



# BAR Chronicle

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BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

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Volume No. 1 Issue No. 5

1 - 15 March 2000

## WINROCK INTERNATIONAL To Co-fund Project With BAR



The Bureau of Agricultural Research Division heads met with Winrock International Country Director Inocencio Bolo last 2 March 2000 to discuss the different aspects of the proposed project on the development of dryland agriculture covering the rain-fed lowland and upland areas. The project will be a collaborative effort of BAR, DA agencies, Winrock International and other funding Institutions. Initially, this will be implemented in the areas of Eastern Pangasinan and Ilocos Norte.

The project will be aimed at addressing and improving the productivity of the farms in the rainfed lowland and upland areas, thereby increasing the profit of farmers. To avoid the mistakes committed in previous government projects, this collaborative undertaking will underpin sustainability, environmental conservation, social equity, and carrying capacity of the proposed area with consideration to population influx.

As agreed, several components will be included in the project. The first will involve the implementation of institutional reforms that will improve the delivery system and relationship between local agencies, LGUs, and the DA. The second is capability building which entails the improvement and enhancement of the identified levels of governance (regional, district, provincial, and municipal). Other identified components are R & D activities, market and other infrastructure support, extension support services, and access to market information & statistics, education and communication. (☞ page 2)

## AQUACULTURE: THE WAY TO GO FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"Aquaculture will continue to become the fastest growing food production sector in the world in the new millennium and is an increasingly important contributor to national development, the global food supply and food security." This is according to the Bangkok Declaration on Aquaculture that was drafted during the *International Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium* in Bangkok, Thailand last 20-25 February 2000.

The Philippines was represented by Ms. Marie Antonette Juinio-Jimenez of the UP Marine Science Institute through the financial assistance of the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR).

According to Ms. Jimenez, the Philippines is lagging behind in aquaculture development "despite strategic advantages - such as being in Asia (which is considered as the center of aquaculture development in the world) and having highly-trained researchers and excellent planners." One factor that may have contributed to this is the continued disregard for certain environmental issues and impact of aquaculture such as the degradation of Laguna de Bay. While other countries have learned from it (Laguna de Bay), "it seems that we have not," she said. (☞ page 4)



## Fiber technical meeting held

The Fibercrops Network Technical Team met last March 6 to present the two approved high impact projects for the fiber crops, discuss the transition of the core planning team to technical team, and select a University Researcher for the development of a compendium for fibercrops.

One important course of the meeting was the presentation and review of the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the National Team Leaders, Core Technical Team/Zonal Coordinators, Network Advisory Group, and Technical Team.

The National Team Leaders shall provide the leadership and implementation of the Fibercrop R/DE program. Specifically, they will provide a rationale for the allocation of resources for the network, technical guidance to regional R/DE network members and the interface with other networks, technical monitoring, review, and evaluation. As stated in the TOR, the National Team Leaders shall be responsible for identifying and packaging technologies on fibercrops for dissemination, establishing/maintaining active linkages with related national and international institutes, sourcing of local and international fund for R/DE program of the network and, providing leadership ability in the organization of network-wide activities.

The Core Technical Team and Zonal Coordinators shall assist the team leader in the planning and implementation of R/DE program, act as zonal coordinators and, provide technical guidance to regional R/DE networks.

The Network Advisory Group will provide technical assistance to the national and regional R/DE network in implementing and validating national projects. This group will also extend technical assistance to BAR on policy matters related to the network commodity or discipline. Also, they shall represent BAR in various technical fora as requested by the Director.

The Technical/Expert Team on the other hand, will provide "on-call" technical assistance in the implementation of national and regional R/DE network. (*Rita dela Cruz*)

## WINROCK ...

According to Mr. Bolo and Mr. Rolando Labios, BAR IDD Chief, several considerations must be addressed in the development of the project. These include getting the community involved in the process of R & D, identifying and packaging the best technologies and practices inherently developed by the farmers, understanding the social and economic aspects of the proposed area of implementation, understanding the extension system, and assessing the support system to the plan. Flexibility of the project should also be considered in crafting the plan. Also vital to the successful implementation of the project is the establishment of support services (market infrastructure and other facilities) or application of the

"core periphery approach". Mr. Bolo further emphasized that the proposed project should cohere to the concept of the Rural-Urban Linkage Development Approach. This will include activities that will also target the urban area for the project to take off.

