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GROWTH IN A TIME OF CRISIS

At 42, SEARCA, despite the challenges that abound, continues to move forward. It remains relentless in its pursuit for agricultural and rural development in the face of a rapidly changing Asia. Its role of building institutional capacities in Southeast Asia is more relevant now, more than ever.

SEARCA celebrates its 42nd year

On 27 November 2008, SEARCA marked its 42nd year of building institutional capacities of SEAMEO member countries in agriculture and rural development through its core programs of graduate scholarship, research and development, short-term training, and knowledge management. The Center celebrated its anniversary with twin milestones: first, an international conference designed for SEARCA alumni (see story on page 16), and second, the first conferment of the Dioscoro L. Umali (DLU) Achievement Award in Agricultural Development (see story on page 8).

SEARCA alumni and scholars, members of the Los Baños Science Community, development partners and representatives from government agencies and diplomatic corps joined the SEARCA staff in the celebration.

In the opening program, Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, remarked that SEARCA exerts effort each year to mark the Center's anniversary because "it makes us remember the reason why the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) saw it important to establish SEARCA back in 1966." SEARCA was established by SEAMEO in 1966 primarily "to provide to the participating countries high quality graduate study in agriculture; promote,

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SEARCA Governing Board holds a special meeting

The SEARCA Governing Board (GB) had a special meeting (its 55th) on 21-22 October 2008 in Makati City, Philippines. The meeting's sole purpose was to conduct a final review of SEARCA's draft Ninth Five-Year Plan, covering the period July 2009-June 2014. The meeting, chaired by Dr. Sitha Khemmarath, representative of Lao PDR and GB Vice Chair, ended successfully, with the meeting participants endorsing the draft plan for presentation to the SEAMEO High Officials Meeting in December 2008.



The 55th GBM participants: (L-R) Mrs. Hajah Rosidah of Brunei Darussalam, Dr. Myint Thaug of Myanmar, Dr. Assanee Pachinburavan of Thailand, Dr. Luis Rey I. Velasco of the Philippines, Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr. of SEARCA, Dr. Sitha Khemmarath of Lao PDR, Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan of SEARCA, and Dr. Wahdi S.A. Yudhi (not in photo) of the SEAMEO Secretariat.

Two months earlier, on 20-22 August 2008, the GB held its regular (54th) meeting for the year in Halong, Vietnam, where the draft plan was first presented. The GB decided to examine the draft plan more closely.

The 55th GBM participants, in addition to Dr. Sitha, were: Mrs. Pg Hajah Rosidah binti Pg Haji Metussin, representative of Brunei Darussalam; Dr. Myint Thaug, in lieu of Mr. Tin Htut Oo, representative of Myanmar; Dr. Luis Rey I. Velasco, representative of the Philippines; Dr. Assanee Pachinburavan, in lieu of Mr. Chaleo Yoosimaruk, representative of Thailand (GB Chair); Dr. Wahdi S.A. Yudhi, in lieu of Dato' Dr Ahamad bin Sipon, Director of the SEAMEO Secretariat; and Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Director of SEARCA.

Also present were Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., Deputy Director for Administration and GB Secretary-Treasurer; all the managers of SEARCA – Dr. Editha C. Cedicol (Graduate Scholarship), Dr. Maria Celeste H. Cadiz (Training), Dr. Arnulfo G. Garcia (Research and Development), and Dr. Mercedita A. Sombilla (Consulting Services); Ms. Susan V. Fernandez, Head, Management Services Unit; Ms. Lily L. Tallafer, Senior Executive Assistant; Ms. Fe D. Dela Cruz, Executive Assistant; and Ms. Adoracion T. Robles, Project Management Associate. (LLTallafer)

SEARCA, Phil Agri Dept, 3 univs, ink agreement on agri capacity-building

SEARCA has teamed up with the Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA) and three top Philippine universities to develop a capacity-building program aimed at equipping senior DA officials and staff with technical and strategic management knowledge and skills.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for this purpose was signed on 20 October 2008 by the DA, SEARCA, Ateneo School of Government (ASoG), University of the Philippines School of Economics (UPSE), and University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) School of Management. Signatories were Mr. Arthur C. Yap, DA Secretary; Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director; Dr. Antonio G. M. La Viña, ASoG Dean; Dr. Emmanuel

S. De Dios, UPSE Dean; and Mr. Ceferino Rodolfo, on behalf of Dr. Rolando T. Dy, UA&P School of Management Dean.

"This institutional cooperation is crucial to farm growth... The development of a corps of skilled, knowledgeable, and committed public managers is essential to the achievement of food security and a sustainable agriculture sector," said Mr. Yap.

Mr. Yap noted that the capacity-building program would be geared especially for DA's planning officers, to enable them to design effective agricultural programs and evaluate them.

Dr. Balisacan said that the rapid developments in the world market, information technology, and biotechnology necessitates that the DA executives be equipped properly to cope with present realities and improve agricultural productivity. Enhancing the skills of program planners and implementers would help the Philippines catch up with its neighbors in terms of economic growth.

Under the MOU, the collaborating institutions will craft an umbrella program that will

enhance and reinforce the knowledge and skills of DA officials and staff on strategic leadership, public management, agricultural policy and agribusiness, development economics, and trade and investment. The program will include some of the degree offerings of the three universities, non-degree credit earning executive forums/seminars, and study tours for DA officials and other participants. The DA will extend financial assistance for the overall organization and implementation of the programs.

The MOU is initially effective for five years and may be extended for another five years. (NARamos)



L-R: Mr. Ceferino Rodolfo, Professor, University of Asia and the Pacific; Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director; Mr. Arthur C. Yap, Secretary, Philippine Department of Agriculture; Dr. Antonio G. M. La Viña, Dean, Ateneo School of Government; and Dr. Emmanuel S. De Dios, Dean, School of Economics, University of the Philippines Diliman.

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Four SE Asians get PhD research scholarships

An Indonesian, two Filipinos, and a Thai received PhD research scholarships from SEARCA.

The awardees, their nationality, study post, and research topics are as follows:

- Mr. Rustadi, Indonesian, Universitas Gadjah Mada in Indonesia, "Nitrogen and Phosphorus Concentration for Predicting Carrying Capacity of Environment and Fish Culture in Sermo Reservoir"
- Ms. Clarissa Yvonne Domingo, Filipino, College of Public Health, University of the Philippines (UP) Manila, "Prevalence and Risk Factors

of Zoonotic Protozoa among Smallholder Livestock Farmers in Aurora Province"

- Ms. Frances Muriel L. Tuquero, Filipino, UP Los Baños, "Knowledge Management Assessment of Agriculture Colleges in Selected Universities under the Super Regions of the Philippines"
- Ms. Suphasiri Trirat, Thai, Central Luzon State University in the Philippines, "The Role of Communication Towards Achieving Sufficiency Economy through Huai Hong Khrai Royal Development Study Centre Projects in Doi Saket, Chiang Mai, Thailand"

The four new awards bring to 18 the total number of PhD research scholarships granted by SEARCA since the award was started in 2005. (LLDomingo)

Eight SE Asians get research grants

Eight Southeast Asians were awarded grants from SEARCA's Seed Fund for Research and Training (SFRT) to implement research proposals. The awarding ceremony was carried out on 27 November 2008 during SEARCA's 42nd anniversary celebration.

The awardees and their research proposals are:

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

Four of the eight awardees were present during the awarding ceremony, namely: Dr. Khin Oo, Ms. Menisa A. Antonio, Dr. Agustin L. Arcenas, and Dr. Victor B. Ella.

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.

Forty-seven proposals from eight Southeast Asian countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam) were received for the 2008 call. The Evaluation Committee was composed of Dr. Arnulfo Garcia (Chairperson), Dr. Maria Celeste Cadiz, Dr. Doris Capistrano (former Director of the Forests and Governance Programme of the Center for International Forestry Research) and Dr. Donato Antiporta (former Senior Policy Adviser of Food and Agriculture Organization Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific).

