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Philippine Rice Research Institute

RAISING THE BAR
FOR MORE AGILE AND FUTURE-READY AGRI WORKFORCE

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ABOUT THE COVER

RAISING THE BAR FOR MORE AGILE AND FUTURE-READY AGRI WORKFORCE

The Institute supports professionalization as one of the Department of Agriculture's strategies in transforming Philippine agriculture. Strengthening the agriculture career system, improving farm business management, engaging the youth and women, and providing easy and efficient services could help achieve a food-secure and resilient Philippines.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Professionalization Pillar

JOHN C. DE LEON

> To be effective, we ought to make our people feel that they belong to the community. In fact, promotion of diversity and inclusion is a top-trending Human Resource (HR) management topic in 2021, along with cultivation of critical thinking, soft skills, employee wellness programs, creativity in recruitment, digital integration, digital skills, and fluid task management.

A Department of Agriculture (DA) - International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) collaborative project (2016-2018) on benchmarking the capacities of regional rice and rice-based R&D networks generated baseline information and analysis on DA-Regional Field Offices' personnel, facilities, and enabling environment. According to a review of this project and based on the results of the benchmarking, a roadmap in improving capacities of researchers and agri-extension workers and strengthening their linkages with farmers under the contemporary environment of Research, Development, and Extension (RDE) needs to be charted. The reviewers also noted that the project was crucial in strengthening the R&D capacities of the regions and the national agricultural research and extension systems, and could have been a strategic input to the current initiative on establishing the Province-led Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Systems.

The One DA Reform Agenda has identified 'professionalization' as one of the strategic pillars to deliver the vision of food security and resilient Philippines with empowered farmers and fisherfolk.

Human Resource (HR) is at the heart (and soul) of any organization. People as resources are invaluable assets in building and maintaining a responsive and responsible public service that promotes excellence, progressiveness, integrity, and accountability. Office culture (and the work environment for that matter) plays a pivotal role in providing a positive experience to employees. To be effective, we ought to make our people feel that they belong to the community. In fact, promotion of diversity and inclusion is a top-trending HR management topic in 2021, along with cultivation of critical thinking, soft skills, employee wellness programs, creativity in recruitment, digital integration, digital skills, and fluid task management. The last item recognizes that the younger generations prefer a work-life balance with flexible schedules and telecommuting.

To echo another study on R&D and technology, "the lack of adequate R&D manpower places the country in a very disadvantaged position because it does not have enough technical capability to adopt, through R&D, developed technologies in the market. In other words, with inadequate technological capability, the Philippines may find it difficult to catch up in terms of access to and mastery of the key emerging or cutting-edge technologies. This, in turn, negatively affects future growth and international competitiveness."

DA-PhilRice supports the honing of agile and future-ready servant-heroes toward the path of our collective modernization efforts at the DA. After all, an organization operates by its workforce and builds its reputation through them.

CELEBRATING 36 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE LOCAL RICE INDUSTRY

For 36 years now, DA-PhilRice continues to pursue research, development, and extension to create impact on the lives of rice farmers.

The Institute celebrated on Nov. 4-5 its 36th year of serving millions of Filipino rice farmers.

"Through the years, DA-PhilRice had worked and continues to strive to make rice production not only more efficient, but also dependable and sustainable in meeting the growing demands of hundred million Filipino rice consumers," executive director John C. de Leon of DA-PhilRice said.

Through the Institute's research for development (R4D) efforts, it continues to implement programs that elevate the competitiveness of the Filipino rice farmer and our rice industry, and transform it to be more profitable, resilient, and sustainable.

The Institute's works in research, development, and extension have been making an impact on the lives of rice farmers.

"DA-PhilRice has helped me greatly in increasing my rice production. Thank you so much to all the staff," Fer Centeno, farmer in Pangasinan, said.

"I and my fellow trainees are grateful that the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) program has reached us despite the remoteness of our barangay. We are also thankful for the free inbred certified seeds that RCEF has been giving us for four cropping seasons now. Our association also received a combine rice harvester from the program," said Leopoldo B. Lopango, a rice farmer in Masbate.

"Thank you, Rice Business Innovations System community program for helping us, farmers. We were able to sell our *palay* at a higher price because we learned group marketing," Lee B. Espiritu of Pangasinan said.

To better serve rice farmers, DA-PhilRice and other stakeholders in the rice industry maintain productive partnerships and continue to exchange ideas.

The anniversary celebration was the 33rd National R4D e-conference where new challenges and opportunities, and national programs contributing to the advancement of rice R4D were discussed. It was held in a blended format. ▫ **MERVALYN O. TOMAS**

[With reports from Julian C. Macadamia and Jayca S. Flores]

L-R: Science City of Muñoz Mayor Nestor L. Alvarez, Former DA-PhilRice Executive Director Santiago R. Obien, DA-PhilRice DED for Administrative Services and Finance Abner T. Montecalvo, Atty. Ferdinand R. Abesamis, Agricultural Attaché Ryan G. Bedford, DA Secretary William D. Dar, Nueva Ecija's 4th District Representative Maricel Natividad Nagaño, CBC Chief Roel R. Suralta, DA-PhilRice Executive Director John C. de Leon, and DA Asec Noel O. Reyes.

New DA-Biotech center to help ensure food security

Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar led the Sept. 30 inauguration of the state-of-the-art Crop Biotechnology Center (CBC) of the Department of Agriculture that will develop various plant products to help ensure food security and enhance the competitiveness of Philippine agriculture.

The facility — located at DA-PhilRice in Nueva Ecija — will also help attain the "Sustainable Development Goal No. 2 on Zero Hunger" of the United Nations, said Secretary Dar. ▫

NRAM UNDERSCORES EATING HEALTHY, NUTRITIOUS RICE

This year's observance of National Rice Awareness Month (NRAM) in November iterates the importance of eating healthy and nutritious rice.

"The kind of rice we consume is crucial to our health. This is especially true to us because rice is the staple food of Filipinos," Dr. Marissa V. Romero, food scientist and co-lead of the Healthier Rice Project of DA-PhilRice, said.

Attuned to the NRAM theme "Be RICEponsibly healthy", the scientist encourages the public to consume brown (unpolished) and pigmented rice, which are healthier options compared with white rice.

Brown rice is also beneficial to farmers because of its 10% higher milling recovery than that of white rice. If every Filipino will eat brown rice at least three times a day, our rice importation would shrink by an average of 50,000MT/yr.

Institutionalized in 2004, the 17th NRAM celebration this year also stresses the importance of buying the produce of our local farmers.

"Based on the DA-PhilRice study, rice in the Philippines is generally less exposed to pesticides and fertilizers compared with the rice that we import from Vietnam and Thailand. If consumers are to put value on safety and nutrition, local rice should be preferred. It should be packaged as the best rice option in the market, owing to the safety of the practices and inputs employed in producing it in the country," Romero advised.

She added that the campaign highlights non-wastage of rice to help achieve rice security.

The 2018 Household Food Consumption Survey of the Food and Nutrition Research Institute showed that 48g of the total 67g food waste in a household are cereals and cereal products.

The DA, PhilRice, and Agricultural Training Institute spearhead the NRAM activities for government agencies and social media activities for the public. ▫ MERVALYN O. TOMAS

(L PHILRICE PHOTO)

Dr. John C. de Leon, DA-PhilRice Executive Director (seated L), and Prof. Dr. Csaba Gyuricza, Rector of MATE (seated R), signed the memorandum of understanding.

PH-Hungary R&D cooperation sealed

DA-PhilRice and the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (MATE) on November 11 sealed an agreement to work together on research initiatives and in knowledge-sharing for agricultural development, particularly in breeding and educational programs. MATE is one of the largest agriculture-focused, multi-disciplinary higher education institutions in Europe.

István Jakab, deputy speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary, expressed his commitment to support Philippine agriculture "with every means to achieve success in the future". ▫

PHILRICE OFFICIAL IS 2021 PRESIDENTIAL LINGKOD BAYAN AWARDEE

Dr. Flordeliza Hidalgo-Bordey, deputy executive director of DA-PhilRice and designated head of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund-Program Management Office, is one of this year's Presidential Lingkod Bayan awardees.

For this year's dry and wet cropping seasons alone, the RCEF-Seed Program has distributed a total of 3.4 million bags of 20-kg seeds to an average 686,000 farmers per season. The program served 956 towns/cities in 55 provinces in the dry season, and 729 towns/cities in 42 provinces in the wet season (March-September 2021).

The *Lingkod Bayan* Award is "conferred on an individual or group for exceptional contributions resulting from an idea or performance that had nationwide impact on public interest".

Dr. Bordey is the 6th Presidential *Lingkod Bayan* awardee from DA-PhilRice. ▫

2021 KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

COMPILED BY CHARISMA LOVE B. GADO-GONZALES

More than 90 knowledge products have been produced for specific audiences this year.

FOR FARMERS

Magasin

- Modernong teknolohiyang pangmagsasaka, marami na nyan!
- Panatag, wag mangamba, sagot kita!

2022 tekno-kalendaryo
yunPALAYun Brochures
PalayCheck Primer
TV and transport ads
School-on-the air learning materials
Videos

FOR ACADEMIC SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

Rice-Based Biosystems Journal

- February 2021 issue
- October 2021 issue

Magazines

- Rice to the next level
- Braving the world of digital farming
- Moving in Together

Marketing Dinorado Rice
PalayCheck Booklet
3-Line Hybrid Rice Seed Production

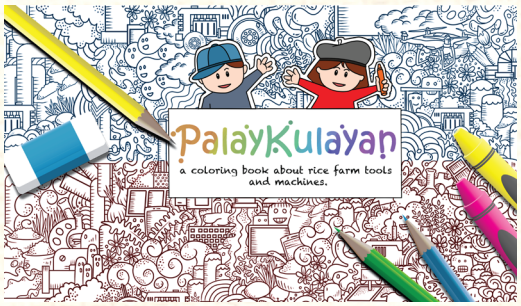
Field guides

- Sampling Insect pests, damaged and diseased plants, and Beneficial organisms in the ricefields: Devices and Techniques
- Harmful and Useful Organisms in Philippine Ricefields
- Major Disorders of the Rice plant

2020 DA-PhilRice R&D Highlights

FOR POLICY MAKERS

Rice Science for Decision-makers
Philippine Specialty Rice
Milestones 2019-2020



FOR CHILDREN

PalayKulayan
Palay Puzzle Book

If you want to grab a copy of any of these knowledge products, you may contact the DA-PhilRice DevCom Division via e-mail at prri.mail@philrice.gov.ph. You can also access them at www.pinoyrice.com.