As an offshoot of the meeting, the group has agreed to visit Pangasinan, Batac and Sarrat Ilocos Norte on 27-31 March. Furthermore, it was agreed that an initial concept paper must be prepared. This must include other relevant information and ideas on the proposed project and information on area-based economic benefits, profitability, social productivity, sustainability, and equity. (*Thea Kristina M. Pabuayon*)

## BAR FUNDS 3rd APMBC PROCEEDINGS

The Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR), through its Scientific Publication Grant System, has agreed to provide the amount of P100,000 for the publication of the Asia-Pacific Marine Biotechnology Conference '99 (APMBC) Proceedings.

The grant is included in BAR's fund allocation for the year 2000. This support is part of BAR's commitment to strengthen the knowledge management of the NaRDSAF. Particularly, this is done to provide professional societies funds for publication of conference proceedings, journals, and manuals. Also, it is expected that this grant will promote agricultural and fisheries R & D excellence. The amount will cover the layouting and printing of 250 copies of the said publication.

Since 1995, the APMBC has been conducted every two years in different Asian countries. This biennial conference deepens and strengthens the relationships of marine biotechnology researchers, features the latest technologies and developments as well as facilitate interaction with the private sector. As part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Marine Science Institute Anniversary for the year 1999, the University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI) in cooperation with the Center for BioMolecular Science Foundation organized the activity last 28 November 1 December 1999. (page 4)





## FDASP opens new opportunity

Potential Filipinos may now have a better opportunity of pursuing a particular field of study in the United States through the Fulbright Department of Agriculture Scholarship Program (FDASP). This was the directive made possible by a press briefing held last 7 March 2000. The program allocated a total of \$2.7 million for the annual educational exchanges between the Philippines and the U.S. It is aimed at modernizing the agriculture and fisheries sectors of the Philippines through human resource development.

The FDASP was established through a signed agreement by Agriculture Secretary Edgardo Angara of the Philippines and Ambassador Thomas Hubbard of the U.S. The funding for this program is made available by the U.S. Government to the Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA).

Granting of the awards is done through an open competition on the basis of individual academic merit. Aspirants of the FDASP grants must be a Filipino, 35 years old or below with at least two years work experience at the DA and its affiliate agencies. The scholarship is also open to those who work as faculty member from recognized state and private colleges and universities offering programs in agriculture and fisheries. Professionals from non-government organizations, government financed institutions, and other government and private agencies whose main work are in agriculture and fisheries were also encouraged to apply.

FDASP grants available are graduate study grants and research grants. Graduate study grants include Ph.D. or Master's degree, both have a one year duration but can be renewed, and non-degree doctoral enrichment dissertation research which has a maximum duration of one year. Research grants include consultation visits with experts in agriculture and fisheries at universities and research institutions in the U.S. This particular grant is good for two to seven months.

Benefits for those who will be awarded by the FDASP will include an international travelling package, tuition fees, monthly maintenance allowance, books and supplies, thesis/dissertation allowance, and health and accident insurance.

Gracing the press briefing were: Agricultural Training Institute Director Edwin Acoba of the DA, US Embassy Counselor for Agricultural Affairs Charles Alexander, Philippine-American Education Foundation (PAEF) Chairman and US Embassy Public Affairs Charles Alexander, PAEF Chairman and US Embassy Public Affairs Counselor Dr. Michael Anderson, and PAEF Executive Director Dr. Alex Calata. *(Rita dela Cruz)*

## FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE PROJECTS IN BATANES IDENTIFIED

A team composed of representatives from the BAR, UPV, UP-MSI, and BFAR-Region II visited the province of Batanes last 8-11 March 2000 to conduct a rapid appraisal of coastal/municipal fisheries and identify possible projects to be implemented in the said province. Ms. Carmencita Kagaoan, Ms. Agnes Sastrillo, Dr. Crispino Saclauso, Prof. Ricardo Babaran, Ms. Helen Bangi, Mr. Ariel Ortiz, and Evelyn Ame consulted with the LGUs, fisherfolk and provincial BFAR staff. This was followed by the Fisheries Consultative Planning Workshop of BFAR Region II with the Fishery Resource Management Council (FARMC) and LGUs in Batanes.