Since SFRT was started in 2005, a total of 33 project 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. The SFRT grants are always conferred during SEARCA's anniversary program. (RCDikitanan)



Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan congratulates Dr. Khin Oo during the awarding ceremony of the SEARCA SFRT grants held on 27 November 2008. Looking on is Dr. Vo-Tong Xuan, first recipient of the Umali Award.

SEARCA Director speaks at 7th Jaime Ongpin Lecture

“Poverty in its various absolute dimensions is widespread in the Philippines, increasing in recent years, and threatening to rip our social fabric. It is disturbingly high, especially in comparison with other countries in East and Southeast Asia,” revealed Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director.

Occasion was the Seventh Jaime V. Ongpin Annual Memorial Lecture on Public Service in Business and Government held on 11 November 2008 at the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), Rockwell Campus, Makati City, Philippines.

Dr. Balisacan’s lecture, titled “Pathways Out of Poverty: Fancies, Facts, and Challenges,” examined the causes of poverty in the Philippines and put forth possible solutions that can leapfrog economic gains that would eventually translate to poverty reduction.

Dr. Balisacan, a Professor of Economics at the University of the Philippines School of Economics (UPSE), shared a perplexing situation. He revealed that “poverty increased between 2000 and 2006 despite the quite respectable economic performance (by the country’s historical standard), as reflected in Gross Domestic Product growth during this period. It thus appears that the economic growth in recent years has by-passed the poor!”

His lecture suggested plausible ways to remedy the problem. The guiding principle is simple. “The reform effort has to go beyond simply raising the level of public investment in basic infrastructure and social services, particularly education and health. It has to be made pro-poor as well. The

data indicate that the poorest groups in society have the least access to health, education, and family planning services. Targeting of public spending must be improved so that poorer individuals would receive proportionately more opportunities for publicly funded social services and infrastructure.”

Among the culprits of the seemingly bottomless poverty trap is rapid population growth, a problem that the country has purposefully neglected and ignored for some time now.



L-R: Dr. Antonio G.M. Laviña, Dean, Ateneo School of Government; Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director and Professor of Economics at UPSE; Prof. Solita Collas Monsod, Professor of Economics, UPSE; Mr. Alberto S. Lim, Executive Director, Makati Business Club; Mr. Tony Lopez, Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of BizNewsAsia; and Atty. Fina De La Cuesta-Tantuico, Chair, Committee on Legal Education, Philippine Bar Association, Moderator and Master of Ceremonies.

The Jaime V. Ongpin Annual Memorial Lecture on Public Service in Business and Government was conceived to help raise the awareness of the business sector about national development issues so that the business community can actively participate as a partner in nation building. It is a program of the Jaime V. Ongpin Endowed Fund and the ADMU. Past speakers of the annual memorial speaker include: Senator Edgardo Angara and Senator Mar Roxas of the Philippine Senate. (MAFABad)

SEARCA partners with Taiwan University for agri-biotech course for Asians

SEARCA co-organized an agricultural biotechnology course participated in by 26 research professors from the academe and research staff and officers from national research and development agencies in eight Asian countries.

Titled “Agricultural Biotechnology Training-Workshop in Partnership with the Philippines and Other Southeast Asian Countries,” the course was held on 1-10 September 2008 at National Taiwan University (NTU).

It was a joint collaboration among NTU’s Center for Biotechnology, College of Bioresources and Agriculture; Food and Fertilizer Technology Center for the Asian and Pacific Region; and Science and Technology Policy Research and Information Center of the National Applied Research Laboratories based in Taiwan; and SEARCA. The Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan; National Science Council, Executive Yuan; and the American Institute in Taiwan served as sponsors.

The course aimed to strengthen the capacity of researchers in conducting biotechnology research and development to contribute to a strong agriculture biotechnology industry in Southeast Asia. It hoped to improve agricultural manpower in Southeast Asian countries and establish partnerships in the development of agricultural biotechnology industry among countries in the region. The participants came from Cambodia (4), Indonesia (2), Lao PDR (1), Malaysia (1), Philippines (7), Taiwan (5), Thailand (2), and Vietnam (4).



A teaching assistant from NTU demonstrates the procedure of a laboratory exercise. Looking on is Dr. Hsin-Hung Yeh, Assistant Professor, NTU Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology.

Lectures covered topics such as recombinant DNA techniques; molecular detection of plant pathogens; methods for identification of genetically modified organisms; serological detection in agriculture; transgenic fish, shellfish, and microalga for aquaculture application and biomedical research; genetic transformation in pigs; applications of marker-assisted selection in rice breeding; genetic transformation in plants; and molecular profiling in crop quality management and improvement.

The laboratory sessions provided the participants with exposure to core techniques of biotechnology. The techniques that were taught, such as detection of orchid virus using the Enzyme-Linked ImmunoSorbent Assay kit, complemented the topics discussed during the lectures.

Apart from lectures and laboratory exercises, the course featured visits to the Agricultural Research Institute, Tai Mushroom Farm, Taoyuan District Agricultural Improvement Station, Fisheries Research Institute, and relevant NTU departments.

During the course’ closing program, the participants said the training-workshop gave them new knowledge and skills, exposure and updates on biotechnology developments, new friendships and networks, and insights on Taiwan as a country and as a biotechnology trailblazer in the region. (NARamos)

Coping with Resource Uncertainty: A New Challenge for Community Forestry Amidst Changing Socioeconomic Contexts¹



For more than two decades now, Asians have engaged in community-based forest management (CBFM) to protect tropical forests and to alleviate rural poverty. However, CBFM faces issues such as tenurial rights, access to resource use, and creating sustainable livelihood from degraded forest lands. Other barriers to CBFM include rapid social, political, and economic (global) changes/conflicts and loss of traditional knowledge.

These issues hinder communities from getting the maximum benefits coming from the use of CBFM and rural livelihood. Uncertainty in access or use rights to resources, for example, discourage communities to fully participate in CBFM. However, when their rights are secured with clearly defined responsibilities, they tend to participate more in forest management.

To get communities to participate more in forest management, CBFM implementers in Asia are now moving towards property rights reforms by formalizing community legal participation. However, for communities having no legal framework to legitimize locals' access rights, even though they are informally managing and using forests, they are faced with greater insecurity.

Policy Concern

CBFM has spread out across different political, social, economic, and cultural landscapes overtime in Asia. With varying contexts however, the viability and general application of such resource management practice faces new challenges.

Firstly, where formal access rights over the natural resources were clearly defined, how to harness in full measure the management capacity of communities takes a great deal.

Secondly, where there are no formalized arrangements for communities to engage in a meaningful and sustainable participation in forest management, how to explore intermediary measures to circumvent the lack of legal instruments is a big test of creativity.

Thirdly, as indigenous communities are affected by globalization and their integration to the mainstream society, how to keep them from being vulnerable to the fast changing biophysical, socioeconomic, cultural, and political conditions poses a big hurdle to overcome.

Emerging Lessons

Lessons learned from the Small Grants Program for Operations to Promote Tropical Forest (SGP-PTF) show the following consolidated findings from the eight participating countries (Thailand, Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia):

1. Where laws already exist that enable formal access to resource and management of forests by communities, collaboration between communities and strong local institutions help communities to reduce the cost of navigating complex laws and to exercise their rights in practice.
2. Where community access rights cannot be formalized within the current legal framework, interim measures for communities to secure resource access include:
 - improving communication and interactions between communities and local authorities, and

- para-legal arrangements backed by contracts or MOUs to specify the rights and responsibilities of communities and other key actors.
3. Sustaining the identity and cultural integrity of indigenous and other rural communities can help them manage rapid social change if:
 - their identities and cultural practices are recognized in processes for local forest governance and poverty reduction,
 - local knowledge is kept alive through methods of sharing and exchange, and
 - local community institutions are encouraged to reflect on and manage change, aspirations, conflict and threats to resource access.

