal Hill, Professor of Economics, Australian National University, received the Philippines' National Book Award for Social Sciences.

The recognition was made during the 27th National Book Awards presented by the National Book Development Board of the Philippines and the Manila Critics Circle on 15 November 2008 at the Yuchengco Museum, RCBC Plaza, Makati City.

The book is published locally by the Ateneo de Manila University Press. It is published by Edward Elgar for international distribution.

The book compares and analyzes economic policies in the context of globalization and decentralization, and looks closely at the Chinese and Indonesian experiences. It also examines the Philippine economy against the greater framework of local politics, governance, labor markets, infrastructure, trade liberalization, growth, and poverty. It is a sequel to "The Philippine Economy: Development, Policies, and Challenges," a book also co-edited by Dr. Balisacan and Dr. Hill and published by Ateneo University Press (and Oxford University Press) in 2003.

The National Book Awards is given every year to recognize excellence in book publishing in the Philippines. (LLTallafer)

SEARCA DIRECTOR RECOGNIZED FOR SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Dr. Emil Q. Javier, NAST President (left), swears in Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan during the conferment rites for new NAST Academicians held on 10 July 2008 at the Manila Hotel, Manila, Philippines.

Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Director of SEARCA, was recently elected to the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) of the Philippines. He was among the eight scientists and researchers conferred the rank and title of "Academician" during rites held on 10 July 2008 at the conclusion of NAST's 30th Annual Scientific Meeting held in Manila, Philippines.

Dr. Balisacan was recognized for his "research and other scholarly work in the field of economics, particularly development economics, which have resulted in a number of internationally renowned publications focusing on poverty, economic inequality, and agricultural and rural development."

NAST noted that Dr. Balisacan's work has substantially improved the understanding of the nature, causes, and consequences of poverty and inequality in the Philippines, and the critical role of agricultural and rural development in a nation's well-being. The Academy also acknowledged Dr. Balisacan's "burning passion to make research relevant to policymakers and for policies to be informed by research…"

Established in 1976, NAST is mandated to recognize outstanding achievements in science and technology and to serve as a reservoir of competent scientific and technological manpower for the country. It is also the Philippine government's highest advisory body on policies concerning science and technology. NAST is composed of outstanding members of the scientific community of the country; its members are called Academicians. The Academy has six divisions, namely: agricultural sciences; biological sciences; chemical, mathematical, and physical sciences, engineering sciences and technology, health sciences, and social sciences.

Other New Appointments

Dr. Balisacan has been recognized also by several other research and policy bodies, where he has been recently appointed to sit as a member. Among these is the Policy Advisory Council of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

SEARCA Director / to page 14

Creating funding opportunities for upland development through Community-based Equitable Payment for Watershed Services (CB-EPWS)[1]

BY DR. TONIE O. BALANGUE[2]

Upland farmers highly need funding opportunities that will enable them to diversify food crop, wood, and biofuel production, as well as improve watershed services. A sustainable funding mechanism will give farmers a chance to reduce upland poverty and help the government protect and manage the environment, especially in mitigating the effects of climate change.

THE UPLAND SITUATION

Today, about 4.5 million households in the uplands depend on forestlands and forest resources for livelihood. Their livelihood activities contribute to degrading important biodiverse forest ecosystems into non-sustainable subsistence farming.

Continuing such activities will further reduce the capacity of the remaining 24% forest cover in the country to produce essential life support systems such as water, clean air, cool temperature, and soil nutrients for food crops. These will also be detrimental to biodiversity and destroy potential medicine and food sources, not to mention the forest itself and its protective and amenity values.

The government can do something to alleviate upland poverty and reverse the current trend of environmental degradation by assisting people in the uplands to contribute rural development.

THE APPROACH

Community-based equitable payment for watershed services (CB-EPWS) offers an opportunity for uplanders to help reduce poverty in the uplands and at the same time maintain a livable environment for all Filipinos. CB-EPWS generates capital where the upland farmers participate in producing and selling watershed and ecosystem services to beneficiaries. Some of the services that are currently in demand are the provisions of water for domestic and industrial use, hydropower generation, and irrigation.

HOW DOES CB-EPWS WORK?

This has three major components: 1) the organization of service providers, 2) the organization of service beneficiaries/ buyers and 3) the intermediary. The functions, responsibilities and relationship of these three actors are shown in Figure 1.