As an offshoot of the four-day activity, several fishery and aquaculture production projects for Batanes were recommended for implementation, these include lobster culture, marine cage culture, tilapia hatchery & culture, aquarium, shellfish (yayang) culture, seaweeds culture, and adaptation of postharvest technologies. Other projects proposed were:

- 🐞 Biology and Distribution of Coconut Crab in Batanes,
- Assessment of Spiny Lobsters and Shellfish (Yayang) and other invertebrates (c/o UP-MSI),
- Resource Assessment/Inventory in Proposed Fish Sanctuaries (c/o UPV-IMFO),
- Spiny Lobster Broodstock Enhancement Project,
- Techno-verification of Spiny Lobster Culture in Sabtang,
- Technical Assistance and/or Training on Processing of Flying Fish and Dorado,
- Seeding of Basco (with tilapia) and Uyugan (tilapia and machrobrachium) freshwater bodies,
- 🐞 Technical Assistance for Sanctuary Demarcation,
- 🐞 Technical Assistance and/or Training on Freshwater Aquaculture.

Four fisheries/aquaculture areas were visited and assessed by the team as potential project sites. These include Basco, a 1000 sq. m. freshwater body which serves as a common resource for livestock and fisheries; Mahatao, an existing marine catchbasin; Uyugan, a freshwater facility with tilapia and azolla; and the island municipality of Sabtang.

To effectively execute the proposed projects, the participants recommended that BAR provide financial support for the abovementioned projects for research. Implementation and preparation of proposals shall be done by UP-MSI or UPV together with the provincial BFAR staff. *(Thea Kristina M. Pabuayon)*



## Who's New at BAR

For the month of March, BAR hired six new contractual staff, Jaime Kim Bayani, Joell Lales, Francis Zandro Guevarra, Rita dela Cruz, Mariko Ramos, and Paolo Neil Navata. They were assigned in PIRD, OAD, NPD, KPSD, and OD respectively.

Originally from Laguna, Kim took a degree in Economics at UP Los Baños (UPLB). She considers herself as friendly and outgoing. Her freetime is mostly allotted to watching t.v., malling, and playing the guitar. She is charged under the Soil and Water Resources Management RDE network.

Joell is another product of UPLB with a degree in Agriculture. This simple and quiet guy enjoys indoor sports such as billiards and table tennis. He is charged under the Mango RDE network of BPI.

A Veterinary Medicine graduate from UPLB, Zandro hails from Indang, Cavite. This simple, very private guy loves to read pocketbooks, play chess, play basketball and watch t.v. When asked about his expectations from BAR, he delightfully said, "... do good in whatever is expected of me and that I will be staying here for many years!" He is charged under the Fisheries Postharvest RDE network in UPV.

Rita, preferably Rayts, graduated last year with a degree in Development Communication in UPLB. She is 21 years old and second of three siblings. From BAR she expects "to grow and be a better person and be able to perform my duties well".

## BAR FUNDS...

The conference featured various research works on mariculture and algal biotechnology, marine natural products and marine environmental biotechnology, marine biochemistry, molecular biology of marine organisms, marine microbial ecology and physiology, bio-business and/or bioeconomics of marine renewable resources of Filipino scientists, which included plenary lectures and paper presentations.

With this financial support, BAR expects to promote knowledge exchange and promote research excellence to the country's agriculture and fisheries development. (*Thea Kristina M. Pabuayon*)

Mariko or simply Iko is 22 years old and hails from Lupao, Nueva Ecija. She graduated cum laude from UPLB with a degree in Economics. She's an avid viewer of popular t.v. series like "Ally McBeal, Dawson's Creek, and Friends". According to her, she loves star gazing, reading pocketbooks, and collecting quotable quotes.

From Cainta, Rizal, Paolo graduated from UP Diliman with a degree in Business Economics. This adventurous guy loves mountain climbing, wall climbing, playing table tennis, and chess. From BAR, he expects to "... hope for the best!"