Recommendations

1. Forest agencies must focus more on building alliances and networks and participatory multi-sectoral partnerships.
2. Field staff must act as broker and facilitate dialogues between communities and government through continuous social negotiation of rights and participatory learning approach.
3. Environment and forest departments have to simplify procedures with communities and local authorities (line agencies and government units) on securing legal rights and responsibilities in relation to forest management.
4. Regional organizations and aid agencies must facilitate the setting up of enabling legal frameworks, recognizing community rights and responsibilities over the forests in Asian countries where such policy instruments are not yet in place.
5. Clarify forest access and management with communities through workable and equitable legal frameworks where these do not currently exist.
6. Forest departments have to recognize local terms and systems of forest nomenclature as part of the national system of classification and management. They must complement and work with existing community organizations.
7. Government agencies and NGOs working on poverty alleviation must target forest communities, in particular, the indigenous groups.
8. Community forestry projects should focus on building social capital to strengthen local resilience and management capacities. One way to do this is to strengthen local institutions to deal with wider governance systems and social equity considerations.
9. Assist indigenous communities in establishing mechanisms to protect their intellectual property rights.
10. Study how cross-border transport infrastructure expansion in Asia affects transboundary dynamics in community managed forests. (Dr. Ma. Victoria O. Espaldon² and Dr. Paulo N. Pasicolan³)

¹ Adopted from the book *Forest Lives*, a joint publication of SEARCA, Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC), and Asia Forest Network (AFN) for the Small Grants Program for Operations to Promote Tropical Forest (SGP-PTF), a program financed by European Commission (EC) and implemented by UNDP through SEARCA.

² Dean, School of Environmental Science and Management, University of the Philippines Los Baños

³ Forestry Scientist, Head, Technical Services, REACH, Inc.

Training course on profitability of new technologies conducted

Two batches of trainees finished SEARCA's "Training Course on the Profitability of New Production and Processing Technologies." Conducted by the Consulting Services (ConServ) Department, the training was an offshoot of an ongoing project titled "Enhancing the Capability of the Philippine Department of Agriculture on More Sustainable Management of Technologies." The first course was done in 4-7 November 2008; the second run was on 11-14 November 2008.

A total of 74 participants, composed of researchers from local academic and research institutions, and personnel of the Bureau of Agricultural Research of the Philippines, attended the training course. The course sought to provide trainees with the necessary skills in profitability/financial viability analysis, which are particularly beneficial in computing the return on investment (ROI) of new technologies; thereby, influencing the acceptability and adoption of new technologies or enterprises developed by researchers.

Potential investors are more interested in getting information on the capital requirement of the new technology or proposed new enterprise, its profitability and market potential rather than in just knowing that the technology is yield-increasing. Profitability analysis is, therefore, needed before researchers and extension workers can give their final recommendations on new farm technologies or enterprises to farmers and other potential investors.

The training course consisted of lectures on analytical tools and practical sessions, providing the participants opportunities for hands-on computer application. The resource persons, all from the Department of Agricultural

Economics, College of Economics and Management, University of the Philippines Los Banos, were: (1) Dr. Corazon T. Aragon, Professor; (2) Dr. Cesar B. Quicoy, Assistant Professor; (3) Mr. Antonio Jesus Quilloj, Assistant Professor; and (4) Mr. Alessandro Manilay, Assistant Professor.

The four-day training course covered the following topics:

- cost and returns analysis and income statement analysis,
- partial budget analysis,
- break-even analysis, and
- financial cash flow analysis.

The third training course run will be in January 2009. (MAFABad)



The first batch of participants of the "Training Course on the Profitability of New Production and Processing Technologies" held at SEARCA in November 2008. With them are Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr. (first row, third from left), Deputy Director for Administration, and Dr. Mercedita A. Sombilla (second row, rightmost), Manager of ConServ, both of SEARCA.

Former SEARCA BIC Head recognized



Ms. Tababa

Ms. Sonny Tababa, former network administrator of the SEARCA Biotechnology Information Center (BIC), received special citations at the Fourth Jose G. Burgos Jr. Awards for Biotech Journalism.

The award, which recognized exemplary contribution in promoting biotech in the Philippines, was given in a ceremony held on 27 November 2008 at the Institute of Small-Scale Industries (ISSI), University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

Ms. Tababa was recognized for her contribution to the promotion of public understanding and acceptance of biotechnology in the country through her successful coordination and implementation of biotechnology advocacy programs of the SEARCA BIC, making it one of the most credible sources of science-based information on biotechnology.

"Her purposeful effort in advancing biotechnology information in the country has reached out to several stakeholders, including scientists, farmers, the media, policymakers, regulators, academe, nongovernment organizations and students, making her a prominent persona in the Philippine biotech community," the citation read.



Dr. Hautea

Dr. Randy Hautea, Global Coordinator and Southeast Asia Center director of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), was

likewise recognized at the same occasion. He was cited for his commendable leadership at ISAAA in facilitating the transfer of crop biotechnology applications and the benefits of new agricultural biotechnologies to the country through public-private partnerships.

The Jose G. Burgos, Jr. Awards for Biotech Journalism is held annually to recognize Filipino science journalists and biotech workers who contribute in promoting and communicating biotechnology in the country. (RBLapitan)



Ms. Jenny A. Panopio (third from left), SEARCA BIC Special Project Coordinator/Network Administrator, receives the special citation on behalf of Ms. Sonny P. Tababa, from Dr. William G. Padolina, Deputy Director General for Partnerships of the International Rice Research Institute during the Fourth Jose G. Burgos, Jr. Awards for Biotech Journalism held at ISSI, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City on 27 November 2008.

Assisting Dr. Padolina are: (L-R) Dr. Nina Gioriani, President of the Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines; Dr. Editha Burgos, Chairman of the Jose G. Burgos Media Services, Inc.; Dr. Segfredo Serrano, Undersecretary of the Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA); and Ms. Alicia Ilaga, Director of the DA Biotechnology Program.

Vietnamese receives 1st Umali Award in agricultural development

A Vietnamese scientist whose life work in agriculture has made great development impact in his country and Southeast Asia as a whole was recognized with the first Dioscoro L. Umali Achievement Award in Agricultural Development. The recognition was given to Dr. Vo-Tong Xuan by SEARCA during its 42nd anniversary celebration on 27 November 2008. The Umali Award is a collaborative effort initially by SEARCA, Philippine National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), and Dioscoro L. Umali Foundation (DLUF). It is named after a prominent figure in agriculture in the region, Dr. Dioscoro L. Umali, who was former dean of the University of the Philippines' College of Agriculture (UPCA) and first SEARCA Director.

"In the history of our civilization, a multitude of actions contribute to changes and development. Yet, when we focus our lenses, we would see standout persons who catalyze such change. The Umali Award seeks to recognize such persons..." said Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director.

Dr. Emil Q. Javier, President of the Philippine National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), said that the Umali Award "has four elements – excellence, leadership, service, and development, limited only by its Southeast Asia geographical focus."

"In order to merit the award, the nominee must show excellence in the exercise of his profession; demonstrate exemplary character in relationships with great and ordinary people alike; must possess an active social conscience which seeks to improve the lot of individuals as well as society at large, and must command the trust and respect of the agriculture and rural community," Dr. Javier added.

Dr. Javier illustrated parallels between the life story of Dr. Xuan and the late Dr. Umali. The most outstanding of these are their consuming love for country and strong sense of obligation. After pursuing graduate studies on foreign shores, both came home to serve their people.

Dr. Xuan, who obtained his bachelor's and master's degrees in agricultural chemistry from the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), has become a successful scientist and development worker in the field of agriculture. He played a key role in the transformation of Vietnam from one of the world's top importers of rice to becoming the second largest rice-exporting country.

Dr. Xuan is former president of An Giang University in Long Nguyen and former Vice Rector of Can Tho University, Vietnam. The past 25 years of his life have been dedicated to promoting diversified and sustainable agriculture, especially in rice production. His life work in agriculture has made an impact on millions of people in the world, particularly those in developing countries where the main means of livelihood is agriculture.