The service providers perform watershed and forestland restoration activities that improve water recharging capacity of farrmlands. Instead of ground surface water draining straight into the sea during rainfall, it is continuously recharged.

If farmers are willing, service providers can use portions of their farms in exchange for a fee equivalent to the farm's value used for EPWS. Farmers can also participate in paid labor for reforestation, rehabilitation, and protection and management activities in classified protected areas or forestlands.
The service beneficiaries pay for watershed and forest services, provided that the desired quality and quantity of water and other services that they demand are sustainably produced.

SEARCA awards Professorial Chair to three UP Profs

Three faculty of the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman, UP Visayas (UPV), and UP Open University (UPOU) were awarded the SEARCA Professorial Chair for Academic Year 2008/2009.

The awardees, their affiliation, and the titles of their seminars are:

- Dr. Doracie B. Zoleta-Nantes, Professor 2, Department of Geography, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines Diliman, will give a seminar on "Agricultural Risks, Typhoon Events and Livelihood Constraints: Conditions of Vulnerability among Subsistence Farmers in Thua Thien, Hue, Vietnam and Quezon Province, Philippines;"
- Dr. Jonnifer R. Sinogaya, Associate Professor 4, Natural Sciences and Mathematics Division, Cebu College, University of the Philippines Visayas, will lecture on "Modeling of the Impact of Coal-fired Power Plant Emissions on the Air Quality of Metro Cebu;" and
- Dr. Alexander G. Flor, Professor 5, Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, UP Open University, will give a seminar titled "Communities of Practice or Communities of Champions: Shifts in Knowledge Management Models to Address Natural Resources Management Imperatives."

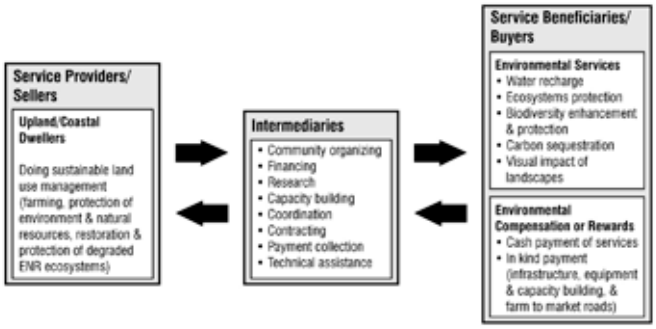
The three new awards bring to 243 the total number of SEARCA professorial chairs awarded to the different autonomous campuses of the UP System. (LLDDomingo)

SEARCA grants eight SFRT awards for Fiscal Year 2008-09

The Seed Fund for Research and Training (SFRT) awardees for Fiscal year 2008-09 will be awarded during the 42nd anniversary celebration of SEARCA on 27 November 2008.

Forty-seven proposals from eight Southeast Asian countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam) were received by the August 1, 2008 deadline. The Evaluation Committee is composed of Dr. Arnulfo Garcia (Chairperson), Dr. Maria Celeste Cadiz, Dr. Doris Capistrano and Dr. Donato Antiporta.

Figure 1. Community-based Equitable Payment for Watershed Services



Note: Schematic design based on the REECS-CARE EPWS Project in Mt. Isarog, Balangue, 2007. Livelihood and CBA Assessment for EPWS.

The intermediaries help both the service providers and buyers to come to an agreement in the establishment of a market for water. They also assist in establishing the right value of water that is acceptable to both the service providers and the service buyers.

They capacitate the service providers in CB-EPWS tasks, assist in the collection of payments, and provide capacity building to the actors in the areas of organizational management, financial management, marketing, site development planning and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
How much funds are expected?

An initial economic study of Resources, Environment and Economics Center for Studies, Inc. (REECS) in 2007 in two watersheds in Mt. Isarog Protected Area showed that each low income household is willing to pay PhP15/month, mid-income household, PhP40/month and high income household PhP55/ month for environmental service. Commercial and industrial establishments might be willing to pay more.

This potential income will be paid as long as the watershed and forest services are continuously given. As time passes, payments will accumulate and more watershed/forestland areas will be restored.

In the same study, cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of agricultural crops and watershed rehabilitation interventions in farmer-owned lands showed that high financial benefits can be gained. This is on the condition that some areas would be converted into agroforestry with biofuel plantations designed as water recharge. This can also be a source of additional income for the households.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

CB-EPWS may be a good way to put an end to the further destruction of the forest ecosystems in the uplands.