## AQUACULTURE...

In this light, several suggestions were made to maximize and optimize the potential of aquaculture in promoting sustainable agricultural and national development:

- Formulate a national policy and program for aquaculture consistent with the principles of sustainable development;
- Human resource development/training on responsible fisheries through orientation and information dissemination by the national and regional networks as effected by AFMA;
- Comprehensive program to (re)train fishery extension workers/policy makers on holistic planning and resource management;
- Formulate an integrated coastal management framework in the expansion of aquaculture development in coastal waters to prevent water use conflicts and environmental degradation;
- Forge partnerships with the private sector and enable policy/legal support to address socio-economic and environmental issues in the interest of national development;
- Inclusion of proper socio-economic and environmental contexts when setting food production targets in the fishery sector; and
- Involve various stakeholders in the decision and implementation process of programs. (*Thea Kristina M. pabuayon*)

## Web NEWS

### Genetically Modified Food Debate:

Visit the following sites for more information:

U.S. Proposes to Ban Biotech in Organic Rules

(<http://dailynews.yahoo.com>)

OTA Cautiously Optimistic About Proposed Organic Regulations

(<http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews>)

Germany says suspend approval of GM maize

(<http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews>)

U.S. wheat growers eye GMO challenges

(<http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews>)

Corn Group sees 16 PCT decline in U.S. Biotech Planting

(<http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews>)

Will GMOs Eclipse Chemical Crop Protection?

(<http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews>)

EU assemble Delays GMO Feed Directive

(<http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews>)

## Chronicle

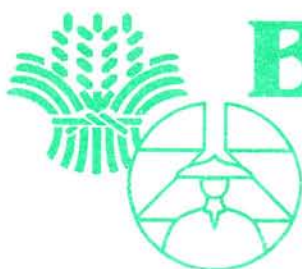
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16 - 31 March 2000

## BAR-SEARCA *grant vehicles to* RIARCs/RIFRCs



*RIARC/RIFRC managers inspect their newly acquired vehicles.*

The Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) together with SEAMEO Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), released a total of 18 vehicles to the DA Regional Integrated Agricultural/Fisheries Research Centers (RIARCs and RIFRCs) of Regions 3, 6, 8, 10, 12, and ARMM.

The turnover ceremony was held last 29 March 2000 at the BAR Conference Room with the facilitation of Mr. Rolando Labios and Mr. Paul E.R. Pablico. The RIARCs acquired a total of six 1999 Isuzu Fuego 4x2 Pick-up Trucks and six Mitsubishi Adventures, while the RIFRCs obtained six Adventures. The remaining regions would also obtain transportation facilities when BAR releases its 2<sup>nd</sup> batch of vehicles on 14 April.

According to BAR Director Eliseo R. Ponce, the procurement was done in order to solve the problem in mobility that continues to hamper the delivery of R & D services to farmers, fisherfolk, stakeholders, and other clientele. With these additional transportation facilities, RIARCs and RIFRCs can now expedite the monitoring and evaluation of R & D activities, gathering of pertinent agriculture and fisheries information used in policy and decision making activities of the DA, and improve the effectiveness of the Regional Integrated Laboratory Support Services (RILSS) and Agribusiness Development Projects (ADPs).

Dr. Ponce emphasized to the recipients to ensure that the facilities are well used so that additional resources can be provided accordingly in the future. (*Thea Kristina M. Pabuayan*)

## APPLYING INTERNATIONAL BIOTECH REGULATORY SYSTEM IN THE PHILIPPINES

Part of the less publicized effort of the Department of Agriculture (DA) towards a comprehensive regulatory system was a seminar held last 23 March 2000 at the ITCAF Conference Rooms of DA. The seminar aimed to listen to the presentation on international practices in biotechnology regulation and thereafter provide interactions with the audience to come up with a comprehensive regulatory system on biotech products. Another purpose was to discuss certain issues regarding importation, commercial production, and sale of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Also to know why there is a certain need for a separate regulatory framework aside from that of the regular-grown crops.

Ms. Patricia Ann "Muffy" Koch, an international Biotechnology Regulation Specialist presented her paper on *International Best Practices in Biotechnology Regulation and Philippine Application*. She was personally assisted by Dr. Rey de la Cruz, former BIOTECH Director of UPLB. Koch's presentation was subsequently divided into three topics: the need for biosafety regulations; the general approach to biosafety; as well as different examples of approved GMOs that were commercially released (agricultural crops, industrial crops, food enzyme, medicine, plant species, vaccines, etc.)