Born during the milieu of tumultuous Vietnam, Dr. Xuan's formative years were characterized by adversity and hardships. These, however, did not deter his passion for learning. Through an examination, he was able to earn a place in an elite public high school called Cao Thang Technical High School. After graduation in 1961, he received a scholarship from Rockefeller Foundation to study at then UPCA, Los Baños. Although the Philippines was not the usual destination for college education like developed countries, Dr. Xuan discovered that UPCA was one of the premier agricultural colleges in Asia where many other foreign students pursued graduate degrees.

During his stay in UPCA, Dr. Xuan was privileged to have met Dr. Umali, the inspiration for the award he received, who was then dean of UPCA. Dr.

Xuan stayed in the Philippines for 10 years during which he also became a research fellow at the International Rice Research Institute. He returned to Vietnam in 1972 determined to help his own country.

Dr. Xuan worked in various sectors to boost the productivity of a then lagging Vietnamese agriculture sector. In 1975, he completed his doctorate degree in crop science in Kyushu University in Japan.

Popularly known in Vietnam as "Dr. Rice," Dr. Xuan significantly contributed to the restoration of Vietnamese farmers' rice production after a terrible brown plant hopper infestation in the late 1970s. The insects destroyed high yielding ricefields, resulting in food shortages in the country. For Dr. Xuan, working with farmers is his greatest satisfaction. He believes that empowering farmers with the right information and equipping them with appropriate technologies help them make better decisions. As such, he used the radio, TV, and magazines to reach the farmers and to educate them about new breakthroughs in the agriculture sector.

Inspired by his work at the grassroots level, Dr. Xuan campaigned relentlessly for agricultural policies that favor the farmers. He helped convince the Vietnamese Government to adopt 'doi moi' policy. The policy promoted a free market economy and was essential in the transformation of Vietnam from a major rice importer to being the world's second largest rice exporter.

Dr. Xuan's citation read:

A scientist, educator, extension worker, administrator, and international servant in rural development, agricultural diversification, and food policies for almost three decades, Dr. Vo Tong Xuan's dedicated and committed service towards the promotion of diversified and sustainable agriculture, particularly in rice production, through his scientific publications, extension, teaching and inputs to national policies has directly and indirectly impacted the lives of millions of people, especially those in developing countries whose lives primarily depend on agriculture.

Dr. Xuan's work at the grassroots, national, and international levels in the governmental, private, and non-governmental sectors contributed immensely to the transformation of the Vietnamese agricultural economy from a net rice importer to the world's second largest rice-exporter. He was instrumental in disseminating the modern cultivation techniques of high yielding rice varieties to the farmers of the Mekong Delta and his leadership helped farmers in the area to restore their production after the brown plant hopper infestation adversely affected the high yielding rice areas of the Mekong Delta, resulting in widespread food shortage among rice farmers.

He has assisted the governments of Cambodia, Myanmar, and Lao People's Democratic Republic on their agricultural policies and technologies. His expertise has likewise been sought by governments and farmers even beyond Asia.

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Xuan recalled his long adventure in agriculture which started the moment he set foot in UPCA in 1961. He related how then Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay's ideals inspired his thinking to put the interests of other people above his own. Thus, he, with the full support of his wife, devoted his service in agriculture as most of the people in Vietnam and other developing countries in the region were farmers.

Drawing from his vast experience, Dr. Xuan imparted several lessons. He pinpointed political will as key to creating a critical mass in agriculture and

ANNIVERSARY PHOTO GALLERY



The scholars in their national attires.



SEARCA Loyalty Awardees... Kudos to you!



SEARCA staff poses with the esteemed Umali awardee.



Dr. Vo-Tong Xuan (middle), the first D.L. Umali Awardee, poses with (L-R): Mr. Manaros Boransing, Undersecretary, Philippine Department of Education, Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, Dr. Emil Q. Javier, President, National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines, and Mrs. Nelia T. Gonzalez, President, D.L. Umali Foundation.



The audience.



A glimpse of Philippine folk dances during the evening soiree.

THE EXHIBITS.



(left photo) Mrs. Hannelore Bossmann, Head of Section, South and South East Asia, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), dances a popular Philippine folk dance called "tinikling."

SEARCA celebrates / from page 1

undertake, and coordinate applied research programs related specifically to the needs and problems of the region; and disseminate the findings of research and experimentation."

At 42, SEARCA has in its wings a variety of offerings geared toward agricultural human resource development. As of June 2008, SEARCA's firstborn – the Graduate Scholarship Program – has awarded a total of 1,238 scholarships, of which 1,036 (596 MS, 440 PhD) had been completed. SEARCA managed 152 graduate scholarships during the past fiscal year; of these, 36 were completed, 42 were new, and 74 were continuing.

SEARCA also awarded in fiscal year 2007/2008 five PhD research scholarships and 10 professorial chair grants.

The Research and Development Program, on the other hand, conducted six international conferences, roundtable discussions, and

workshops to discuss sustainability science and watershed landscapes, biodiversity and climate change, biofuels development, food safety, and rural transformation. It also oversaw the conduct of 13 research projects, including nine grants under the Seed Fund for Research and Training. These research projects covered the following topics: agricultural productivity, poverty, aquaculture, food security, community-based ecotourism, climate change, value chain analysis, biodiversity, and soil fertility.

The Short-Term Training Program, the learning arm of SEARCA, conducted four learning events that tackled plant biotechnology regulations, impact evaluation of anti-poverty programs, biofuels development, and knowledge management; these involved 75 participants from 12 countries. SEARCA also carried out 51 seminars through the weekly Agriculture and Development Seminar Series held at the SEARCA headquarters every Tuesday.

The Knowledge Management Program produced 19 publications during the past fiscal year. Through the Biotechnology Information Center,

an information network providing science-based information on agricultural biotechnology, SEARCA conducted one international conference and four local training courses, co-organized/co-sponsored 12 seminars, workshops and conferences, and did seven study visits to confined biotech trials. Around 1,305 participants attended these activities.

SEARCA's Consulting Services implemented 11 projects on the following: assessment of biofuels developments, energy infrastructure in rural areas, land administration and management, agrarian reform, poverty reduction, and hunger mitigation.

The Center also awarded 14 travel grants to researchers from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines to enable them to present their research results in international conferences.

These highlights of the past fiscal year are part of the myriad reasons for SEARCA to celebrate. The road to agricultural and rural development is still long and there are still a lot to be done. But for now, as SEARCA commemorates its 42nd

THE ANNIVERSARY SPEAKERS.



Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan

Dr. Virginia Cardenas for
Chancellor Luis Rey I. VelascoMr. Manaros Boransing
for Secretary Jesli A. Lapus

Mrs. Nelía T. Gonzalez



Dr. Emil Q. Javier



Dr. Vo-Tong Xuan

rural development (ARD). He said, “ARD advocates must not only be confined to our professional circle... ARD is a government responsibility. Governments should not only be competent technically, but also possess a strong political will to come up with incentive policies for farmers and agribusinesses.”

He likewise sees it important to have, not only the aptitude for ARD, but also a heart and social consciousness for nation building. Dr. Xuan noted that “the best and most fundamental way is through proper human resource development.” It is with this realization that he became a dedicated academician, in addition to his extension work. He believes that the power of a teacher is so strong, whose influence creates a ripple effect among students and constituents.

Building the competencies of farmers is another ingredient to effective ARD. Farmers hold indigenous knowledge, handed down from generations, which aid their survival. However, due to lack of training, most of them remain poor in the midst of globalization. “They must not be left out,” he said.

He credits Vietnam’s success to being a result of a multi-sectoral approach and collective effort. “Obviously, these successes do not belong to myself alone but to a larger body of people,” he shared. “The farmers of Vietnam, at the very end of the production line, must be honored, too, for their hardwork in the fields,” Dr. Xuan remarked.