Through this approach, uplanders can have both a livelihood and a hand at watershed and forestland productivity restoration. They can help with the planting and managing of forest, agroforestry, fruit-tree, and biofuel (Jatropha) plantations, and with soil and water conservation for ground surface water recharge.

They can likewise participate in the sustainable protection and management of the natural forest and in the establishment of community-based entrepreneurial ventures to process high-value products in agroforestry, fruit-trees, biofuel and soil and water conservation species.

Through these interventions, they will be able to optimize productivity of their lands, derive additional income from forest protection and management, and restore the services of the watersheds and degraded forestlands in the country.

Doing so will ensure the continuous production of physical goods, as well as environmental services that are important to all of us.

1 Based on the paper of Dr. Tonie O. Balangue presented at the SEARCA Agriculture and Development Seminar Series (ADSS) last 15 April 2008. Basic EPWS methodology and data used were based on the REECS-CARE Philippines EPWS Study in Inarihan and Yabo Watersheds, Mt. Isarog Protected Area, Camarines Sur.

2 Executive Director, REECS

The list of awardees, titles of their approved proposals, and respective home institutions are as follows:

- Dr. Davin Uy, *Accumulation of Arsenic by Fruits and Vegetables Grown in the Arsenic Contaminated Areas*, Institute of Technology of Cambodia
- Dr. Zeily Nurachman, *Screening and Identification of the Local Marine Microalgae Strain Producing Biodiesel*, Biochemistry Division, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Institut Teknology Bandung, Indonesia
- Dr. Zainal Abidin Mohamed and Dr. Mad Nasir Shamsudin, *Comparative Advantage Indices of Selected Livestock Production Sectors in Malaysia*, Department of Agribusiness and Information Systems, Faculty of Agriculture, Universiti Putra Malaysia
- Dr. Khin Oo, *Impact of the Cyclone Nargis on Livelihoods, Food Security and Agricultural Sector in Myanmar*, Department of Agronomy, Yezin Agricultural University, Myanmar
- Ms. Menisa A. Antonio, *Survey and Characterization of Indigenous Food Plants in Ilocos Norte, Philippines*, R&D Directorate, Mariano Marcos State University, Philippines
- Dr. Agustin L. Arcenas, *Coastal and Marine Resource Management in the Philippines: An Analysis of the Political Economy of Selected LGU Initiatives*, School of Economics, University of the Philippines Diliman, Philippines
- Dr. Victor B. Ella, *Simulating Hydraulic Effects of Climate Change on Groundwater Resources in a Selected Aquifer in the Philippines Using a Numerical Groundwater Model*, College of Engineering and Agricultural Technology, University of the Philippines Los Baños, Philippines
- Dr. Nguyen Kim Loi, *Integration of GIS and AHP Techniques for Land Use Suitability Analysis in Di Linh District, Upstream Dong Nai Watershed, Vietnam*, Department of Applied Geomatics, Nong Lam University, Vietnam

The SFRT aims to assist Southeast Asian researchers with limited start-up funds to translate their promising research and training into scientific outputs that could be applied to promote agricultural and rural development. The seed fund (maximum of US$15,000) is envisaged to enhance the chances of chosen research and training proposals of securing long-term support from donor agencies.

Since it started on 2005, a total of 33 research and training proposals from seven Southeast Asian countries: namely, Cambodia (1), Indonesia (5), Lao PDR (2), Malaysia (1), Myanmar (1), Philippines (12), Vietnam (10), and one joint proposal from Thailand and Philippines were awarded the SEARCA SFRT grant. (RCDikitanan)

Myanmar hosts / from page 4

and Costs (BCA) of Biofuels Development Projects." Despite it flaws, BCA plays an important role in government decision-making and is preferable to purely arbitrary actions. He also presented the Agricultural Policy Simulation Model (APSIM). While it was not fully tailored to the requirements of biofuels development, it was considered useful by the participants.

Seven participants from CLMV and more than 20 observers from various agencies in Myanmar participated in the technical workshop. There was unanimity in the articulated need for an objective methodology for policy formulation/development as well as for capacity-building and mentoring. It was also recognized that countries have their own specific focus that would need special attention and that these different needs would need short-, medium-, and long-term responses.

Also in attendance at the workshop were officials from the Korea FAO Association headed by its Chairman, Dr. Sang-Mu Lee; Director General U Tin Htut Oo, MOAI-DAP; and Dr. Arsenio Balisacan, SEARCA Director.