WEATHER AND CROP MANAGEMENT BULLETINS HELP FARMERS DECIDE

LEYLANI M. JULIANO AND
ELOUEZA MARIE P. DELA CRUZ

Climate change is escalating the risks in farming particularly in the more vulnerable areas that are prone to drought, flood, and typhoon conditions. Pests and diseases in these areas have acquired adaptability, which contributes to the complexity of crop management.

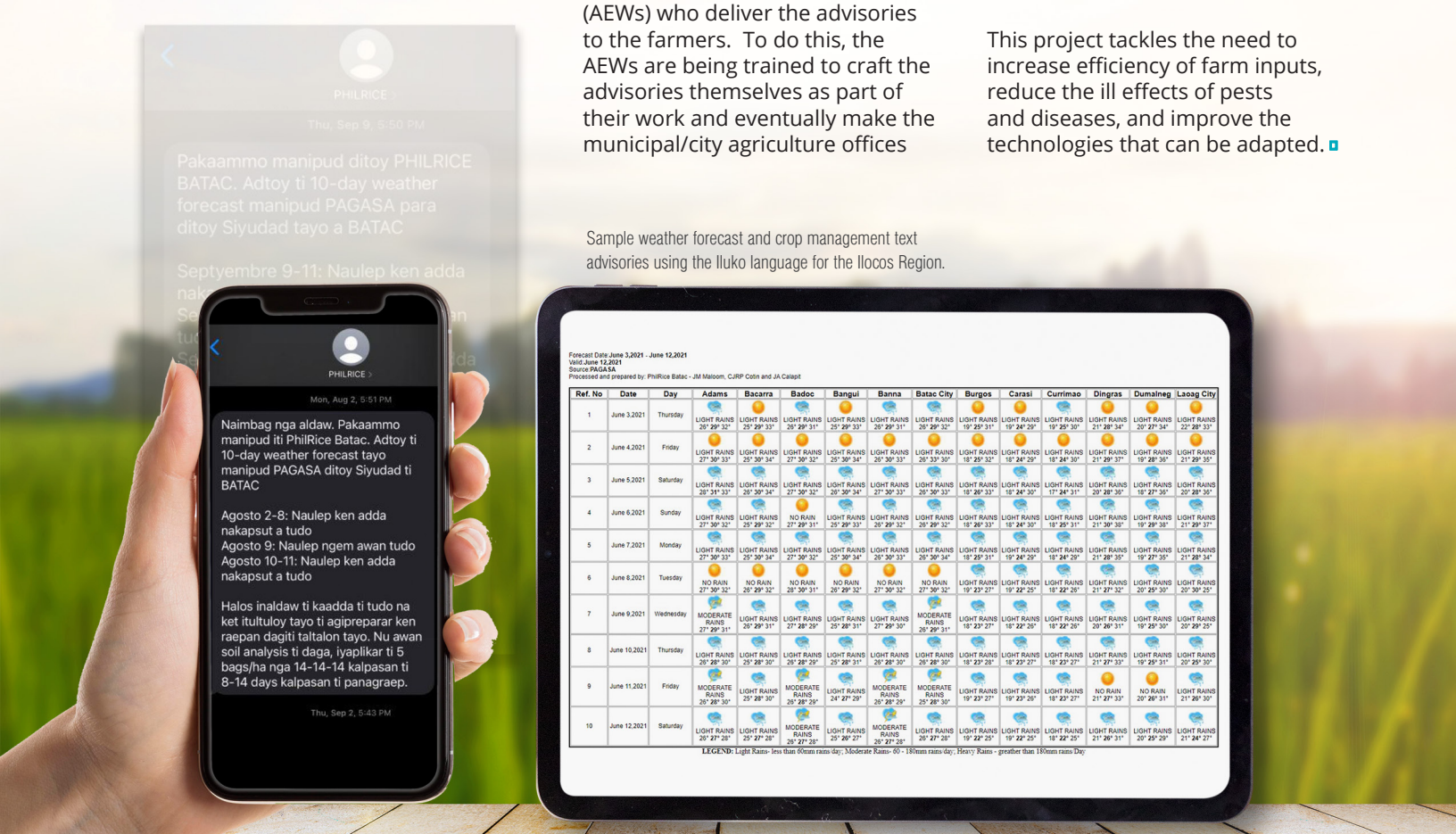
Fortunately, localized weather forecasts are being institutionalized to mitigate the risks. Doable crop management advisories are being provided to help farmers respond to farming contingencies appropriately.

One of the components of DA-PhilRice Batac's Farm Wise project is to elevate farmers' resiliency in farming. It generates localized weather forecasts and advisories, with the active involvement of agricultural extension workers (AEWs) who deliver the advisories to the farmers. To do this, the AEWs are being trained to craft the advisories themselves as part of their work and eventually make the municipal/city agriculture offices as hubs of science-based farming advisories.

The project generates and disseminates weather forecasts and crop management advisories on a municipal level with at least 10-day lead time. A 10-day localized weather outlook from PAGASA is processed per municipality for Ilocos Norte/Sur, La Union, and Pangasinan. The data is published at the PhilRice Batac Facebook page and sent through text blasts.

According to Engr. Juanito M. Maloom, agrometeorology expert and currently leading this initiative, "localized weather forecasts along with right crop management advisories can be packaged and disseminated at the right time to aid in the decision-making of farmers, making them adapt better to adversities."

This project tackles the need to increase efficiency of farm inputs, reduce the ill effects of pests and diseases, and improve the technologies that can be adapted.



Sample weather forecast and crop management text advisories using the Iluko language for the Ilocos Region.

RICE ACROSS THE COUNTRY

COMPILED BY REUEL M. MARAMARA AND CHRISTOPHER JOHN C. GONZALES

For smooth RCEF implementation, DA-PhilRice in partnership with LGUs of Cavite, Laguna, and Quezon assessed challenges and opportunities of the programs.

Through the RiceBIS Farm Walk, farmers from Banna learned the various characteristics of rice varieties.

DA-PHILRICE LOS BAÑOS

KNOWLEDGE-SHARING FOR BETTER RCEF SERVICES

The Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) - Seed and Extension Programs conducted Social Mobilization and Capacity-Building Workshops in September through October 2021. With 145 participants from local government units (LGUs) of Cavite, Laguna, and Quezon, the workshops laid out challenges and opportunities for better RCEF implementation.

According to Senior Agriculturist Sheryl M. Sinense of Tagkawayan, Quezon, the workshop made her aware of the challenges other municipalities are facing during seed distribution and the solutions done by other LGUs.

Preference of rice varieties to be planted was one of the challenges faced by LGUs. To settle it, they have learned to consider farmers' preferences and advised seed growers to produce the preferred varieties.

RCEF Los Baños coordinator Jacqueline Lee Canilao explained that training and workshops capacitate participants to be more effective and efficient in delivering government services.

The LGUs thanked RCEF and other partner-agencies. Agricultural Technologist Jessica An M. Morales of Imus City, Cavite observed that partnering with RCEF made farmers become more active and easier to tap.

All the 79 cities and municipalities identified as RCEF areas in CALABARZON were invited to the workshops, which were conducted either online or face-to-face for Laguna. **// CHRISTINE M. REYES**

DA-PHILRICE BATAC

FARM WALK IN BANNA

The Rice Business Innovations System (RiceBIS) - Batac has conducted a farm walk in Bugasi, Banna, Ilocos Norte that showcased high-yielding varieties and cost-reducing technologies.

Employing *PalayCheck*, an integrated crop management system, the varieties shown were NSIC Rc 480, Rc 506, Rc 508, Rc 510, and Rc 512. It also used the mechanical transplanter and multi-purpose seeder for crop establishment.

Most of the farmers preferred NSIC Rc 510 (Tubigan 43) for its exceptional crop stand and characteristics. The variety averages 5.7t/ha, to a maximum of 10.3t/ha and maturity of 110 days after sowing (DAS). **// DEEJAY JIMENEZ**

CHRISTIAN PAUL A. DE LEON

A season-long training on F1 Hybrid Rice Commercialization was conducted to prepare Apayao farmers for a community-organized hybrid rice farming.

DA-PHILRICE ISABELA

APAYAO READIED FOR COMMUNITY-ORGANIZED HYBRID RICE FARMING

Aimed at making the public hybrid rice seed system sustainable, a community-organized hybrid rice farming and marketing setup will soon take root in Apayao.

A preparatory season-long training on F1 Hybrid Rice Commercialization participated in by 30 inbred and hybrid rice farmers started on September 21 in Bacsay, Luna.

"Through the training, we hope to tap and engage capable farmers in hybrid rice cultivation and seed production. Then we link them to the market and make the F1 seeds available for commercialization," project lead Dr. Ofelia C. Malonzo described the initiative.

In partnership with DA-Regional Field Office Cordillera, the provincial agriculturist of Apayao, and the municipal agriculture office of Luna, the training polished the knowledge of farmers on F1 hybrid rice cultivation.

Public hybrids PSB Rc 72H (Mestizo 1) and Rc 204H (Mestiso 20) were showcased during the training.

Bacsay Irrigators' Association chairperson Erlinda P. Felipe said they are very excited over the project. "The average yield in our barangay is only 5-6t/ha and as we know, hybrid varieties offer more. That is why we look ahead to the fruition of this initiative," she said.

The training is part of the Community-Organized Hybrid Rice Farming and Marketing (COHRFarM) component of the Rice Development Initiatives for Cagayan Valley and CAR Environments (RICCE) project. ▫ **// JOILLIE NICOLE B. LACBAYAN**

DA-PHILRICE BICOL

BICOL TAKES ON CHALLENGE


DA-PhilRice Bicol personnel/staff participating in the WokTok Challenge.
SHIELA OXALES-SABARIA

The station is participating in the Institute-wide Walk your Talk Challenge (WokTok) that aims to capacitate all DA-PhilRice personnel/staff on the *PalayCheck* System.

After several sessions, participants are now building up knowledge and skills through blended discussions, live demonstrations of farm activities and machine operations, and hands-on field work that will help them serve farmers more confidently.

For security officer Anthony Chad Guazon, among the most important lessons he values are the different seed classifications from breeder, foundation, registered, and certified. He says he now knows how to identify them according to their tag colors and their basic qualities.