Dr. Xuan’s exemplary achievements in the field of agriculture have gained the commendation of international bodies. In 1993, he was conferred the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Government Service. He also received a certificate of recognition from the Prime Minister of Canada for “dedication and contribution to the world of sciences” (1995) and a medal “Chevalier de l’Ordre du Merite agricole” awarded by the French Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry. His more recent awards are: Nikkei Asia Prize for Regional Growth (2002), and Crawford Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) Derek Tribe Award (2005).

Presently, Dr. Xuan holds the following positions: member, Board of Trustees, The Rockefeller Foundation, New York; academician, ATSE; member, Board of Directors, International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development, Alabama, USA; and professor of agronomy, An Giang University.

founding day, the Center’s staff took a pause to unwind, relax, and enjoy the fruits of its labor.

In the evening of 27 November 2008, SEARCA had a soiree wherein SEARCA Loyalty vawardees, Seed Fund for Research and Training grantees (see story on page 11), and SEARCA photo contest winners were recognized (see story on page 9). Dubbed “An Affair to Remember,” the evening was a night of leisure and celebration among the SEARCA alumni, staff, scholars, and guests, with special presentations by the UPLB Folk Dance Society and a local music band.

The three SEARCA Loyalty Awardees and their years of service are as follows:

- Dennis P. Dizon, Electrical and Equipment Technician, 25 years;
- Mina G. Talatala, Records and Archives Assistant, 20 years; and
- Sharon F. dela Rosa, Audit Specialist, 10 years. (MAFABad)

Dr. Xuan received a plaque and a cash prize of US\$10,000. The Umali Award is going to be given annually. (MAFABad)



Dr. Vo-Tong Xuan, Vietnam’s Dr. Rice.

ABOUT THE TROPHY

“PUNLA”

Kilnformed Glass, Stainless Steel,
and Philippine Granite
By Bobby Castillo

The artist views the institution of this memento as an effort to inspire a virtual nursery of effective agricultural development work, and propagate innovation, purposeful insight, useful activity, patience and perseverance in order to benefit human kind.

The glass was made using a 3,000-year-old hot glassworking technique called kilnforming and was coldworked, etched, painted and decorated with modern day synthetic gold leaf thus reflecting the timelessness of the achievement of the awardee.

Serrano, Medrano named outstanding SEARCA alumni

The SEARCA Fellows Association of the Philippines (SFAP) has named its 2008 Outstanding SEARCA Fellows during SEARCA's 42nd anniversary celebration on 27 November 2008 in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines. They are Dr. Segfredo R. Serrano, Undersecretary, Department Agriculture (DA), Philippines, and Dr. William C. Medrano, Commissioner, Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Philippines.



Dr. Serrano



Dr. Medrano

SFAP recognized Dr. Serrano, a national-international policy and trade negotiator for his immeasurable and significant contributions to the growth and development of the

Philippine agriculture and fishery sector in the various positions he has held in the Philippine government.

Dr. Serrano was also cited for his initiatives, innovative ideas, and leadership in policy and program planning, research, monitoring and evaluation, and loan/grant negotiations, starting from the time he was a Program Leader and Chief Research Specialist at the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), during his appointment as Assistant Secretary and now Undersecretary for Policy and Program Planning of DA.

As chief negotiator of the agriculture and fishery sector, Dr. Serrano has greatly contributed in providing the sector better socioeconomic policies

that have significantly helped in the unprecedented growth of the Philippine agriculture and fishery sector in the past eight years.

Similarly, SFAP recognized Dr. Medrano as research administrator-educator par excellence, particularly his outstanding achievements as leader of three institutions in Philippine agriculture and education: CHED, DA's Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR), and Cagayan Valley Agriculture Resources Research and Development (CVARRD).

As Consortium Director of CVARRD, Dr. Medrano led it to become the model for integrated R&D management for the National Research and Development Network, winning the prestigious Ugnay Award for four consecutive years.

While he was Executive Director of the BAR, Dr. Medrano initiated innovative programs that brought BAR closer to its clients. He also prioritized the upgrading of the BAR's research outreach stations and regional integrated agricultural research centers as well as partner state universities and colleges, thus enabling them to take a more active participation in the agriculture and fisheries R&D system.

SFAP also cited Dr. Medrano's innovative ideas and his initiatives in establishing development programs that benefit higher education institutions and their constituents as former Executive Director and now Commissioner of CHED.

SFAP is the association of Filipino SEARCA graduate alumni. Organized in 1995, it aims to provide a vehicle for Filipino SEARCA graduate alumni to mobilize their expert services for development assistance. Beyond fostering closer relations among SEARCA alumni in the Philippines and other countries, SFAP also strives to create collaborative research and development efforts in the Philippines and in the Southeast Asian region. (LLDDomingo, with inputs from SFAP)

SEARCA Photo Contest highlights climate change

Climate change is a pressing concern that could alter every aspect of life. Many scientists have articulated the consequences people may face. The agriculture sector is one of the areas that would be most affected by climate change, and this is a big concern because the majority of the poor belong to this sector. With this context, SEARCA conducted a photo contest on the theme "Coping with Climate Change: Finding Solutions."

The photo contest ran from 16 August to 17 November 2008. SEARCA received a total of 195 photo submissions from India, Myanmar, Philippines, and Singapore.

The entry, "Wood gatherer in Bangui", by Mr. Ramon Castillo of the Philippines won first place. Mr. Castillo also bagged the third place for his entry, "Reforestation." The second prize went to Ms. Gina Meneses of the Philippines for her entry, "Rebirth."

The winning entry of Mr. Castillo was taken in Ilocos Norte, northern Philippines. It depicts a wood gatherer with the wind turbine as his background.

"Rebirth" shows the danger posed by forest denudation and how it affects the mangrove ecosystem. "Reforestation" shows a farmer planting a tree to minimize deforestation.

The entries were judged based on the following criteria: relevance (35%), regional flavor (20%), originality (20%), composition (15%), and sharpness (10%). Dr. Ma. Victoria Espaldon, Dean of the School of Environmental Science and Management (SESAM), University of the Philippines Los Baños; Mr. Al Benavente, a professional photographer; and Dr. Ma. Celeste Cadiz, SEARCA's Training Manager, served as final judges.

The entries were part of the exhibits during SEARCA's 42nd anniversary on 27 November 2008 during the anniversary's evening program. Winners received the following prizes of US\$500 (first place), US\$300 (second place), and US\$200 (third place). (RMMDedicatoria/MAFABad)



1st place



2nd place



3rd place

Thesis Abstracts

AGRONOMIC AND PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES OF HYBRID RICE TO SEED RECYCLING, NITROGEN LEVEL AND BIODYNAMIC PRACTICES



Ni Ni Tint, Myanmar
MS in Agronomy
University of the Philippines
Los Baños

Field experiments were conducted at the University of the Philippines Los Baños in 2005 and 2006 to evaluate the agronomic and physiological performance of the F1 and F2 generations of PSB Rc 72H (dry season only), NSIC Rc 114H, and NSIC Rc 116H under different nitrogen (N) levels during the dry and wet season. An inbred (Burdagol) and two generations of PSB Rc 72H were evaluated during the wet season using zero-N, 50 and 100 kg N ha⁻¹. Biodynamic (BD) preparations were applied to the zero-N plots.

Nitrogen level did not affect most agronomic parameters except grain yield which was significantly higher under the recommended N level during the dry and wet season. Grain yield in the 0 N + biodynamic plots was significantly lower than the yield from the N-fertilized plots. Grain yield obtained from 0 N + BD plots, however, was relatively high (3.88 t ha⁻¹). PSB Rc 72H had the highest grain yield whereas NSIC Rc 114H had the lowest. Regardless of N level, the F2 generations had significantly lower yield than the F1 hybrids by 11 -25% during the dry season. The grain yield of the F2 generation of PSB Rc 72H and NSIC Rc 114H was statistically similar to the yield of the F1 hybrids during the wet season. The number of panicles m⁻² was the sole yield parameter significantly related to the grain yield of the F2 generations during the dry season whereas the number of filled spikelets m⁻² and harvest index were significantly related to grain yield during the wet season. These yield parameters in addition to loss of uniformity in flowering, height and panicle length accounted for the yield depression. Hybrids with higher yield potential were more prone to yield depression than those with lower yield potential. Physiological response to N level and to the biodynamic practices generally did not vary with variety-generation.