Dr. Lee and Mr. Tin Htut Oo emphasized the need for human resource development in the area of biofuels developmet. Both suggested a regional training of trainers (TOT), to be followed by an in-country training to expand the skills or knowledge base in the country.

Dr. Balisacan also highlighted the need to monitor project implementation and the need for flexibility to correct or change directions when necessary in the course of the project. He cited the need for impact evaluation of projects, including ex ante evaluation, particularly of biofuels projects. (CNGRogel)

SEARCA Director / from page 11

On the invitation of the Honorable Stephen Smith, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australia, Dr. Balisacan became a member of the ACIAR-PAC for a term of three years starting 15 May 2008. Dr. Balisacan represents Southeast Asia in the Council.

He participated in his first ACIAR-PAC Meeting in Canberra, Australia on 2-3 September 2008. The meeting included a Roundtable on Food Security. It also coincided with the holding of the Crawford Fund's annual conference at Parliament House on 3 September. The conference's theme was *Agriculture in a Changing Climate: the New International Research Frontier*.

On the national (Philippines) level, Dr. Balisacan became a member of the National Steering Committee of the Global Environment Fund (GEF) Small Grants Programme and a member of the Advisory Group of the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction of the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development last July and August, respectively.

Dr. Balisacan is also actively involved in the Philippine Congressional Commission on Science & Technology and Engineering (COMSTE) as a member of its Technical Advisory Committee. (LLTallafer)

The Honorable Stephen Smith, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Australia (front row, sixth from left) joins the ACIAR Commission and the ACIAR Policy Advisory Council (PAC) for a souvenir photo last September. The ACIAR PAC includes Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director (front row, second from right).

SEARCA zeroes / from page 16

The lectures covered: (1) concepts, definitions and framework for climate risk analysis and management including extreme weather events; (2) discussions on various methods, tools, and procedures ranging from soil erosion prediction, economic valuation, and development of crop adaptation strategy to climate change; and (3) managing climate risks in aquaculture and rice production. Community-based climate risk and disaster planning and management complemented two practical experiences and applications in well-known cases of natural disasters namely in Infanta, Quezon and Albay were also presented.

Ten resource persons from the academe and various R&D institutions shared their technical expertise and experiences on the field including:

- Dr. Felino Lansigan, Professor, Institute of Statistics, UPLB;
- Dr. Eduardo Paningbatan, Professor, Agricultural Systems Cluster, UPLB;
- Dr. Maria Victoria Espaldon (representing Mr. Manuel Rangasa of CIRCA), Dean, School of Environmental Science and Management (SESAM), UPLB;
- Dr. Nicomedes Briones, Professor, SESAM, UPLB;
- Dr. Daylinda Cabanilla, Associate Professor, College of Forestry and Natural Resources, UPLB;
- Dr. Rosa Perez, Member, International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC);
- Dr. Ashok Kumar, Scientist and Sorghum Breeder, ICRISAT;
- Mr. Rolando Edra, Former Chief, Inland Aquztic Resource Division, Philippine Council for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development;
- Dr. Reiner Wassmann, Head, Rice and Climate Change Consortium, IRRI; and
- Fr. Francis Lucas, Chair, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development.

After the lectures, the participants prepared a strategic framework plan on managing risks, which could be applied in their respective areas; these were presented during the last session. A field visit to IRRI was also conducted to enable the participants to know the latest technology on rice and climate risk management research.

Dr. Segfredo Serrano, Undersecretary, DA graced the closing program saying that climate change is one of the department's priority programs. Since 1998, DA aims to become proactive in gathering agro-meteorological information, which is readily accessible to farmers. Farmers are indispensable, while bureaucrats are dispensable. He called on everyone to give the farmers the best services that they deserve. (RMMDedicatoria, with reports from KBorromeo)

IFAD, SEARCA / from page 16

- Creation of an enabling policy environment to support initiatives for rural poverty reduction. The government's role is crucial for agricultural growth and non-farm employment opportunities.
- Development public-private partnerships in support of better markets and dynamic non-farm employment opportunities. This should also include the people's sector (e.g., indigenous peoples) in co-management of natural resources.
- Increase in the resilience of the rural poor to respond to risks and vulnerabilities caused by natural disasters, as well as opportunities for livelihood enhancement.