"We usually speak with visitors such as seed growers, farmers, and partners who often ask for information on the services provided by the Institute. We can now brief them about the basic information taught to us by the WokTok challenge," he said.

According to station director Dr. Victoria C. Lapitan, the challenge will help the branch station provide timely and appropriate information to its stakeholders as more staff are equipped with the right knowledge on the technologies promoted by the Institute. ▫ **// MICHAEL L. SATUITO**

RICE ACROSS THE COUNTRY

COMPILED BY ALDRIN G. CASTRO AND GLADYS G. CRISTOBAL

DA-PHILRICE MIDSAYAP
RISE OF RICE KNOWLEDGE

DA-PhilRice Midsayap continues to capacitate its staff members, rice farmers, and other rice stakeholders through a refresher course on *PalayCheck* System.

Availability and access to credible and updated information prove to be particularly crucial as this pandemic grinds on. But with or without pandemic, knowledge on rice production is important to sustain an efficient and productive rice industry. Notwithstanding stringent health and safety protocols, various capacity enhancement initiatives were conducted by DA-PhilRice Midsayap for its staff members, rice farmers, and other rice stakeholders.

In August, 11 Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) coordinators and technology demonstration officers underwent a refresher course on the *PalayCheck* System to build their confidence in dealing with other extension workers and farmers.

Fifty-one RCEF personnel of DA-PhilRice Midsayap participated in the series of knowledge-sharing and learning (KSL) activities under the WokTok *PalayCheck* Challenge. The KSL allowed them to learn and be updated on integrated crop management system through mixed learning approaches. The KSL employed hands-on activities, lectures, and focus group discussions.

The RCEF Extension Component is also carrying out a season-long Farmer Field School (FFS) in Panicupan, Pikit, Cotabato from July to November for 32 farmer-beneficiaries. This initiative is also in support of the agriculture sector, specifically the rice farmers of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

New agriculture graduates trained on the *PalayCheck* System through a boot camp.

RCEF Extension likewise diffuses knowledge on rice production by supplying knowledge products to school-on-the-air (SOA) farmer-participants of the Agricultural Training Institute XII. Some 1,200 copies of the Gabay sa Pagpapalayan and *PalayCheck* primers were distributed. These materials reinforce the learnings of the farmers from the SOA.

To further boost the rise of rice knowledge, the station also trained 21 new agriculture graduates through the Rice Boot Camp on the *PalayCheck* System. The Camp intends to encourage them to continue pursuing careers in agriculture and accumulate acumen and skills in rice farming for their future endeavors. **// SYLVIA THERESE C. QUIRING**

DA-PHILRICE NEGROS

FARMERS DON THE TOGA ONCE AGAIN

Thanks to RCEF. Farmer Field School, young-at-heart farmers never stop to acquire knowledge about rice farming.

THE GRADUATE

If you thought people of age are stubborn and not open to modern ideas, meet *Nanay* Cecilia F. Tagobador, 54-year-old farmer from Bago City, Negros Occidental. She is one of the 125 farmers who graduated from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) Farmer Field School facilitated by MBA Forest Technical School Inc. under the auspices of the RCEF Extension program.

"We learned that spraying pesticide should not be done right away but should only be as a last resort, " Tagobador recalls.

Tagobador also acquainted herself with the certified seeds distributed by RCEF since they were only using home-saved seeds before. With the training and the certified seeds provided, she is confident that she can manage her rice field well and gain profit from it.

THE TRAINER

One of the trainers is Jovanie A. Gino, who's been in the Institute for seven years. The 25-year-old instructor has been educating farmers since the implementation of the RCEF-Training of Trainers (ToT) in 2020 after he finished the ToT in DA-PhilRice Negros. Aside from the interactive lectures, he would go to the farmers' fields upon request. As a high school graduate, Gino admitted that there is a lot to be learned, so he never stops learning and attending trainings when possible.

Some of the beneficiaries of the training are farmers' sons and daughters who decided to get involved and help their parents manage their rice fields. This is welcome news in sustaining the rice industry in their community. As of this writing, the MBA Forest Technical School has produced 200 graduates. // **VANESSA A. TINGSON**

DA-PHILRICE AGUSAN

MULTIPLIERS OF LEARNING

Farmers and specialists complete their training.

Twenty Rice Specialists' Training Course (RSTC) and 96 Farmer Field School (FFS) participants have completed their training on the latest farm technologies. The trainees from Regions 10, 11, and 13 are now specialists on the production of high-quality inbred rice, seed certification, and farm mechanization. RSTC participants work in the DA-Regional Field Office, Office of the Provincial Agriculturist, Municipal Agriculture Office, Farmers' Cooperatives and Associations, and accredited farm schools of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. Meanwhile, FFS enrolees are from barangays of Butuan City.

Provincial Soils Coordinator of the Surigao del Sur Agricultural Office and a graduate of the RSTC Ellen Mae C. Orcullo, shared that despite having second thoughts on accepting the invitation, she's very thankful to DA-PhilRice Agusan for giving her the opportunity to join the training.

"I encourage everyone who will be offered to join this training to not be hesitant because the training won't only be useful for your career, it will also help you develop as a person," Ellen advised.

This training is an initiative of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund-Rice Extension Services Program.

Training Coordinator Alona P. Tape explained she couldn't find any other approach in conducting the training that could compensate for the face-to-face learning system, which is why she opted for it following minimum health protocols.

// **KRISTIANNE MARIE C. DAVID**

YES TO AGRICULTURE

ANNA MARIE F. BAUTISTA

Children seldom mention agriculture-related careers when they talk about their future dream jobs. Studies reveal that the youth's disinterest is mainly because of their perception that farming is unprofitable, that there are so many risks tied to it, and that it is a difficult back-breaking job.

This is a global phenomenon. Data from the International Labor Organization showed a decreasing trend of youth involvement in agriculture. In 1988, 48.9% of employed youth worked in agriculture. This dipped to 33.8% in 2006, and in 2017, agriculture disappeared from the list of growing sectors for the youth.

On the bright side, youth-in-agriculture enthusiasts are still hopeful that there are varied ways to rekindle the young people's love for farming, either as skillful farmers or as agriculture professionals. The reason is many young people are still involved in farm activities, directly or indirectly.

In recent years, several initiatives have been waged to serve this purpose. Public and private entities introduced youth scholarship grants, awards and recognitions, and organizations. Two of the most recent initiatives are the DA–Bureau of Agricultural Research's (DA-BAR) Mentoring and Attracting the Youth in Agribusiness (MAYA) Internship Program and the DA-PhilRice Infomediary Campaign.

THE MAYA INTERNSHIP

what is it

- Launched in February 2021
- A 3-month internship program that aims to breed young Filipinos to become agri-fishery entrepreneurs or as employed agriculture professionals

how it's done

- Experiential mode of teaching and learning
- Interns enroll in a curriculum based on their chosen track: EMPLOYMENT or ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- Curriculum is divided into two stages: one-week preparatory and basic orientation; 11-week on-site internship
- Upon graduation, the interns may either venture in an agri-fishery enterprise for which they may apply for a zero-interest loan under the DA's Agricultural Credit Policy Council or pursue a career in DA or any government agency

who can join

- Open to all Filipinos, 20-30 years old, and are graduates of any four or six-year degree course, preferably on agriculture, fisheries, agribusiness, and other related courses

THE INFOMEDIARY CAMPAIGN

what is it

- Implemented from 2012 to 2019

A youth engagement initiative that mobilized high school students to serve as infomediaries (information mediators) of rice production technologies to farmers in rural rice-farming communities

how it's done

- Partner-schools, specifically their teachers were trained at DA-PhilRice, and were also introduced to Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs)
- Either the teachers gave lectures to the students about rice production, or the students searched the information through the DA-PhilRice Text Center, Pinoy Rice Knowledge Bank, or the reading materials that the Institute provided for their school; finally, the students were to share the information to their farmer-parents or other farmers they know

- Other activities such as quiz bee, jingle-making contests, rice garden setups, and field days were pursued both for education and entertainment purposes

campaign coverage

- A total of 81 out of 108 partner-schools of the Campaign in 2015 were offering technical-vocational courses in agriculture
- After the Campaign bowed out in 2019, several of the participating schools still continued the initiative such as Asuncion National High School in Davao del Norte, Batac National high School - Bungon Campus in Ilocos Norte, and Libacao National Forestry Vocational High School in Aklan

YES TO MAYA!

On its first rollout, more than 3,000 Filipino youngsters applied for the MAYA internship program. Of these, 791 were accepted as pioneer batch and were spread through 45 DA Handling Offices. During the recognition day, 10 interns were awarded for their promising agribusiness plans. They are to receive P40,000 each as capital to establish their proposed business venture.

CAMILLE B. DOGUILES, 23

Bocaue, Bulacan
Agribusiness plan: Mushraff Mushroom Noodles

"Through the internship, I learned how to operate different agricultural equipment, tools, and machinery. I also gained knowledge on agribusiness management, specifically marketing agricultural products and financial management."

RHEMA JOYCE B. MONDALA, 23

Balungao, Pangasinan
Agribusiness plan: RJs Integrated Vermishroom

"Through MAYA, I've learned the difference between theoretical and actual agriculture. I was also introduced to agribusiness. After my internship, I was hired at the DA-Regional Field Office 1. I decided to stay employed while I work on my RJs Integrated Vermishroom (vermicomposting and mushroom). This agribusiness enterprise is a fruit of my internship at MAYA. It is a waste-management-technique business that aims to utilize agricultural wastes to produce high-value products such as vermicompost and mushroom that are beneficial to the environment and the people."

YES TO INFOMEDIARIES!

The main aim of the Campaign was to tap students to help farmers in accessing information on modern rice technologies through ICT. However, it was found later on that some of the students developed the motivation to pursue agriculture as a profession after being engaged in the Campaign's activities.

The book "Youth and Agriculture: The Infomediary Campaign in the Philippines" reads at least 60 students, from one of the pilot sites in Aurora, took agriculture-related courses in college. Meanwhile, teachers from other partner-schools also reported more students who chose crops production, horticulture, and other agriculture-associated tracks in senior high school, several of whom gained National Certificates (NC).

CARMI KILAYKO

Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat

"I enjoyed our farming activities in high school. We planted together, and were very competitive during the Infomediary quiz bee. My experience in rice production during those years have helped me shape my interest and career path in agriculture. I even became an officer of the 4H Club in our barangay (youth organization focused on agriculture). Today, I am an NC II holder in organic agriculture, horticulture, animal production, and food processing. I must say, I am in love with agriculture."