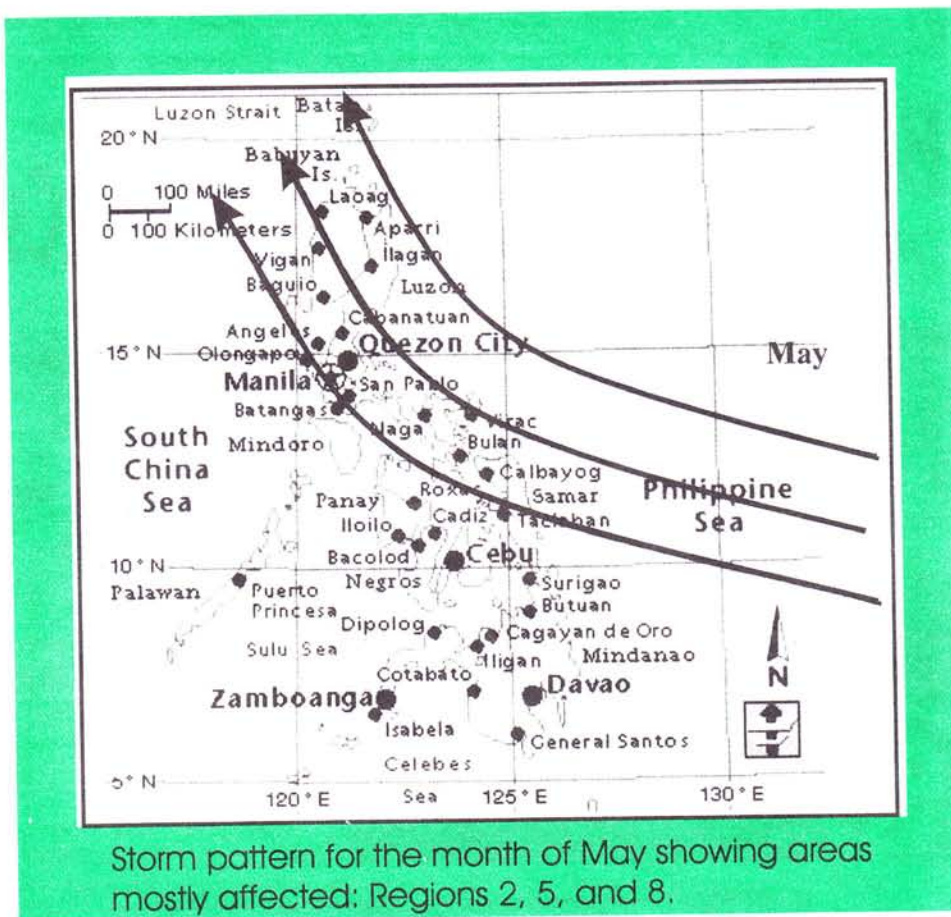


# BAR PROPOSES DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR TYPHOON-PRONE AREAS

To address the problems and issues confronting the farmers and fisherfolk of the typhoon-prone areas of Regions 2, 5, and 8, the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) has proposed a project that is expected to improve the agricultural productivity and increase the income of the above-mentioned regions through effective agricultural management.

This transpired in a meeting held last 29 March 2000 at the CERDAF Boardroom, attended by representatives from Regions 2, 5, and 8, Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), and the Bureau of Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Development of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR-BARBD). The participants discussed the problems in agriculture and fisheries in the areas of Cagayan Valley, Bicol, and Eastern Visayas and came up with strategies that will increase the productivity of priority commodities, and support services that can be provided in the areas.

The proposed project will involve a collaborative effort among DA-RFU 2, 5, and 8, BPI, PCA, Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), with BAR as the funding agency. According to BAR Director Eliseo R. Ponce, the projects to be identified must be geared towards the goals of AFMA, specifically, food security, poverty alleviation, people empowerment, sustainability, and global competitiveness. Moreover, he stressed that the projects should not only address improvement of crop management but more importantly, the socio-economic factors and values. Aside from these, Dr. Ponce spelled the importance of alternative livelihood opportunities that can ensue from the projects. These in turn can benefit the farmers and fisherfolk of the said areas.



For Region 2, the development of corn varieties with long dormancy that can withstand prolonged submergence to water and strong winds was identified as a potential project. For Regions 5 and 8, a potential project is the utilization of coconut husks (commonly regarded as waste product in the area) as pots for seedling production, which are biodegradable and more environment-friendly in place of the usual plastic bags.