Seed recycling is variety- and season-specific. Recycle a segregating generation if the savings on cost of seeds is greater than forgone net returns. Long-term studies are needed to evaluate further the effectiveness of biodynamic practices on lowland rice.

PRODUCTIVITY AND ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY OF TRADITIONAL HOMEGARDENS IN BOBONARO DISTRICT, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE



Luis Godinho, Timorese
MS in Silviculture and Forestry
Influences
University of the Philippines
Los Baños

The study was conducted in Bobonaro District reservation, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste from January to April 2007. It is aimed to determine the productive and ecological sustainability of the upland and lowland homegardens in Runabout Village, Mailana Sub-district of Bobonaro.

Thirty-three respondents were identified using 33% stratified random sampling from 100 households to determine the homegardens' species composition, vegetative structure, establishment and management practices, and economic productivity. Two representative homegardens were identified to characterize species diversity, soil physical and chemical properties, and sheet erosion.

The Bobonaro homegarden were found to provide a wide variety of products and was economically productive. Structurally, four canopy layers and high species diversity characterized the homegardens. Management practices were simple and done by family members. Mean annual production value from the homegardens was US\$1,101.35 and US\$837.32 in the lowland and upland areas, respectively, which were derived mainly from food crops and livestock.

The results of the study showed that upland and lowland homegardens possesses desirable physical and chemical properties that are within the acceptable standards considered for ecologically sound system. There were no significant differences found in the physical and chemical properties of lowland and upland homegardens.

Bulk density, particle density and depth of sheet erosion soil were lower in the lowland compared with upland homegarden. Soil organic matter was 5.89% and 6.55% in the upland and lowland homegardens, respectively. Meanwhile, pH, phosphorus, calcium, magnesium, and cation exchange capacity were also slightly lower in the upland compared to the lowland.

EVALUATION OF THE HYPOGLYCEMIC ACTIVITY OF SPRAY-DRIED BANABA [*LAGERSTROEMIA SPECIOSA* (L.) PERS.] POWDER ON ALLOXAN-INDUCED DIABETIC ICR MICE



Neil C. Tanquilut, Filipino
MS in Veterinary Medicine
University of the Philippines
Los Baños

This study was conducted to evaluate the hypoglycemic activity of spray dried banaba [*Lagerstroemia speciosa* (L.) Pers.] powder (250 and 1000 mg/kg), banaba decoction (20 ml/kg) and glibenclamide (10 mg/kg) on alloxan-induced diabetic male ICR mice.

The administration of 250 and 1000 mg/kg spray dried banaba powder and banaba decoction (20 ml/kg) given once daily by gavage significantly reduced ($P < 0.05$) blood glucose level of diabetic mice in a 28-day treatment period. Percent reduction in blood glucose after 28-day treatment in groups given 250 mg/kg banaba powder, 1000 mg/kg banaba powder and banaba decoction were 23.88%, 32.87% and 20.51%, respectively. The drop in blood glucose was also related to the dramatic reduction of urinary glucose ($P < 0.05$).

No significant reduction of blood glucose was observed in glibenclamide-treated diabetic mice. The absence of functional β cells may have caused this failure. Urinary ketones were undetected throughout the treatment period (28 days).

There was a significant reduction in Body Mass Index and body weight in mice given spray dried banaba powder (250 and 1000 mg/kg) and banaba decoction when compared to the diabetic control group. The feed intake of mice in the non-diabetic control was comparable with the diabetic control. However, significant reduction in feed intake was observed in banaba treated and glibenclamide treated groups compared to the non-diabetic control. Water intake was significantly high in the diabetic control mice compared to the other groups. Water intake was normalized in diabetic mice treated with banaba. Necropsy and histopathological changes were also observed. But treatment effect was complicated by the toxic effect of alloxan on other organs of the body.

There was a general reduction in organ weights of diabetic mice compared to the non-diabetic control mice except for the spleen. Spleen weights are comparable to other groups.

5th Executive Forum on Environmental Economics for Decision Making

30 MARCH - 3 APRIL 2009 SEARCA, LOS BANOS, LAGUNA, PHILIPPINES

Overview

The Executive Forum on "Environmental Economics for Decision Making" is part of a series of forums under SEARCA's Natural Resource Management program. It is designed for decision-makers and mid-level environment and resource managers/executives in Southeast Asia-based nongovernment organizations, international organizations, and government agencies. It aims to enhance their understanding of recent trends and debates on global and regional resource and environmental problems such as biodiversity, climate change, and transboundary problems from an economics perspective. It is also designed to re-equip participants with the knowledge and appreciation of environmental and resource valuation with emphasis on contingent valuation method.

Methods

This five-day forum offers lectures and workshops covering regional environmental concerns within Southeast Asia and the application of environmental valuation as a tool for policy making and environmental planning. Workshops and lectures will be facilitated by regional experts and researchers, combining theory, methods, and policy research-oriented case studies. A variety of teaching methods will be employed which includes interactive lectures, workshops, and participant presentations.

Objectives

At the end of the forum, participants will be able to:

- discuss the various resource valuation tools and how they can be used for policy, project and program assessment, as well as for advocating environmental conservation and protection;
- name and describe current regional and international treaties related to biodiversity, climate change, and transboundary resource problems, as well as see the likely impacts of these treaties to his/her country; and
- analyze current trends, debates, and issues in climate change, biodiversity, and transboundary resource problems.

Content

- Getting the values right: Concept of value and the tools available in environmental economics
- Using benefit cost analysis for evaluating policy options
- Environmental policy analysis
- Environmental health hazards
- The value of statistical life
- Pollution issues in Southeast Asia
- Climate change scenarios and its implications for the Southeast Asian region
- Adaptation to climate change: Needs and opportunities for Southeast Asia
- Moving beyond the science: The value of information to farmers during climate change
- Clean development mechanism: Opportunities and challenges
- Moving beyond multilateral environmental agreements: Prospects and challenges for biodiversity conservation in Southeast Asia
- Economics of biodiversity conservation
- Conservation financing options for a cultural heritage site

Measures of Hope and Promises Delivered: An International Conference on Socioeconomic and Environmental Impact Assessment of Genetically Modified Crops

21-22 APRIL 2009, BANGKOK, THAILAND

Background and Objective

Biotechnology is touted to 'feed the world.' After a decade of global adoption of biotech crops, issues on sustainability, equitable access and benefits, environmental and socioeconomic impacts, among others, linger. The concerns are not much to deter the development of biotechnology but much more to ensure that what it promises are delivered. After a decade of global adoption of biotech crops, a wealth of experience has been generated from a number of socioeconomic and environmental impact assessment studies that have been conducted on ex-ante and ex-post basis both in the Third World and industrialized countries.

SEARCA, in collaboration with the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSP II), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and Monsanto Singapore Co. (Pte) Ltd., will conduct a two-day international conference titled, "Measures of Hope and Promises Delivered: An International Conference on Socioeconomic and Environmental Impact Assessment of Genetically Modified (GM) Crops." It will be held on April 21-22, 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The conference would provide a better understanding of the methodologies, tools, insights, and experiences in examining the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of adopting biotechnology applications, particularly GM crops. It also aims to examine the factors that encourage or hinder the development and diffusion of new agricultural biotechnologies, and the institutional arrangements and/or policy environment influencing the same.