CEFF BASA JR., 25

Balagtas, Bulacan

"My interest in agriculture heightened when our school [Balagtas National Agricultural High] was involved in PhilRice's Infomediary Campaign. It inspired me to pursue agriculture as a career. Today, I occupy an Agriculturist II position at the Bulacan Provincial Agriculture Office.

I know that I can do something so that we can attain sustainable agriculture. Young people like me have actively played their role in sports, entrepreneurship, arts, and culture. It is now time for us to take on a dynamic role in agriculture, to help address matters on food sufficiency and security, climate change, and environment."

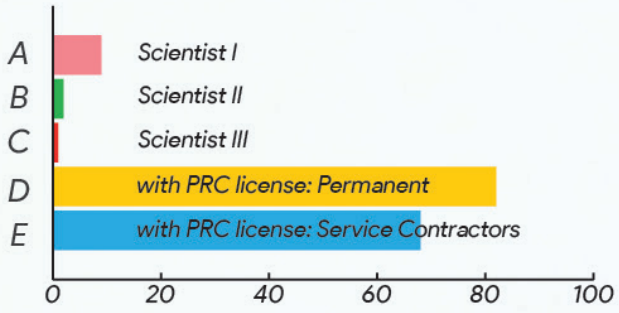
Excellent EMPLOYEES RENDER Excellent SERVICE

MERVALYN O. TOMAS

The success of an institute or organization lies heavily on its people. Employees who are brilliant in what they do create an organization that serves excellently.

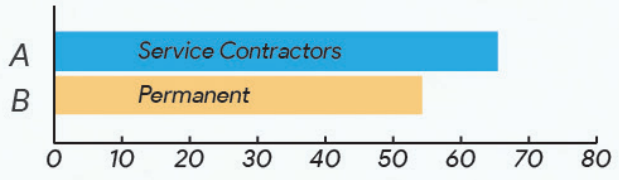
Scientists and Board passers

DA-PhilRice has a pool of researchers, development, and administrative workers that serve rice farmers. With 12 conferred scientists, the Institute has the highest number of active scientists in the country. Many of its employees are also board passers, and 152 employees hold a postgraduate degree with assistance from the Institute through its Staff Learning and Development Program (SLDP).



Outstanding extension workers

DA-PhilRice development workers are TESDA national certificate holders.



Implementers of the Institute's Rice Business Innovations System (RiceBIS) Community Program also go through training programs to improve their competence in assisting farmers to become agripreneurs.

Continuous learning and development

People need opportunities to learn and grow professionally. DA-PhilRice's Staff Learning and Development Program (SLDP) cater to this need.

SLDP covers all permanent PhilRice employees and have the following components:

Graduate degree grants to develop top-caliber and committed staff. Candidates must possess or demonstrate outstanding academic credentials, work performance, and high potential to become rice R4D scientists, development experts, and administrators.

Non-degree grants to upgrade specific skill levels, broaden research experience, and enhance competence and performance of the staff. They also provide necessary exposure and experience through study, observations, and exchange tours and training.

Special Assistance Program provides thesis assistance and recognition of self-initiated career development activities by resourceful employees.

Scholars for development

dap
14 graduates

Fourteen DA-PhilRice employees have graduated from the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP). They enjoyed the full scholarship grant offered by DAP to government workers with permanent positions. Many of them graduated with honors or special awards.

Selection and promotion

DA-PhilRice implements a Merit Promotion Plan (MPP) as a system of promotion for qualified employees. The MPP provides for basic policies, system of ranking positions, procedures on hiring and promotion, scoring system, and criteria to cover education, training, and experience. To evaluate all applicants and to properly implement the MPP, a Selection and Promotion Board (SPB) is established for the first and second-level positions.

Awards and recognitions

The Dangal ng PhilRice awards for excellence is implemented to recognize and reward outstanding accomplishments and achievements of PhilRice employees. It aims to raise the bar on employee performance and promote the Institute's core values and attributes. All permanent and contractual staff from the different sectors and stations are qualified to be nominated to the awards.

The major awards are grouped as follows: Excellent Performance, Excellent Product/Practice, and Excellent Public Service awards. Recipients of these awards are prioritized for recommendation to national and international award-giving bodies.

Service contractors are also recognized under the Pasasalamat ng PhilRice awards. Other awards/recognitions are: External and Peer, Scientific Productivity, Loyalty, and Scholastic.

Setting the bar high: meeting standards

The Institute also makes sure that its farms meet the standards that it advocates for.

Our FutureRice Farm was awarded the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification by the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards at the DA-Regional Field Office 3 on November 3, 2017.

The Farm received the GAP certification for ensuring food safety and quality while keeping high regard for environmental protection and workers' health, safety, and welfare; producing quality and safe agricultural crops for consumers; and facilitating access of Philippine agricultural crops to neighboring ASEAN markets and other foreign outlets.

The said farm was also the first at PhilRice to receive a GAP Certification for rice and vegetables. It underwent on-site evaluations of its current farming practices such as record-keeping, maintenance of facilities, quality production, and management. Its farm produce also passed chemical tests performed by the Bureau of Plant Industry.

All DA-PhilRice Branch stations are working on their GAP certification.

[With reports from Crizza M. Agapay, Krizza Marie R. Carlos, Nympha F. Abon, Ma. Teresa R. Clariz, and Cindy S. Reyes]

IT'S NOT JUST A FARM, IT'S A FARM SCHOOL

SARAH JOY N. RUIZ

Farm schools under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund-Rice Extension Services Program (RCEF-RESP) are first accredited by the DA-Agricultural Training Institute (DA-ATI) as Learning Sites for Agriculture (LSA). LSAs can then apply as Farm Schools at the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Farm schools provide training on high-quality inbred rice production, seed certification, farm mechanization, and other rice-related short courses.

There are eight steps to be an accredited LSA, and steps to become a farm school.

Hands-on training on mechanical transplanting at FDN Integrated Farm

RAMI's Integrated Farm in San Mateo, Isabela

Felomino B. Corpuz achieved success in farming owing to the new learnings he acquired from training.

FARMING AS A PROFESSION

It all started with the desire to change the old system governing their farm. From what he thought was just a simple innovation, Francis D. Nitura, 58, found a gem in establishing his own LSA/farm school—the FDN Integrated Farm.

Just like other learning sites, he also went through the accreditation process, converting his 29ha property in Ballesteros, Aurora, Isabela into a farm school.

"Even before my farm became an LSA, many farmers and various institutions from different towns have been visiting here seeking for learning," Francis recalled. "I changed our old system by venturing into mechanization and taking part in various projects."

The farm's first-ever training was under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) program with courses on Production of High-Quality Inbred Rice, Seed Certification, and Farm Mechanization. FDN was allocated 200 students who graduated with all the learnings and knowledge they had acquired at the farm.

Now, FDN is currently training another 100 Farmer Field School (FFS) students. It also recently acquired accreditation to conduct training on organic agriculture production, which focuses on chicken and vegetables, and supplements such as fertilizer, concoctions, and extracts. "We dream, we work smart...we inspire"—this is the battlecry of Francis Nitura as a farm owner. And to all aspiring farm owners, he has only few words to say: "If you have passion, dedication, and commitment to helping our very own farmers, GO FOR IT!"

"Once you have the taste of it, believe me, it turns truly rewarding and fulfilling," he added.

CATALYZING THE IMPROVEMENT OF PEOPLE'S LIVES

Rami's Integrated Farm School in Marasat Grande, San Mateo, Isabela is owned and operated by father and son Raffy A. Guillermo, 60, an Agricultural Engineer and retired DA-PhilRice Researcher; and PJ, 30, a CPA, finance executive, and an agriEntrep.

The farm conducts various trainings such as FFS on Production of High-Quality Inbred Rice and Seed Certification, and Farm Mechanization; Rice Machinery Operations (RMO) NC II; Solar-Powered Irrigation System Operation and Maintenance Level II; Organic Agriculture Production NC II; and AgroEntrepreneurship NC II.

"We take pride in providing quality training especially to our farmer-entreps. With the help of DA and TESDA, from 2019 to 2021 we have had 325 graduates in RMO, and 350 in FFS. We also provided them free training courses in Organic Agriculture Production," PJ said.

"We believe that our farmers are the backbone of the economy. It is time to focus our investment on developing our farmers to improve food production, to be competitive internationally," PJ added.

LEARNING AS A POWERFUL WEAPON IN FARMING

For Felomino B. Corpuz, 65, who owns a 2-ha farm in Bayambang, Pangasinan, earning knowledge and skills leads one to success in farming.

The father of eight considers himself adventurous and a risk-taker. Despite many risks, he still wants to try new things and techniques that he thinks will sustain his farm through the future. Drawing strength from his innovativeness and resilience, he attended one of DA-PhilRice RiceBIS' 2020 training courses for farmers: Organization-Building and Management, and Farmer Field School.

Senior citizen Corpuz said his training improved his crop management and record-keeping skills. From only 60 to 70 cavans/ha before the RiceBIS intervention, he now counts 90-100 cavans/ha.

"Thanks to the innovative technology I learned from the training," he exclaimed. "Not only did my yield increase, my expenses went down as well."

For farmers who want to put up a farm school, contact DA-ATI at **0920-946-2474**.

WHERE ARE THE RICE SPECIALISTS NOW?

HANAH HAZEL MAVI B. MANALO

Training as professional intervention should not end with its mere conduct; it should also include the documentation of former trainees' lives years after being trained.

Questions such as what happened to the trainees years after their training, did they share their knowledge to their community, and what needs to be improved in the training course or program should be asked.

According to Rowena A. Pineda, senior science research specialist of our Technology Management and Services Division (TMSD), tracer studies among the Institute's former trainees should be conducted to ensure that the present training courses/programs meet the needs of its stakeholders especially the farmers.

In a 2017 tracer study led by Pineda, 135 graduates of the season-long Rice Specialists' Training Course (RSTC) on *PalayCheck* and *Palayamanan* Systems were traced.