To improve the drafting and identification of projects, it was suggested that a Technical Team composed of experts on agronomy, agricultural engineering, economics, and agricultural meteorology be formed. Moreover, a committee that will monitor and document the progress of the projects must be created.

The three regions have been identified as typhoon-prone areas because of its geographical location along the Philippines' eastern seaboard. Oftentimes, the areas suffer high economic and agricultural losses due to tropical cyclones and depressions. Although the areas have its own management practices to address the destruction and losses, further improvements, interventions, and support in terms of technology and infrastructure are needed.

The proponents are still in the process of consultation with the concerned agencies. The framework of the project, the project formulation team's terms of reference, and membership have still to be identified and finalized. (Thea Kristina M. Pabuyan)



## CPT TO REVIEW RDE AGENDA FOR WHITE POTATO

A consultation meeting to validate and review the draft of White Potato RDE Agenda was held last 15 March 2000 at the BAR Conference Room. Attending the half-day activity were Core Planning Team (CPT) members from BSU-NPRCRTC, BPI-BNRDC, BPRE, MMSU, VISCA, farmers and processors, and BAR staff. This BAR-sponsored event was facilitated by Ms. Salve Ritual of the National Program Division.

Emphasized in the meeting were six major issues and concerns that should be addressed for inclusion in the thrusts and priorities of the CPT. The first issue tackled the market linkage with the processing industry. Farmers need market security to be able to continue in

the production of white potato. Through such linkage, farmers are ensured of the immediate outlet of their production through these processing industries.

The second issue evolved in the improvement of cultural management of the farmers as a way to increase their annual yield. This includes the efficient control of pest and diseases, more particularly controlling the wrath of *blight* through multi-cropping system or crop rotation.

The third issue was mainly concerned in making certified seeds more available to our farmers. In connection with this is the fourth issue, which explicated on the need to identify possible varieties that the industry needs. This could be done by conducting benchmark survey of the variety

of potato that is usually processed by the industry stakeholders.

The fifth issue focused on improving the seed storage system so that more of these could be successfully dispersed for production. The last concern explained the necessity of enhancing the capability of our farmers on white potato production through trainings and educational tours.

Also in the consultation meeting was Dr. Jocelyn Perez, Team Leader for White Potato RDE Network, who presented the RDE Agenda/Program. On the other hand, presiding the meeting was Prof. Fernando Evangelio of VISCA who is also the National Team Leader for Rootcrops RDE Network. (Rita T. dela Cruz)

Consultation  
Workshop on

## NATIONAL RDE ROOTCROPS Held

In order to identify the different Regional Coordinators for Rootcrops, a consultation workshop was held last 20 March 2000 at the PhilRootcrops Training Hall in VISCA, Baybay, Leyte. DA-BAR, PhilRootcrops, and VISCA jointly sponsored the one-day activity.

BAR Director, Dr. Eliseo R. Ponce presented the keynote address, which heightened on making the rootcrops industry to the global market. "... think this commodity on a global market!" With this endeavor, Dr. Ponce reiterated the role of VISCA to have a forum with other key institutions to synchronize

activities on rootcrops. Moreover, for them to conduct symposia or series of seminar with speakers from these key institutions to have better interaction and to gain salient information from their past, present, and future activities.

He also stressed the importance of different DA-Regions when it comes to providing strategic interventions that could also be looked at as a strategic role in the conduct of research. These regions must formulate a Regional RDE Network and come up with the MOU that embodies the general agreement of the member institutions.

The Consultation Workshop was highlighted by three presentations on National Integrated RDE Agenda & Program for Rootcrops, National Integrated RDE Agenda and Program for White Potato, and National RDE Network for Rootcrops. This was presented by Dr. Jose Pardales, Jr. of PhilRootcrops, Dr. Jocelyn Perez of NPRCRTC, and Dr. Fernando Evangelio, National Team Leader for Rootcrops RDE Network, respectively.