The participants commonly identified influence of climate change and rising food prices as drivers of change. Climate change may have negative impacts on agricultural productivity, but it can also create opportunities for developing payment for environmental services to benefit the rural poor. Rapidly rising fuel prices adversely affect input and transportation costs, but stimulate more focus on renewable and alternative sources of energy. Migration and flow of remittance income to poor households also create multiple impacts, some of which may have important policy implications.

The consultation identified also a set of enabling factors for replicating and scaling up promising solutions for rural poverty reduction. These enabling factors include supportive policy and legislation; strengthening of local institutions; capacity-building to empower the rural poor; appropriate rural infrastructure development; champions such as nongovernment organizations (NGOs) or individuals for policy advocacy; knowledge sharing (including the role of media); available and accessible financial services and microfinance; public-private-people partnership; adaptive research and development focusing on changing needs, with a balance between technical and social services; collaboration on transboundary issues; and enhanced international cooperation in agriculture to support poverty reduction efforts.

The last day of the consultation was devoted to presenting and discussing challenges related to risk and vulnerability and soaring food prices faced by smallholders in the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, the findings of major studies commissioned by IFAD were shared and discussed, with a focus on policy implications.

The papers on risk and vulnerability, in the context of the Pacific Islands and Central Asia, were presented by Dr. Raghbendra Jha, Professor and Executive Director, Australia South Asia Research Center, Australian National University, and Dr. Madhav Karki, Deputy Director General, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development. The paper on rising food prices, in the context of the Asia-Pacific region, was presented by Dr. Raghav Gaiha, Professor, Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi, India. (NARamos)"

EXCERPTS OF IFAD CONSULTATION SPEECHES

….two-thirds of the world's poor live in Asia. Although poverty reduction in Asia is quite rapid by global standards, it has come largely from market-mediated expansion of the economic pie. However, economic growth without poverty reduction means deepening social divides. The key challenge for our policymakers and the development community is to widen the catchment basin of the economic growth process

in such a way that the poor become active participants in the marketplace. "One-size fits all" does not apply in the real world of poverty reduction."
Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director

"…research has shown that poor people in the region are exposed to different risks: economic, public health, social, etc. Another major issue is the rising inequality between rural and urban areas, and among regions within a country. Rising oil and food prices also pose as challenges. On the positive side, these challenges have resulted in increasing attention to the agriculture sector, which has seen a precipitous decline in resource allocation both by national governments and the international development community in the last two decades. External forces such as globalization, urbanization, and rising incomes have resulted in the increasing demand for high-value commodities both for domestic consumption and for exports. This has opened up new

opportunities for smallholders to increase their incomes if we can empower them to produce and market these commodities cost effectively."
Dr. Ganesh Thapa, IFAD Regional Economist

"Asia remains mainly rural and poverty is mainly a rural problem in the region. Non-income poverty is even more severe than income poverty in rural areas. Reducing rural poverty in the region requires five general areas of interventions: raising agricultural productivity, managing natural resources and the environment (strong poverty-environment nexus in the region), supporting policies and carefully targeted development (road, power, etc.) to help farmers' transition from farm to non-farm activities, promoting social improvements (education, health), and fostering good governance for decentralized public services. The challenge is to turn "what to do" into "how to do": work harder to get those ideas effectively designed and efficiently implemented. Rural poverty reduction is not rocket science, but a much harder task, which needs greater appreciation and a political economy perspective. We need to work with the rural poor to enable and

empower them to move up and move forward out of poverty."
Mr. Xianbin Yao, Director General, Regional and Sustainable Development Department, Asian Development Bank

"With nearly 90 million people, the Philippine population is growing 2 percent annually. Data from 2006 indicate that a family of five needs US$3 per day for basic food requirements; this means that one-half to two-thirds of total household income is spent on food. At present, interventions are focused on raising productivity in the agricultural sector. On the demand side, there are programs designed to provide adequate and affordable food such as Pagkain sa Bawat Mesa (Food for Every Table). The Department of Agriculture is undertaking priority infrastructure program in tandem with concerned local government units and other government agencies, as well as poverty alleviation programs in collaboration with international organizations like IFAD.

Dr. Preceles H. Manzo, Officer-in-Charge for the Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning, Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA), representing H.E. Arthur C. Yap, Secretary, DA.