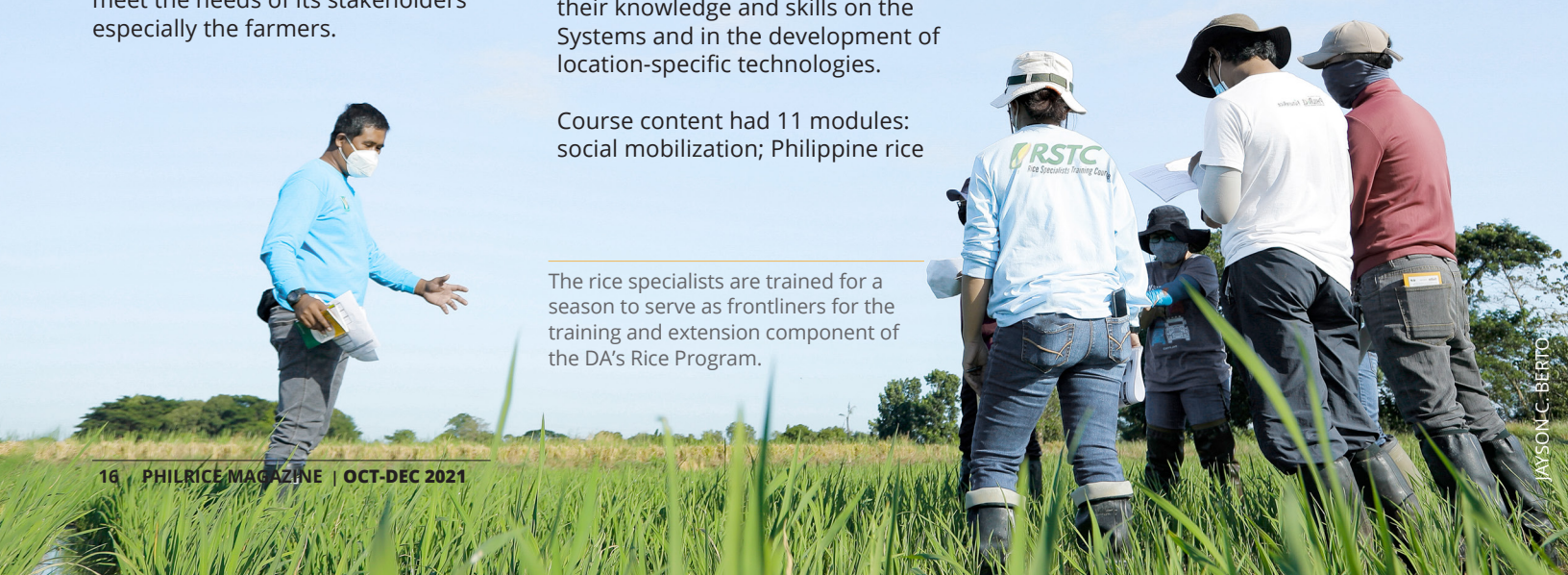
ABOUT THE RSTC

The RSTC on *PalayCheck* and *Palayamanan* Systems is one of the major training courses the TMSD offers. Trained from 2008-2010 were 347 rice sufficiency officers (RSO) and agricultural extension workers (AEW).

The season-long training was conducted in support of the Rice Master Plan of the government that aimed to train a core of rice specialists who will lead in the training and extension component of the DA-Rice program, and to enhance their knowledge and skills on the Systems and in the development of location-specific technologies.

Course content had 11 modules: social mobilization; Philippine rice situationer; introduction to rice science; the *PalayCheck* System; seed quality aspects of rice; hybrid rice technology; training, extension, and communication; socioeconomics; overview of the *Palayamanan* System; field and classroom exercises; and special topics.

Instructional strategies used were participatory lectures, discussions, and workshops; establishment of technology demonstration farms as learning fields; management of seed production areas; and conduct of *PalayCheck* Field Schools, team-building activities, Farmers' Field Days and Forum, farm walks, and educational tours.



The rice specialists are trained for a season to serve as frontliners for the training and extension component of the DA's Rice Program.

JAYSON C. BERTO

The former trainees still serve the agriculture sector: (L-R) Jayvee A. Cruz is a Scientist 1 at DA-PhilRice, Johanna R. Dizon is the OIC-provincial agriculturist of Bataan, and Juniel G. Lucidos is an extension worker and the director for planning and development in Romblon State University.

TRACING 2008-2010 RSTC ALUMNI

The 2017 tracer study showed that 87% of the trainees were with the government particularly in the agriculture sector doing research, extension work, and training.

Trainees shared that the training was very helpful in doing their work and in finding new jobs or getting promoted (77%). Some 44% of them got promoted while 30% had secured permanent positions.

They said the *PalayCheck* System was the most relevant module while the actual field exercises on land preparation and crop establishment were the most educational field activities for them.

The trainees described the RSTC very effective in enhancing their level of knowledge of rice production and rice-based technologies (vegetables and other crops).

"My present career status in science was greatly influenced by my training way back in 2009. I personally experienced an in-depth training on rice crop management, which brought me several national and international opportunities with regard to my career development. Proud and forever grateful to be an RSO," Dr. Jayvee A. Cruz, one of the former trainees, said. Currently, Cruz is a senior science research specialist/ Scientist I at DA-PhilRice.

> "By being an instrument in uplifting the lives of the farmers, there's self-fulfillment and happiness on my part. For me, that is real success.
>
> - Johanna R. Dizon

They testified that the RSTC boosted their confidence in doing their work as extension worker, facilitator, resource person, and technical staff. It improved their skills in presentation and facilitation, decision-making, diagnosis, and crop management, which were important in dealing with farmers and other rice stakeholders.

"I did not only learn about the technical aspects of rice production but also about project management. My skills in dealing with various types of people in the agri sector were also polished. These learnings are of great help in fulfilling my job as extension worker and director for planning and development in Romblon State University," Juniel G. Lucidos, also an RSTC product said.

The study learned that the specialists reached an average of 29,211 farmers, AEWs, and other rice stakeholders through capacity enhancement activities from 2008 to 2017.

"I started to live a purpose-driven life when I participated in RSTC. The knowledge, skills, and learnings I acquired from RSTC have motivated and shaped me to become an advocate of agriculture in Bataan. RSTC made me realize that success can be measured differently. By being an instrument in uplifting the lives of the farmers, there's self-fulfillment and happiness on my part. For me, that is real success," said Johanna R. Dizon, OIC-provincial agriculturist of Bataan.

The knowledge they shared in their communities were mostly on management of pests and diseases, water-saving technologies, high-quality seeds and recommended seeding rates, and nutrient deficiency and management.

Most of the problems they solved were pest-related resulting in lesser field damage.

"Let us continue this kind of 'kumustahan' or follow-up studies with our former trainees to check if we are making changes among the lives of our stakeholders," Pineda concluded.

LEVELING-UP RICE FARMING THROUGH TRAINING

REUEL M. MARAMARA

JUDY S. ORENSE, 52

In a 2017 study by DA-PhilRice, the ability of Filipino farmers to obtain maximum production is only 80.19% despite technological advancements. The study concluded that better education, membership in an organization, securing tenurial status, and participation in training could help increase farmers' yields.

In the following accounts, farmers tell their story of how training programs have changed their farming—for good.

JUDY S. ORENSE, 52, BAGO CITY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

I started rice farming in 2011 with only my childhood memory as my farming experience. Since then, I only relied on common knowledge in rice production until I attended a Farmer Field School (FFS) in a nearby farm school from June to September 2020.

> "With the training, I understood that high yield starts with using high-quality seeds.

I was surprised that many of the concepts they taught us were the opposites of what we practiced in our farms. For instance, I didn't know the importance of using high-quality seeds. Before the free inbred certified seeds came under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) program, I used to plant rice seeds that I bartered with fellow farmers. With the training, I understood that high yield starts with using high-quality seeds. They also taught us the importance of knowing what the crop needs through simple soil analysis, like the Minus-One-Element Technique, so that we can optimize the use of fertilizers.

I am very grateful that I got to participate in the training. As the chairperson of the San Juan del Monte Irrigators' Association, I also share what I learned to my members during our meetings.

I just graduated so I am yet to apply what I learned from the training to my 2.4ha ricefield and I am very positive that it will greatly increase my yield and reduce production cost. A lot will be changed from the preparation of seeds to harvesting.

ANGEL C. GLORIA, 56

ANGEL C. GLORIA, 56, STO. DOMINGO, NUEVA ECIJA

> Aside from the seed and fertilizer support I get from the government, I'd say I reduced my expenditures by 5% as I no longer buy chemicals.

Rice farming has always been my way of life. When I graduated from elementary, I became a full-time *manananim* (rice transplanter).

That's how I knew rice production. When my parents retired, I took over our 0.87ha farm land employing the old knowledge I inherited from them. As irrigation water is scarce, I only devoted 0.37ha for rice production, the rest is for corn and onion. For a long time, I settled with 25-30 cavans of rice harvest from this area until last year when I joined the FFS at DA-PhilRice.

It was time-consuming as we had to leave our homes and our farms but everything was worth it.

Before the training, I just leave the field as it is after transplanting and replant missing hills in about 15 days. For fertilizers, I used to apply only when I felt it's needed. It has also been my habit to spray pesticides when I see any insect in the field.

With my years in rice farming, I never thought these practices were wrong. Today, I visit the field regularly to inspect for any problems and prevent possible yield loss; replant missing hills within 7 days to give time for the plants to recover; apply the right amount of fertilizers in three splits at the right time; and no longer spray pesticides without thorough investigation if it's needed or not.

Now, I am getting more from my area and I can confidently attribute it to the training I had. I harvested 38 cavans during the 2021 dry season and 35 cavans in the wet season. There's still room for improvement but this is a good start.

I also cut my production cost. Aside from the seed and fertilizer support I get from the government, I'd say I reduced my expenditures by 5% as I no longer buy chemicals.

Banking on this experience, I encourage other farmers to make time and join rice-related training programs. It transformed my farming and it can transform theirs, too. We already know something but we can still widen that knowledge through training. With that, you can lower production cost and increase yield.

MESSENGERS OF RICE TECHNOS

CHARISMA LOVE B. GADO-GONZALES

For Sophocles, "none loves the messenger who brings bad news." In agriculture, messengers of technologies helpful in increasing yield and reducing farm expenses are constantly trained to ensure that information are accurate, updated, and consistent.

Amidst the pandemic, extensionists, rice workers, and farmers are continuously educated following new training methods and strict health and safety protocols.

Lea dR. Abaoag, head of the Technology Management and Services Division, said that the Rice Specialists Training Course (RSTC), employs face-to-face and blended learning approach in conducting the season-long course. These strategies implement three modules with varying number of hours or days of delivery. The modules include Transformational Leadership, Understanding Rice, and Rise with Rice. While participants in the face-to-face approach immediately apply their learnings through a Farmer Field School, trainees in the blended approach are asked to establish and manage their own technodemo in their area to practice new learnings with the guidance of an online facilitator.