Also present in the activity were: Paencia P. Milan, President of VISCA, Jose L. Bacusmo, Director of ODRD, PhilRootcrops Staff, and DA-BAR Staff. (Rita T. dela Cruz)



## Visit the following sites for more information:

Glickman Seeks Biotech Seeds Probe  
(<http://dailynews@yahoo.com>)

Intensive Farming Threatens Important Bird Habitats  
(<http://dailynews@yahoo.com>)

Spotlight: Biotechnology in Agriculture  
(<http://www.rdnews.uplb.edu.ph>)

BIOTECH Savants Turn Distillery Waste Into Liquid Fertilizers  
(<http://www.rdnews.uplb.edu.ph>)

New Hybrid White Corn Named After PEQJ  
(<http://www.rdnews.uplb.edu.ph>)

Spotlight: Biotechnology in Agriculture  
(<http://www.fao.org>)

A first in RP: IPB Clones Fruit Ripening-Related Genes  
(<http://www.rdnews.uplb.edu.ph>)

Making Rodents Less Damaging To Sugarcane  
(<http://www.rdnews.uplb.edu.ph>)

In line with the Civil Service Commission's (CSC) thrust of making our "human resources a world class bureaucracy", they conducted the *First Congress of HRM Practitioners* last 15 March 2000 at the EIIB Multi-Purpose Hall. This was spearheaded by Chairperson Corazon Alma G. De Leon who was also the guest speaker of the activity.

The one-day event was held specifically to convene Human Resource Management Officers (HRMOs) in the National Capital Region (NCR) and thereafter establish a network of communication among them. Furthermore, it was intended to update HRMOs about the latest HRM policies and trends in the public sector.

In attendance were more than 400 HRMOs from different GOs and NGOs in the NCR, including BAR staff, Ms. Aurora F. Pecson, of the Administrative Division, and Ms. Ludivina M. Pelayo of HRMO.

To emphasize on the latest HRM policies and trends, two papers were presented illustrating the best HRM practices. The Department Manager of the Human Resources Services Department, Ms. Marcita M. Perez, presented the first paper on "The NAPOCOR Experience". On the other hand, their Vice President for Corporate Human Resources, Mr. Reynaldo M. Gener presented the second paper entitled "The San Miguel Corporation Experience".

Other concerns that were discussed in the activity are the specific roles of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) in the human resource transformation, which was conferred by Mr. Rene A. Zaraspe, Chief Compensation and Position Classification Specialist of DBM. Also stressed out are guidelines for The Search for Outstanding HRM Practices in NCR, which was explained by Mr. Victor S. Clavel of the Philippine Orthopedic Center. (Rita T. dela Cruz)

## BIOTECH ...

According to Koch, "GMOs are confined during development, but able to reproduce and spread after general release". Therefore, development trial release and commercialization need the conduct of risk assessment to determine the safety of these GMOs to the environment, humans, and other consumers. As to who will address the biosafety regulations, Koch said, "...it will have to be regulated by governments". Specifically, three Departments should be well involved in the BIOTECH regulation: the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, and Department of Environment. Together, they will have to form specific guidelines for a comprehensive regulatory system.

She added that in general, the government could approach biosafety by modifying the existing legislation to include GMOs like what happened in USA. They could also create new GMO legislation and harmonize with the existing laws. The Law on the other hand, would have to regulate in terms of its GM process and products.

Aside from the biosafety approaches, Koch also stressed the different organizational structures of different countries in approving the commercial release of GMOs. Among the countries she cited were USA, Netherlands, France, South Africa, Australia, Indonesia, and Philippines.

Compared to other countries, the Philippines is still in the field trial stage. Though Koch admitted that the Philippines have all the basic commercialization requirements from the scientific assessment of safety down to regional harmonization, it still lacks on certain aspects. According to Koch, for the Philippines to move from field trial stage to commercialization, there should be:

- a more permanent/established committee;
- a new set of guidelines that incorporates national issues and needs;
- include socio-economic impact;
- expand government representations; and
- a strong legal structure for commercialization process.

She further noted that, aside from the organizational structure aspect, the best way to hasten the process is, "to challenge your Biosafety Committee with many applications".

During the open forum, several issue/concerns were raised. These are:

- basis of having a comprehensive regulatory system;
- weaknesses of the present framework;
- strengthening the rules on GMO;
- simplifying the rules on the application process for immediate use of the advantages of GMOs;
- GMO labeling;
- harmonization of the legislation; and
- impact of moratorium on health safety of biotech products.

Also in attendance were representatives from NCPP, BIOTECH, DA-Staff Bureaus, DA-Attached Agencies, and other government agencies. (Rita T. dela Cruz)

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