The Speakers

Highly esteemed policymakers, respected technology researchers and developers from the private sector, and actors from the academe and non-government organizations would be invited to attend the event. By bringing together an international multi-stakeholder group, it is expected that priority areas in research, capacity building, and doable policy options that will help strengthen public policy on agricultural biotechnology will be identified by the end of the conference.

Topics to be Covered

There will be five thematic sessions focusing on:

- Session 1: Tools of the Trade: Methodological Tools and Approaches
- Session 2: Scanning the Horizon: Sharing of Experiences in Socioeconomic and Environmental Impact Assessment of Genetically Modified Crops
- Session 3: Going Beyond the Technology: Looking at the Environmental and Sustainability Impacts of Genetically-Modified Crops
- Session 4: The X-Factor: The Costs of Biosafety Regulations
- Session 5: Makeovers: Integrating Results of Socioeconomic and Environmental Impact Assessment into the Decision-making Process

For more details, contact SEARCA's Research and Development Department. E-mail: agg@agri.searca.org, rvg@agri.searca.org; Tel: +63 49 536-2290 loc 159/137; Fax: +63 49 536-4105

SEARCA invites applications for Graduate Scholarship in Agriculture for SY 2010/2011

SEARCA invites applications for its graduate scholarship (MS and PhD) in agriculture and related fields (including biological sciences, social sciences, economics and statistics, forestry and fisheries, environmental sciences, agro-industrial technology and engineering, biochemistry, and development management) for **School Year 2010-2011**. The scholarship is open to nationals of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam who are regular employees of academic or research institutions or government agencies and not older than 35 years old.

Applicants may submit their applications to their countries' respective Ministries of Education, Higher Education, Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Environment and Natural Resources, or Rural Development. The Ministries will then screen and endorse their applications and submit the list of qualified applicants accompanied by the complete set of requirements to SEARCA not later than **30 July 2009**. Applicants should inquire with their respective Ministries regarding the Ministries' closing date for receiving SEARCA applications, which they will screen and endorse to SEARCA.

Any one of the following universities may serve as study posts of SEARCA scholars: Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia; Kasetsart University and Thammasat University, Thailand; Institut Pertanian Bogor, Universitas Gadjah Mada and University of Indonesia, all in Indonesia; University of the Philippines (UP) Los Baños, UP Diliman, and UP Visayas, Philippines; and National University of Singapore, Singapore; SEARCA reserves the right to make final decision on the choice of the scholars' study post. Therefore, applicants are required to submit to SEARCA applications for admission to the Graduate Schools of at least three universities in the list.

The list of requirements for application as well as all the required forms for scholarship application of the priority thrusts of SEARCA, namely: agricultural competitiveness, sustainable land use and water management, and biodiversity conservation.

SEARCA shall not evaluate applications with incomplete documents. Moreover, applicants who are denied admission by the Graduate School concerned will not be considered for scholarship.

Interested parties may contact the Graduate Scholarship Department of SEARCA via email at gsd@agri.searca.org or ecc@agri.searca.org

SEARCA to conduct back-to-back activities on fisheries

Capture fisheries and aquaculture play significant roles in the economy of many countries in Southeast Asia as far as food security, employment, and income are concerned. With average fish consumption at 16.9 kg/capita, total global demand is projected to continuously increase over the years, especially as population grows and consumers become more health-conscious.

Continuing concerns on the uncertain impact of climate change and the relative vulnerability of countries and specific communities to these changes have made it imperative to identify and implement early on specific strategies and mitigation policies to cushion, if not totally avert, the negative consequences of climate change.

On 19-20 March 2009, SEARCA will conduct back-to-back activities on the fisheries sector of Southeast Asia. The first will be a regional workshop on "Climate Change and Food Security: Global Challenges for improving the competitiveness of fisheries and fisheries-based products in Asia." The second activity will be a "Mini-Forum on Initiatives, Information Exchange, and Research Cooperation on Fisheries and Climate Change in Southeast Asia." Both activities will be held at SEARCA Residence Hotel, Los Baños, Laguna.

The workshop, a product of collaboration among SEARCA, WorldFish Center, Philippine Council for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development (PCAMRD), and Philippine Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR), will bring together a multi-stakeholder group including policymakers, researchers, and private sector representatives from Asia.

It aims to identify production constraints and target priority areas along the product or service life cycle where improvements and higher investments could be made to enhance the competitiveness of the fisheries sector and/or fisheries-based products. It will assess the status of the fisheries sector in the region and develop a research proposal that could help address the various limitations confronting the sector, especially those associated with climate change within the context of food security and other key areas of concern.

The second activity to be held in the afternoon of 20 March 2009 aims to conduct a preliminary assessment on the impacts of climate change on fisheries in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Vietnam; identify research gaps, and come up with recommendations for future activities. (RCDikitanan)



Snapshots



Dr. Emerlinda R. Roman, President, University of the Philippines (UP), calls on Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, on 10 October 2008. Dr. Roman was in UP Los Baños to attend the university's 90th Loyalty Day festivities.



Bangladeshi participants of a training cum study tour conducted by SEARCA's Consulting Services (ConServ) Department in relation to the Rural Infrastructure Development Project, held on 19 October – 1 November 2008 pose with the training facilitators and staff, among them: Dr. Merlyne M. Paunlagui (leftmost), University Researcher, College of Public Affairs, UPLB, and Dr. Mercedita A. Sombilla (second row, leftmost), Manager of SEARCA's ConServ Department.



Governing board members of the SEAMEO Regional Center for Tropical Biology (BIOTROP) led by Dr. Handoko, BIOTROP Director, and representatives from the Indonesian Embassy and SEAMEO Secretariat visited the Center on 24 October 2008.



Administrative staff members of SEARCA listen to Ms. Connie Udina, Trainer, Guthrie-Jensen during their training course on "Effective Business Writing" held on 28-29 October 2008 at the SEARCA Residence Hotel.



SEARCA staff members let their hair down as they play parlor games during SEARCA's Christmas Party held on 19 December 2009.



Three officials from the Vietnam Forestry University, led by Dr. Pham Xuan Hoan, Vice Rector, visited SEARCA on 4 December 2008. Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., Deputy Director for Administration, and managers/representatives of the Center's core programs briefed them on SEARCA.



Dr. Jen-Chyuan Lee, new Director of Food and Fertilizer Technology Center (FFTC), discussed with the Center's officials and department managers possibilities for more collaboration between FFTC and SEARCA on 26 October 2008.



Ms. Virginie Lafleur-Tighe (second from left), European Commission Philippines Programme Officer, visited the Center on 14 November 2008 to discuss areas of further collaboration. Ms. Lafleur-Tighe has worked with SEARCA through the Small Grants Programme for Operations to Promote Tropical Forests (SGP PTF). She was received by Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., and program heads.



The Ladies from the Office of the Director and Deputy Director for Administration spice up the party with a Christmas medley.

SEARCA CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS IN A MUSICAL FASHION



The Consulting Services Department belts out "All I want for Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth."



The Graduate Scholarship Department staff does it Abba-style with "Supertrooper."



Children of SEARCA staff go home with adorable gifts.

SEARCA CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY



Fun and games!

GIVING BACK



SEARCA, through its Human Resources Management Unit, shared its blessings to its adopted school by giving milk and other gift items to pupils of a public elementary school in Maahas, Los Baños on 17 December 2008. Ms. Maria Margaritha B. Romero led the gift-giving.

UC and proposals to generate funds. Thus, a Fund-Raising Working Group was formed, which is composed of representatives from UQ, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM); University of the Philippines Los Banos (UPLB), and SEARCA.

The Board also agreed on two priority themes for UC projects in the next two years: (1) food security and biosafety; and (2) biofuel and global warming (climate change, competition between food and biofuel).

The Board approved the continued implementation of ongoing student and faculty exchanges with combined funding from the UC and other sources, as well as the annual UC meetings.