Farmers are also further capacitated through the Farmers Field School and Rice Business Innovations System (RiceBIS) Community Program. In RiceBIS communities, farmers are educated through clustering to avoid crowding. The training aims to arm farmers with new skills so they can cope with the new normal.

While the DA-PhilRice enhances the skills of its stakeholders, its rice workers are engaged in a competition dubbed, *WokTok*: Walk your Talk Challenge, for them to be well-versed on technologies like *PalayCheck* – a dynamic rice production system. The competition challenges staff and personnel to achieve 1t/ha yield increase in irrigated/high-yielding areas or 0.5t/ha increase in rainfed/medium-yielding areas while reducing production cost by 30%.

Completed training courses from March 2020 to present

RSTC - blended, face-to-face: **5 BATCHES**

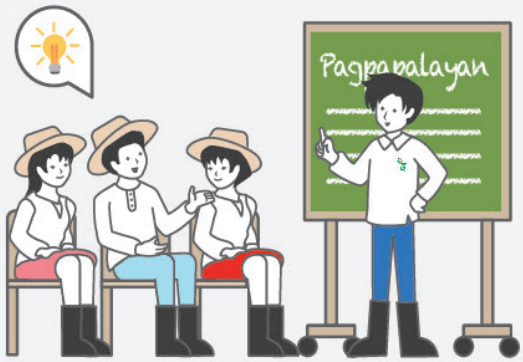
Training of Trainers (ToT) on the production of high-quality inbred rice seeds: **13 BATCHES**

Farmer Field School: **18 BATCHES**

ToT on pest & nutrient management: **7 BATCHES**

From January to June 2021, 65 rice specialists completed the season-long course with 55% gain in knowledge (GIK)

RCEF Farmer Field School on the Production of High-Quality Inbred Rice, Seed Certification, & Farm Mechanization:
50.12% GIK



RiceBIS Community

RiceBIS (Jan – June 2021, across the country)

Rice production & processing: **1,393 farmers**

Organizational building & management: **723 farmers**

Agroenterprise: **849 farmers**

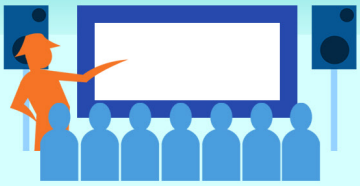
ONLINE LEARNING AT PALAYARALAN

PalayAralan caters to DA-PhilRice's clients and visitors who want specific information and knowledge on certain aspects of rice production but do not wish to enroll in a long-term, in-depth and intensive rice training course.

It aims to engage the community and promote DA-PhilRice technologies and services. Topics are based on cropping calendars. Participation in PalayAralan lecture seminars is voluntary and free of charge.

The Community Relations Office handles it with assistance from the Information Systems Division.

INFOGRAPHIC BY JUDE KLARENCE C. PANGILINAN
WRITTEN BY ANDREI B. LANUZA



THE BIRTH OF PALAYARALAN

November 2018 – first PalayAralan session

PALAYARALAN DURING PANDEMIC

April 30, 2020 - Livestreaming service begun through (DA-PhilRice) Facebook page and Zoom

DA-PhilRice Agusan, Bicol, and Isabela have likewise adopted PalayAralan and have conducted similar activities for their respective areas.

SUMMARY OF SESSIONS FROM 2019 TO 2021

COMMENTS FROM FB LIVE SESSIONS

Aser Pantaleon
Salamat po sa pagtugon sa aking katanungan. Sana po huwag kayong magsasawang tumulong sa aming mga magsasaka. Maraming Salamat Sir Edwin.
Like · Reply

Larry Maravilla
Thank you very much *sa karagdagang impormasyon. Nadagdagan ang kaalaman naming mga magsasaka.*
Like · Reply

Ceasar Quiambao
Salamat po sa pagbati. Malaking tulong po ito sa akin na gumagawa sa bukid. Maraming salamat po.
Like · Reply

Drin Bibon
Sana ma-upload din po ito sa YouTube para maaaring balikan. Maraming salamat po.
Like · Reply

BREAKING BARRIERS: THE SISTERHOOD IN RICE FARMING

Viola Fern U. Sebastian (L) and Frianina V. Resplandor (R), co-owners of Myriad Farm School

MARY GRACE M. NIDOY

While substantial steps to promote gender equality in our country have been taken with the enactment of the Magna Carta of Women in 2009, gender gaps remain in other industries like agriculture.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, 8.31 million men and 2.76 million ladies in 2016 were employed in agriculture. Men were also paid P17.45 higher than women. Yet these data are not enough to reflect the important roles that women play in agriculture.

"There are many undocumented labor practices. While women play major roles in food production, their contributions in the social and entrepreneurial aspects of agriculture are worth noting and must also be highlighted," asserts Dr. Diadem G. Esmero, DA-PhilRice Gender and Development focal person.

She adds that women usually manage the budget for the farm, prepare meals for the family, market their produce, and largely consulted by their husbands in the decision-making for their farm activities.

Esmero also recognizes that DA-PhilRice has taken big strides in promoting gender and development (GAD) by providing capacity-enhancement initiatives to its GAD focal point persons and key officials. In 2018, the Institute achieved a Level 3 standing in the Gender Mainstreaming Evaluation Framework certifying that GAD is applied in its operations. Efforts on GAD mainstreaming were also integrated in DA-PhilRice's 77 projects in 2019 and 2020.

"As we continue to strengthen our GAD Focal Point System, we envision our Institute to be fully gender-responsive in terms of capacity development, enabling mechanisms, policies, programs and projects to attain social inclusiveness," Esmero explains.

As women continue to navigate the world of agriculture, some have found their space and we are highlighting their narratives in the hope that the sector will continue to recognize their invaluable contributions.

FROM FARMER TO MANAGER

When Rosario "Rose" C. Clemente left her job in Metro Manila in 2002 to settle in her husband's hometown in Oriental Mindoro, she found that her husband's farm was being rented by a local for rice production.

Her curiosity in farming led her to become a business partner and was in-charge of the financial aspect. The former social worker calls herself a 'late-bloomer', but this did not stop her from becoming a farmer and manager of their farm.

"When one of my kids was about to go to college, I asked my business partner if I could manage our land solely. At first, I saw the farm as an investment until my work became my advocacy," she shares. Rose would regularly monitor the farm and create a cropping schedule. She also enrolled herself in various training courses to improve her farming skills. One of her proudest moments was when she harvested 10t/ha.

"Before Youtube and Facebook, I didn't have a mentor, so I had to learn

Rosario "Rose" C. Clemente, a proud seed grower and farm school owner from Oriental MIndoro

everything on my own. Eventually, I was a constant figure in training courses and met some of the veteran farmers who guided me," the 63-year-old farmer says.

The mother of four is also active on social media, citing DA-PhilRice's *Palaywakin ang Galing* campaign as one of her sources of information on the *PalayCheck* System.

Soon enough, she learned that not all income could be derived from production alone. Her 8-ha farm caught the attention of seed growers who convinced her to join another training. She was one of the only three women farmers who participated.

"I decided to elevate myself and become a seed grower in 2019. First, it was for monetary considerations since seeds are expensive. Second, I also considered it as a personal achievement in my agricultural journey," Rose shares.

By 2020, Rose also became a farm school owner and started training farmers under the RCEF Extension Program. She has trained 300 farmers thus far.

One of her children has also joined a training for seed growers. She knows that eventually, someone from their family will have to take over her work. For Rose, women's known characteristics such as patience, organizational skills, and compassion are some of the strengths that they could use in carving their own path in agriculture. The sector has been financially rewarding for her, proving that yes, there's money in agriculture. "I believe that there is a very big space for women in agriculture. All we need to do is find where we could fit in," she advises.

PARTNERS IN PRIME

Frianina V. Resplandor and Viola Fern U. Sebastian abandoned the concrete ecosystem of Makati City in 2017 when they saw potential in developing a 10-ha farm owned by Sebastian's family in Guimba, Nueva Ecija.

To say that it was challenging is an understatement given that career-wise, the long-time couple's work was not directly related to agriculture. Fern was an interior designer while Nina was in the management consultancy business. Like any budding farmer, they also enrolled in various training courses to learn more about rice farming.

"Fern already had a vision of what we wanted for the farm so when we were attending all these training courses, we were also building it gradually and transforming it into a farm school," Nina starts an exposé.

Fern and Nina, now in their fifties, also participated in the Rice Specialists' Training Course (RSTC) under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) Extension Program early this year. They describe it as 'rigid' but the 'best training' they ever had.

Myriad Farms was accredited by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) in 2020. At the start, the former urbanites had doubts if they could manage the trainings. After all, the farmers are way ahead of them as far as experience is concerned.

"I would always tell them not to look at me as a teacher but rather a friend so we can learn together," Nina discloses.

Their approach was to cascade what they learned from their training at DA-PhilRice and enhance the knowledge of farmers without compromising what they already know.

"Surprisingly, the reception among the farmers was very good and they eagerly joined our hands-on and practical applications. They would even ask us to buy Leaf Color Chart, [a tool to assess the nitrogen status of the rice crop using a 4-colored "ruler" for leaf color comparison] and Minus-One-Element Technique kit [a soil nutrient diagnostic technology done through a pot experiment] from DA-PhilRice," Nina goes on.

"I think one of the factors is they see that we practice what we teach. There's this notion that because we're owners of the farm, we can't do the dirty work. We have inspired, especially our women participants, to do the work," Fern recounts.

More than 400 farmers have graduated from the three batches of RCEF-Farmer Field School they had conducted at the farm. They've also noticed that more and more women are getting interested to venture in farming as they saw an increase of women-enrollees. In their latest batch of graduates for instance, half of the participants were women ranging from 20 to 30 years old.

"We have a lot of friends who are women-farmers and they take pride in their profession. I think we are more aggressive when it comes to decision-making and risk takers in entrepreneurial ventures," Nina calculates.

Their advice to fellow women? "Learn! Continue to learn. Attend the training courses/programs. It's free anyway!" Fern exclaims with conviction.

"Don't wait for the retirement. If you want to venture in agriculture, now is the right time," Nina wraps it up.

ENCHANTING THE YOUTH INTO AGRICULTURE

ELOUEZA MARIE P. DELA CRUZ

One of the alternative courses of action in disseminating information about agriculture is engaging the youth community. Various programs have been developed to encourage the youth to be involved in agriculture especially in rice farming to help farmers adapt available technologies.