"The food crisis is largely created by the rising cost of fuel, and these twin problems are likely to be with us for the next decade. I hope that the Rural Poverty Report could be desegregated so that Filipino policymakers can calculate how much is needed to lift Filipinos out of poverty….In 2010, there will be approximately 100 million Filipinos. The country will need at least 19 million tons of paddy rice to ensure food security and avoid panic. Rice is an important symbolic commodity to Filipinos and most Asians, and considered both an emotional as well as political commodity. The overall state of prosperity or lack of it in the Philippines is dependent on the following factors: basically being an agrarian society; inadequate roads and other rural infrastructure, which are essential in an archipelagic country; islands like Mindanao, contiguous and extremely fertile, need more upland development programs; how are rural people going to benefit from the ICT revolution; how do we sustain and continue the progress made in rural development in the face of soaring and energy food prices; and national

government must seek like-minded partners among the international community involved in agricultural growth and poverty reduction."
Hon. Edgardo J. Angara, Senator, Republic of the Philippines

IFAD, SEARCA organize regional consultation

Participants of the Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on IFAD Rural Poverty Report 2009 held at Sofitel Hotel on 22-24 July 2008.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and SEARCA organized the *"Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on IFAD Rural Poverty Report 2009"* at Sofitel Hotel on 22-24 July 2008.

The consultation, in time for IFAD's 30th anniversary, aimed at building a broad constituency for the IFAD Rural Poverty Report 2009, and ensuring that it reflects current and new challenges from the perspectives of the rural poor in the Asia-Pacific region.

The report is IFAD's new flagship publication on key challenges and lessons overcoming rural poverty today. It aims to provide policy-relevant lessons about what challenges the rural poor are facing in a rapidly changing world, what solutions are being developed in the field, and how these may be replicated and scaled up. The intended audience of the publication includes national and regional policymakers, development agencies, and civil society organizations or private sectors working with the rural poor. Core chapters of the report are based on five key thematic areas in which poor rural people meet challenges today: natural resources, agricultural services, markets, non-farm employment and enterprise development, and governance processes.

The consultation in the Philippines is one of a series of regional consultations done to obtain critical inputs and feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. Other consultations were done in eastern and southern Africa, western and central Africa, Near East, and Latin America.

In the Philippines, the consultation brought together 55 participants from diverse sectors and countries to: 1) identify priority challenges faced by the rural poor under the five key themes; 2) discuss successful responses to the priority challenges, and draw lessons for replication and scaling-up; and 3) discuss trends and challenges related to risk and vulnerability and soaring food prices faced by smallholders.

During the first two days, participants engaged in small working groups centered on the five key thematic areas in which poor rural people meet challenges at present.

Four priority cross-cutting challenges and needs emerged from the workshop:

- Enhancement of participation and representation of the rural poor in policy-making processes and their involvement in governance processes at the local level.

IFAD, SEARCA / to page 15

SEARCA zeroes in on climatic risk management for agricultural production

Participants of the international training course titled *"Responding to Climate Change: Knowledge Based Strategies for Managing Risks in Agricultural Production"* held on 8-12 September 2008.

Climate change is recognized both as a major environmental issue and developmental challenge. It is behind this backdrop that SEARCA, in cooperation with the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), organized a five-day international training course titled *"Responding to Climate Change: Knowledge Based Strategies for Managing Risks in Agricultural Production."*

A total of 13 participants representing two countries (Philippines and Vietnam) completed the course held from September 8-12, 2008 at SEARCA, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines. Most participants came from the different units of the Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA) while others were from universities, local government units, and grassroots organization.

In its opening program, Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, pointed out the overwhelming evidence of the implications of global warming among the region's poor. The poor have limited strategies in coping with disasters because they have no access to safety nets such as education and health services.

He explained "…we have much less understanding of what works best for developing countries especially at the ground level [where there is] low investment in education, lack of infrastructure, and no access to safety nets." He said that there should be a consensus on giving high priority to climate mitigation and adaptation.

Dr. Felino P. Lansigan, course coordinator and Professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) said that the training's focus is on the promotion of knowledge-based strategies in agricultural production. He clarified that these not only refer to scientific knowledge but indigenous knowledge as well. Further, the term "changing climate" was used as it suggests a more dynamic meaning than climate change.

He noted that agricultural production systems need knowledge intensive information, such as soil, land use, weather, and climate data since each factor affects production. He emphasized the need for systems approach that combines theories and principles from natural and social sciences. This then was the direction followed during the training's duration.

SEARCA zeroes / to page 14