Participants of the meeting and their institutional affiliation are as follows:

Insitut Pertanian Bogor (IPB), Indonesia

- Dr. Khairil Anwar Notodiputro, Dean of Graduate School; and
- Dr. Rinekso Soekmadi, Director, Directorate of Collaboration and International Programs.

Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

- Dr. Masyhuri, Director, Center for World Trade Studies, Office of International Affairs; and
- Dr. Ali Wibowo, Professor.

UPM, Malaysia

- Dr. Aini Ideris, Dean of Graduate School; and
- Dr. Hasanah Mohd. Ghazali, Deputy Dean, School of Graduate Studies.

University of British Columbia, Canada

- Dr. Mahesh Upadhyaya, Associate Dean, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences Graduate Studies; and
- Dr. David Kitts, Professor and Program Director of Food, Nutrition and Health.

UQ, Australia

- Dr. Roger Swift, Executive Dean, Faculty of Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Veterinary Science; and
- Dr. Richard Williams, Professor and Coordinator, Faculty International Programs, Faculty of Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Veterinary Science.

Tokyo University of Agriculture (TUA), Japan

- Dr. Akimi Fujimoto, Director of International Programs; and
- Dr. Mariko Uehara, Deputy Director of International Programs.

UPLB, Philippines

- Dr. Luis Rey I. Velasco, Chancellor; and
- Dr. Oscar B. Zamora, Dean of Graduate School.

SEARCA

- Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, Director; and
- Dr. Editha C. Cedicol, Manager of Graduate Scholarship Department.

TUA will host the 22nd UC Meeting tentatively scheduled on the second week of November 2009.

The UC was established in September 1989 at SEARCA, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines. Its founding members are: IPB and UGM in Indonesia; UPM; Kasetsart University (KU) in Thailand; and UPLB. Its associate members are UBC in Canada; UQ in Australia; the Georg-August University of Goettingen (GAUG) in Germany, and TUA in Japan. SEARCA initiated the establishment of the UC and has been serving as its secretariat since then. (ECCedicol)

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agricultural and rural development through graduate scholarship, research and development, and knowledge management.

Mrs. Hannelore Bossmann, Head of Section, South and Southeast Asia, DAAD, delivered a presentation on DAAD's policy in Southeast Asia. DAAD is a long-time partner of SEARCA in capacity-building, especially in the Graduate Scholarship Program. She said DAAD, an association of German universities, tries to strengthen universities in South and Southeast Asia through exchange programs that play an important conditional role in DAAD's efforts to improve living conditions. She added that DAAD aims at creating long lasting academic links that will foster international cooperation between German universities and their partners in the region.

The third plenary presenter was Dr. Alex B. Brillantes, Jr., Professor and Dean, National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines Diliman, who reported the results of his impact study on the SEARCA Graduate Fellowship Program. As in findings of past impact studies of the programs, he found that the SEARCA Graduate Fellowship Program's impact on individuals and institutions is positive and highly relevant. He thus recommended that SEARCA should focus on building the brand (Tatak SEARCA) of the graduate education program to create a dent in ARD in Southeast Asia. Tatak SEARCA envisions that receipt of the scholarship equates to personal success, which in turn would create a dent in ARD in Southeast Asia. He also emphasized that SEARCA must play a lead role in organizing and strengthening its graduate alumni network to further strengthen collaborations for greater individual advancement and institutional development that could lead to greater impact on national and regional policymaking.

A total of 16 full papers and 22 posters were presented on the five conference sub-themes: 1) Agriculture, Globalization, and the Millennium Development Goals, 2) Education in a Rapidly Globalizing Asia, 3) ICT and Knowledge Management for Agriculture and Development, 4) Lessons and Challenges in Public-Private Partnerships for Agriculture and Rural Development, and 5) Managing Agricultural Development in Globalizing Southeast Asia.

Dr. Zosimo M. Battad, President of SFAP, said in his closing remarks that "indeed, we are leaders in our own right and respective spheres of functions and responsibilities, taking into consideration the impact of our R&D work as reflected in our publications and long list of accomplishments." He stressed that as leaders, SEARCA alumni face greater challenges now more than ever in the face of a global financial crisis, increasing human population, food and fuel scarcity, climate change, and new and deadlier diseases. Dr. Battad urged his fellow SEARCA alumni to be part of the solution.

Dr. Vo-Tong Xuan, first recipient of the Dioscoro L. Umali Achievement Award in Agricultural Development, in his keynote speech also put into perspective the rationale of the conference. He remarked that agricultural and rural development practitioners "should have the essential skills and knowledge of appropriate agriculture, as well as a good heart and sympathy toward farmers and the farming countryside."

Dr. Balisacan challenged the SEARCA alumni, "Now that you are no longer SEARCA scholars but SEARCA alumni, we now view you no longer as beneficiaries but as partners in our development efforts." (LLDDomingo)

University Consortium Executive Board meets in Australia

The Executive Board of the Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC) had, held its 21st annual meeting in Gatton Campus, University of Queensland (UQ), Queensland, Australia on 2-3 December 2008. The meeting focused on the following: 1) directions of the UC in the succeeding years, 2) partnerships, and 3) plans and activities for fund generation. Dr. Roger Swift, Executive Dean of the UQ Faculty of Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Veterinary Science, chaired the meeting.

Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, an associate member of the UC and UC Secretariat, presented SEARCA's Ninth Five-Year Plan which will pursue more focused selection of programs, projects, and themes under the two broad thrusts, namely: agricultural competitiveness and natural resource management. In the next five years, SEARCA's activities will be more regionalized and will strongly engage the UC in collaborative projects, particularly in hosting SEARCA scholars, researchers, and scientists; and in designing joint graduate programs, research and training courses, and sandwich programs for MS and PhD scholarships.



Participants of the 21st University Consortium Annual Meeting in Queensland, Australia.

Dr. Richard Williams, Associate Dean, Faculty of the UQ Natural Resources, Agriculture and Veterinary Science, provided information on the availability of Australian grants and opportunities to the UC such as the Australian Leadership Awards and the Asian Public Sector Linkage Awards. He said proposals have to be submitted in order to apply for these grants.

Recognizing the need to build on the track record of the UC, the UC Executive Board decided to hire an expert to come up with a marketing plan for the

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SEARCA gathers graduate alumni for international confab

SEARCA has convened its graduate alumni and scholars in an international conference on "Developing Tomorrow's Leaders in Agriculture and Rural Development: Responding to the Challenges of Globalization" held on 27-28 November 2008 at Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines.

The conference was co-sponsored by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD); Philippine Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR); SEARCA Fellows Association of the Philippines (SFAP); Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Philippines, and SEARCA.

Held on the occasion of SEARCA's 42nd anniversary, the conference discussed issues and concerns confronting higher education institutions in responding to the challenges of fast-changing technological, social, and political environments.

The 109 conference participants, mostly SEARCA graduate alumni and ongoing scholars, came from Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.

The conference commenced with a program celebrating SEARCA's 42nd anniversary on 27 November 2008. Dr. Arsenio M. Balisacan, SEARCA Director, remarked that "the main purpose of the Center's human resource development programs, particularly the Graduate Scholarship Program, is to produce people highly trained in agriculture who will assume leadership positions so that they could sway the direction of development efforts, especially agricultural and rural development, within their sphere of influence."

He said the persistence of poverty in the Southeast Asian region and the opportunities and demands brought about by modernization and globalization pose big challenges for development and education institutions. He emphasized that the SEARCA graduate alumni are the Center's partners in development efforts and that the conference is intended to spark ideas on how this new mode of the alumni's engagement with SEARCA can best be conducted.



Participants of the SEARCA Alumni Conference pose for posterity.

Three papers presented during the plenary session set the tone of the conference.

Dr. Balisacan presented SEARCA's directions and plans for the next five years, covering fiscal years 2009/2010 to 2014/2015, which are focused on enabling institutions for agricultural and rural development in a globalizing Southeast Asia. The Center's Ninth Five-Year Plan reaffirms SEARCA's commitment to building the capacities of Southeast Asian institutions working toward

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