Let's discover the engagements of the youth in agriculture.

After almost 7 years of implementation, the Special Training for Employment Programs (STEP) by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), a community-based specialty initiative, is still being sustained to increase employment and opportunities to local communities including the youth.

Agriculture and Fishery is one of the offered courses under the program and attendees obtain free training, assessment, starter tool kits, and training allowance. The program accepts any legal Filipino citizen aged 15 and above. However, the number of students participating in the program has reduced since the pandemic started.

TESDA implements STEP in 57 administered schools, 60 training centers and community-based training classrooms. In February-March 2021, over 2,000 trainees from Cordillera region and Northern Mindanao schools received their starter tool kits.

SHARPENING AGRI GRADS' KNOWLEDGE ON RICE TECHNOLOGIES

To equip new agriculture graduates with knowledge and skills on rice production and technologies, DA-PhilRice Midsayap conducts lectures and field training through the "Rice boot camps" every semester.

The camp raises awareness on the existence and relevance of DA-PhilRice technologies including the *PalayCheck* System and *Palayamanan* Plus, Agro-Ecosystem Analysis, and Minus-One-Element Technique. It also identifies potential R&D workers who could catalyze change toward advanced agriculture.

Eight former trainees under the camp training are now serving at DA-PhilRice Midsayap. Three trainings are slated to allow more new agriculture graduates to acquire proficiency in rice production and technologies.

YOUTH AS INFOMEDIARIES

Generating alternative communication pathways in agriculture extension, the Infomediary Campaign was launched in 2012. It engaged young people, particularly students, in rice production who served as information providers in their rural communities.

DA-PhilRice trained teachers, introduced them to information sites and provided reading materials about rice production and technologies that they later passed on to students. Students were introduced to available e-platforms such as the DA-PhilRice Text Center and Pinoy Rice Knowledge Bank (pinoyrice.com)

OLITA S. NTOC

Planting of Mestiso 20, a hybrid rice variety, inside the Rice Garden located at the Rizal Park in Manila.

LORELIE VEE C. DOMINGO

Distribution of PalayKulayan coloring books and PalayPuzzle books to private and public schools.

DATU ALI N. SUMLAY

Field observation and gathering of data for Agro-Ecosystem Analysis of new agriculture graduates.

where they gathered rice information for their parents and relatives.

RICE FARMING IN THE CITY

It's been decades since urban agriculture was introduced locally. Since then, many alternatives and technologies were created to introduce farming even in urban areas of the country.

Among these is the Rice Garden that began in 2003. It occupies a 300m^2 area in the northwest corner of the Rizal Park, where 200m^2 serve as rice demo area and 100m^2 for other plants.

Ceremonial rice harvesting is held every November at Rizal Park in Manila in celebration of National Rice Awareness Month. Activities include *Likhang Palay*, a photography contest; riceApanataym, story-telling adaptation from the TV show 'wansapanataym'; tour of the Rice Garden and actual harvesting of rice. No thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's event will be conducted virtually via Facebook livestream.

> "Si Sagib at ang Kanyang mga Paglalakbay" —an online storytelling that featured the exciting journeys of "Sagib" the rice, from seed to plate, together with other characters - the friendly insects, the farmers, and more.

PALAYKWENTUHAN

To cope with the online era of learning, the Rice Science Museum (RSM) run by the Community Relations Office developed programs that involve not only farmers but also the youth community. One of these is *PalayKwentuhan*: "Si Sagib at ang Kanyang mga Paglalakbay" —an online storytelling that featured the exciting journeys of "Sagib" the rice, from seed to plate, together with other characters - the friendly insects, the farmers, and more.

RSM also launched and distributed "*PalayKulayan*" and "*Palay*Puzzle" books, which promote and encourage teachers and pupils to learn rice science and arts by coloring and solving puzzles.

RSM continues to broaden its reach up to the far-flung areas and develop more convenient and efficient ways of learning rice science.

By developing strategies to entice youth into agriculture, information is now highly localized in farming communities.

HOW THE YOUTH FAIR IN AGRICULTURE

CHRISTINA A. FREDILES

Let's learn more about Falqueza, their club, and his views on how the youth fair in agriculture.

HOW DO THE YOUTH FAIR IN AGRICULTURE? WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT IN THE SECTOR?

Agriculture is a continuous process. No matter how advanced our technology is, if there are no able players, it will not prosper.

The youth of today are the players who will carry on the torch of our aging farmers. We are one of the pillars of food security. Aside from tillers of land, the youth are among the key players in agricultural R&D.

Romblon-based Ricmel S. Falqueza, 31, is the national president of the 4-H Club of the Philippines. He also owns the farm Aspire AgriTech Academy, Inc.

The 4-H Club is a rural youth organization that provides positive, hands-on and educational opportunities for the youth. The club benefits from various programs of the Department of Agriculture.

Thousands of 4-H club members have completed the national training on agripreneurship that teaches them the basic principles and concepts of business planning and marketing in the agricultural context.

Falqueza says that since the pandemic started, 4-H Club members have established community gardens in various barangays nationwide.

CITE SPECIFIC PROJECTS THAT COULD HELP THE YOUTH ENGAGE IN AGRICULTURE.

Engagement of the youth in agriculture is not the main issue as most of them are aware of the challenges in food security and in the lack of job opportunities. We are aware that farming can be an alternative source of income.

Sustaining the youth in agriculture is the challenge compared with their engagement in agriculture. To sustain them, the government should involve the youth in crafting and formulating agricultural policies and programmed designs. This can be done through grassroots consultations.

Aside from technologies that could increase the yield of farmers, we need to hone our technical and agro-entrepreneurial skills through training to ensure that this profession [agriculture] can bring food on the table. It would be much appreciated if this training is a complete package from planning to implementation, considering the level of understanding of participants and their current situations or constraints they are experiencing.

Strengthening support for local produce and incentive programs can also help sustain the youth in agriculture. We need guidance especially on market opportunities.

CAN ENGAGEMENT OF THE YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE HELP OUR COUNTRY SOLVE FOOD INSECURITY AND FUEL PANDEMIC RECOVERY?

I believe that we can, considering the youth as the HOPE of our country. As an entrepreneur myself, I am proud to say that my job brings food on the table for my staff and a good source of food for my consumers. Especially in this pandemic, people need to eat, hence, agri-entrepreneurs need to produce food. This profession is in demand whether there is or no pandemic.

HOW CAN THE 4-H CLUB OF THE PHILIPPINES EMPOWER THE YOUTH?

The Club empowers the youth by strengthening their technical and entrepreneurial skills. This Club adopts the learning-by-doing strategy to ensure engagement of the youth toward productivity and profitability.

HOW WILL YOU ENCOURAGE THE YOUTH TO JOIN IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR?

Enjoining the youth into agriculture is an easy task if only we can prove to them that there is money in agriculture; if only we can assure them that agriculture as a profession is profitable aside from the fact that it is enjoyable and satisfying as well.

We cannot persuade the youth if agriculture means low productivity and profitability. We need to prove to them that agriculture is a noble, fun, and profitable profession.

MESSAGE FOR THE YOUTH AND THE GOVERNMENT:

For the youth, let's not lose hope. Let's be open to opportunities especially in the field of agriculture. Let's embrace agriculture, this profession is more than just farm work. We can be entrepreneurs, agriculturists, or food scientists! Let's explore our full potentials toward agricultural development. Even during this pandemic, we can still learn agriculture through online seminars. Let's be pro-active. May we learn to put value on agriculture.

May the government continue to support education in agriculture, engage the youth in policy-making and provide innovative technologies toward productivity and profitability. Let's work and learn together. Thank you for your support.

VILLAR SIPAG SUPPORTS THE YOUTH

Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere is the foremost Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the United Nations, which aims to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030.

In the Philippines, the Villar SIPAG (Social Institute for Poverty Alleviation and Governance) took initiative in encouraging the youth to help their respective communities alleviate poverty through social enterprises.

The Villar SIPAG Awards - Youth Poverty Reduction Challenge is a friendly competition among the Filipino youth groups composed of college or masteral students, out-of-school youth, young professionals and entreps, social enterprise groups, and youth organizations that were successful in assisting to reduce poverty in their areas and compete for the title of 'Most Outstanding Youth Social Enterprises.'

This time, the Youth Poverty Reduction Challenge returned for its 4th year of implementation and accepting submissions for nominations until November 13.

Ten awardees will receive a cash prize of P150,000 each to finance their projects and initiatives on poverty alleviation.

"This is our way of supporting the empowerment of our young people in the hope of further encouraging them and also inspiring others to significantly contribute to our goals as a nation," Senator Cynthia Villar explained.

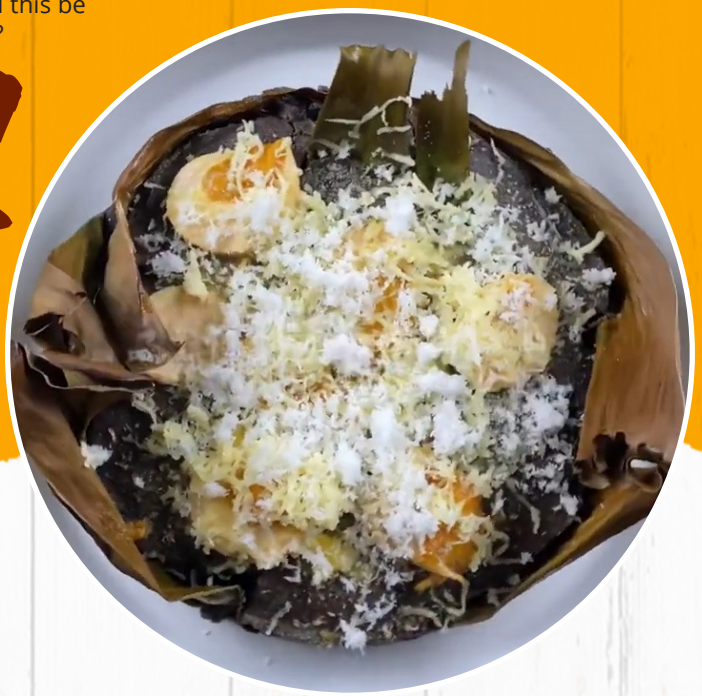
//ELOUEZA MARIE P. DELA CRUZ

Holiday Rice Recipes

It's that special time of the year again! Waking up to the cold breeze that invades your privacy through the half-open window; chorusing with the never-boring songs of Jose Mari Chan; and coming home with freshly cooked bibingka and puto bumbong after attending simbang gabi: can all this be called PASKO-demic?

But just like other celebrations, Christmas also speaks volumes of our faith, customs, values, beliefs, and traditions. Specifically, rice looms large in the Noche Buena because it is believed that rice brings members of the family closer, like how the cooked rice grains stick together.

COMPILED BY GLADYS G. CRISTOBAL AND CHRISTOPHER JOHN C. GONZALES



Black Bibingka

PREPARATION TIME: 2 hours; makes 3-5 servings

Ingredients

- 200g Black Rice
- 1 cup Rice Flour
- 4 tbsp Vegetable oil or cooking oil
- 2 cups water
- ½ cup All-purpose flour
- ½ cup White sugar
- ¾ cup Fresh or evaporated milk
- ½ cup Coconut milk
- 2 tsp Baking powder
- ¼ tsp Salt
- Butter or margarine
- Cream cheese (optional)
- Salted egg
- Grated coconut (*niyog*)
- Cheese
- Pre-cut Banana leaf (manually wilted over fire)

Procedure

- Soak the black rice with the first cup of water until soft, then strain the water.
- Grind the black rice using a food processor or blender and gradually add the 2nd cup of water.
- In a large bowl, extract the liquid from the puree using the strainer.
- Preheat the oven at 190°C.
- Into the bowl of extracted black rice liquid, add the rice flour, all-purpose flour, white sugar, fresh or evaporated milk, salt, vegetable oil, and baking powder, then whisk until well-combined.
- Line a 6-inch baking pan with pre-cut banana leaf then coat it with butter or margarine.
- Pour the bibingka batter in the baking pan, and put small chunks of cream cheese.
- Bake for 20min (do not turn off the oven after baking).
- Put sliced salted egg on top and drizzle with coconut milk.
- Put it back in the oven for another 10min.
- Remove from oven then immediately, coat it with butter while hot.
- Top with grated cheese, white sugar and *niyog*.
- Serve, share, and enjoy!

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zq4_IVGEolY&t=1s

Rice Pudding Brûlée

PREPARATION/COOK TIME: 1 hour/35 minutes

ingredients

- 3 cups whole milk
- 3 cinnamon sticks, roughly broken
- 5 cardamom pods, crushed
- 1 vanilla bean, split
- 2 one-inch strips of lemon peel
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
- 2 1/2 cups white rice, cooked
- 1/2tsp salt
- Granulated sugar for topping

procedure

- Pour the milk into a medium saucepan. Add the cinnamon sticks, cardamom pods, and lemon peel. Scrape the seeds out of the vanilla bean. Add the seeds and the bean into the milk. Put the pan over medium heat and wait for the milk to simmer. Right before it starts to boil, remove the pan from the heat, cover it with a lid, and let it sit for 30-45min, so the milk becomes infused with the flavors.
- Pre-heat the oven to 190°C, and spray your ramekins or large baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.
- In a large bowl, whisk together the egg yolks, egg, and brown sugar. Pour the milk through a fine-mesh strainer into the egg mixture, straining out all of the spices. Whisk everything well. Add the cooked rice and the salt and stir well, until everything is combined. Make sure the rice is separated into individual grains and isn't clumped together.
- Ladle the rice pudding into the ramekins. Place the ramekins in a large baking pan and fill the pan with water halfway up the sides of the rice pudding dishes. Bake at 176°C for 30-35min for small, shallow dishes, or up to an hour for large, deep dishes. The pudding should look brown around the edges and feel set, with just a slight jiggle, when you lightly tap it.
- Carefully remove the dishes from the water bath and let them cool at room temperature. (If desired, the pudding can be refrigerated until you are ready to eat it.)
- To create the brûlée effect, sprinkle the tops with a thin layer of granulated sugar. If you have a kitchen torch, light it up and gently pass the flame over the surface of the pudding in smooth even strokes, until the sugar melts and caramelizes. If you want a deeper, thicker caramel layer, repeat the process. It's smarter to do two thin layers than to try and caramelize a thick layer of sugar—it will cook unevenly, leaving you with burnt or undercooked spots.
- If you don't have a kitchen torch, place the sugared ramekins on a baking sheet and set them under the broiler until the sugar melts and caramelizes. Watch them closely, as it's easy to burn the tops with this method. Let the sugar cool and harden, then enjoy immediately.

Source: https://www.sugarhero.com/rice-pudding-brulee/

EASY AND EFFICIENT SERVICES

MINARD F. PAGADUAN

The technologies of today's digital age are continuously transforming our economies and societies, duly accelerating when the COVID-19 pandemic descended on us. More people are becoming "internet citizens" due to travel restrictions and health protocols. Many employees are fulfilling their duties and responsibilities through the work-from-home setup. Most meetings and conferences are virtual. Never have our lives been so digitalized than during this pandemic, which certain persons describe as "science fiction movie that turned into reality."

Quick response services

DA-PhilRice Text Center (PTC) [0917-111-7423] - digital platform that provides answers to queries about rice seeds and modern farming practices through text or call.

Binhi e-Padala system - first in the agriculture sector to optimize financial technology, providing farmers with an easier and faster way of receiving seeds for planting through a digital voucher system. While carrying out the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) - Seed Program, DA-PhilRice piloted it last year, in partnership with PayMaya Philippines Inc., Development Bank of the Philippines, and Nueva Ecija Seed Growers Multipurpose Cooperative.

This year, DA-PhilRice has taken over the distribution of voucher codes through the in-house RCEF seed monitoring system (RSMS). After extracting the lists of farmer-beneficiaries from dependable sources, DA-PhilRice assigns a claim code to each farmer and sends it through the PTC. The nearest claim location outlet and schedule are specified. The system also electronically records the seed claims and releases them for easy reporting.

All in the name of making it easy for farmers, the Binhi e-Padala has been proven to work in some areas of Nueva Ecija and Tarlac, and was later expanded to some municipalities of Ilocos Region, Cordillera, Central Luzon, CALABARZON, Bicol, Eastern/Western Visayas, Northern Mindanao, and Davao Regions.

Agri-apps in Playstore

Minus-One-Element Technique (MOET) App - determines the nutrients deficient in the soil and the amount of fertilizer needed to attain a certain target yield. It also predicts the yield from your fertilization plan. It comes with the farmers' MOET manual and instructional videos.

Binhing Palay app - detailed catalog of currently released rice varieties to educate farmers about seed characteristics, pest and disease reactions; with recommendations on planting areas for specific varieties.

e-Damuhan app - weed management approaches that aim to defeat weeds in the rice fields. Farmers can also identify weeds through artificial intelligence.

AgRiDoc - mobile phone app for farm management methods whereby farmers can enjoy simple record-keeping features, rice crop updates, geographical visualization of the farm, PalayCheck System, and scheduler. The app is easy to use, and no internet is needed.

www.pinoyrice.com - online source that helps farmers and extension workers easily access rice production advice. It serves as a one-stop online information source that specializes on PalayCheck, an integrated crop management system.

Digital marketplace using Shopee

Farmers, students, field schools, and agriculture extension workers may place their orders for rice products, diagnostic tools such as MOET Kit and Leaf Color Chart (LCC). The LCC assesses the nitrogen status of the rice crop using a 4-colored "ruler" for leaf color comparison. Souvenir items for sale are available, too.

The DA-PhilRice Business Development Division is a Preferred Shopee seller with a five-star rating from customers.

Items are shipped out within two days from the order date except for Fridays, where the orders are picked up by freight partner J&T every Monday.

DA-PhilRice's INTRANET service - an integrated portal that allows employees to access various automated services that provide resources, calendars, bulletins and ads, chat, email, memos, library, links to social media accounts, and many more. It helps the agency comply with emerging procedural or reporting requirements as well as accounting and auditing reports. Thus, it lessens the reporting time, making them more efficient and eliminating data entry errors and duplication.

The system automates most of the transactions for employees suited for the work-from-home setup. It also minimizes administrative expenses such as ink and paper. Thus, they can do their work as expected using the system to serve the farmers indirectly.

Project Management Information System (PMIS)- contains relevant information on all DA-PhilRice projects. Through its Activity Monitoring System features, it facilitates real-time inputting of targets to the link programs, projects, studies, or components, which complement the sectoral and institutional goals.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY APPOINTED AND PROMOTED STAFFERS

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NEUST, 2019

AGRIPRENEURS TALK

COMPILED BY
ELOUEZA MARIE P. DELA CRUZ

RONALDO SAGAYSAY, 44, San Mateo, Isabela

Instead of being an individual seller and producer, Sagaysay embraced the entrepreneurial mentality espoused by DA-PhilRice's Rice Business Innovations System. He learned the concepts of record- keeping, importance of group marketing, and the strategies of not just increasing the yield but income as well.

MARITES BENICO, 41, Zaragoza, Nueva Ecija

Instead of selling *palay* to traders, we process our produce to brown rice. Compared with P16-19/kg, we sell our brown rice at P50/kg. We have to be open-minded. Let's not limit ourselves to producing and selling to traders. We can also process our produce; we can think of other ways and be smart in our decisions.

CONCEPCION CARILLO, 56, Bingawan, Iloilo

For those who want to be a successful agripreneur, start with making friends with yourself, making an inventory of your characteristics, and defining clearly your goals in life. Careful planning, analysis, evaluation, decision-making, love of work, and risk-taking are the keys to success.

NARIE ASUNCION, 72, Mandaon, Masbate

Join cooperatives and farmers' organizations to establish connections that help market your products. Participate in trainings conducted by DA-PhilRice and other development agencies to gain more knowledge on rice production and technologies.

FRANKLIN EBARDO, 25, Bayugan City, Agusan del Sur

As a young agripreneur, it is important to know the roots of rice farming. Learn by planting rice yourself and work your way up to learning advanced rice farming and its existing technologies. In this way, you will experience the hardship that will become your 'fruit' in the future.

MANOLITO CACANINDIN, 52, Midsayap, North Cotabato

Getting together with fellow farmers and adopting strategies and business ideas from co-members is a good approach. We should learn to negotiate with traders and consolidate our produce.

"Human resource is at the heart (and soul) of any organization. DA-PhilRice supports the honing of agile and future-ready servant-heroes toward the path of our collective modernization efforts at the Department of Agriculture."

DR. JOHN C. DE LEON
Executive Director

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PHILRICE
PHILIPPINE RICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

DA-PHILRICE CENTRAL EXPERIMENT STATION
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