



2018

NATIONAL RICE R&D HIGHLIGHTS

SCIENCE-BASED POLICIES IN ADVANCING RICE COMMUNITIES

PROGRAM



Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Executive Summary	
I. Fostering Improved Rice Research Environment (FIRE) In Policy	3
II. Building Unified Rice Network (BURN) through Campaign and Advocacy	6

SCIENCE-BASED POLICIES IN ADVANCING RICE COMMUNITIES (SPARC)

Program leader: Myriam G. Layaoen

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The need for well-thought-through policies can never be overemphasized with the increasing number and intensity of challenges relating to food production. These policies must be scientifically-based, rooted from best-known information to effectively guide policymaking. Hence, the Science-based Policies in Advancing Rice Communities (SPARC) Program is devoted to examine existing policies, produce new ones, and popularize these policies to best guide the Philippine rice industry. It meticulously prioritizes issues of national significance such as labor cost reduction, narrowing yield gaps across rice-producing provinces, and farmers' access to credit.

The program aimed to create a strong science-based and supportive policy environment to guide national and local decisions on rice-related issues. Specifically, it intends to:

1. scrutinize existing rice-related policies;
2. draw up new policies based on data collected from research initiatives of the Institute; &
3. advocate for policies of local and national significance to the Philippine rice industry.

As embedded in its strategic plan, the SPARC Program, through its two projects, conducted relevant and responsive policy researches and strengthened its advocacies to influence legislative agenda that will improve the efficiency of the rice value chain – from the input sector to production, processing, marketing, and the consuming public. Project FIRE (Fostering Improved Rice Research Environment in Policy) analyzes the existing and emerging policy issues surrounding the rice industry from production to utilization, conducts policy researches, and recommends policy options for consideration. Project BURN (Building Unified Rice Network through Campaign and Advocacy) packages and disseminates the research results to stakeholders, especially the policy actors, to help them make informed decisions and eventually create a favorable policy environment for the rice industry.

The policy research and advocacy initiatives of the program provide rice policy-related information, recommendations, and knowledge products shared through advocacy campaigns as major final outputs. The success of these outputs significantly depends on the symbiotic synchronization of the above-mentioned components – with the research group generating the content of advocacy messages.

In 2018, the program completed data gathering for three policy research studies on hybrid rice seed pricing, credit system, and understanding the Philippine rice industry. The study on hybrid seed pricing hopes to discuss the reasons for the high prices after the complete analysis. The study on credit documented the borrowing characteristics of farmer-borrowers

of formal and informal lenders. They manifested almost the same characteristics, except that informal borrowers were more dependent on rice farming than formal borrowers. The study on understanding the Philippine rice industry has consolidated, analyzed, and presented some important data and information in briefing materials (powerpoint briefer and reading material) that will be useful in understanding the trends and current status of the industry. The PhilRice management and Socioeconomics Division had presented the results in several internal and external briefings.

To jumpstart its advocacy initiatives, the program organized a knowledge product launching featuring the book, “Rice Value Chain in the Philippines”; the policy brief, “How the TRAIN Law impacts rice farmers”; and the infographics, “The effect of the TRAIN Law on rice farming cost and income”. The event also reintroduced to the rice stakeholders past knowledge products on rice and rice-based policies.

Tasked to address calls and queries on rice policies, the team members served as resource persons in six Congress hearings, meetings of technical working groups on the suggested retail price of rice, DA-hosted events, and media interviews that require policy inputs related to rice. Free media exposure in print, online, radio, and television amounted to more than P6 million in PR value.

Knowledge products developed include: one policy brief (on TRAIN Law and rice production), one infographics (on Train Law and rice production), one policy memo (on rice shortage and importation), one position paper (on rice seed price deregulation), 33 flyers (on narrowing yield and cost gaps), four popular articles (on RA 7308, rice shortage, TRAIN Law, and narrowing yield and cost gaps), and 25 campaign materials (on Be RICEponsible and NRAM). These were printed/uploaded and disseminated through the quad-media and 22 knowledge sharing and learning activities.

In partnership with the DA-Regional Field Offices 4B, 4A, and 10 as sponsors, the program organized and conducted two seminar-workshops on rice value chain and comparative efficiency in the Philippines in Puerto Princesa City (Luzon cluster) and Cagayan de Oro City (Vis-Min cluster). More than 400 program planners, policy makers, local government officials, and other rice stakeholders participated in these events.

The program also housed the Be RICEponsible Campaign and the conduct of the National Rice Awareness Month for this year as an advocacy activity. Four local government units (Baybay City, Bacolod City, Davao City, and Murcia, Negros Occidental) passed and adopted the ordinance on half-cup of rice serving and resolution on brown rice promotion. The House of Representatives had accommodated for hearing a bill on the serving of half-cup rice. This year’s NRAM celebration promoted PhilRice’s slogan, “Quality rice. Quality life.” featuring rice as the bond that brings farmers and consumers together towards achieving quality life. The team drafted and coordinated the communication plan that served as the guide on the conduct of activities nationwide, hosted by partner-agencies both in the public and private sector.

While there are some identified priorities, the program is proactive and responsive to addressing other rice production-related issues as they arise. The intended outputs largely contribute to Outcome 4 (science-based and supportive rice policy environment), Outcome 6 (enhanced partnerships and knowledge management for R4D), and Rice BIS components of the PhilRice Strategic Plan. Specifically, the potential impacts of the program are the following: (1) strengthened rice policy environment; (2) sustainable and enhanced welfare of the farmers, stakeholders, and policy makers of the rice environment; and (3) increased rice productivity and enhanced profitability of rice based-farming.



PROJECT 1:

FOSTERING IMPROVED RICE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT (FIRE) IN POLICY

AC Litonjua

This project assessed existing policies, analyzed proposed policy changes, and recommended solutions on rice policy-related issues. Specifically, it analyzed existing and emerging policy issues surrounding the rice industry from production to utilization; conducted policy researches and provided these to stakeholders, especially the policy actors, to help them make informed decisions and eventually create a favorable policy environment for the rice industry; and recommended policy options for consideration of stakeholders.

For 2018, the project prioritized hybrid rice seed pricing, credit system, and understanding the Philippine rice industry.

The hybrid rice seed has a market price of P212/kg for public-bred and P275-350/kg for private-bred hybrids. These are seven times higher than the price of certified seeds. It is interesting to determine what makes these prices so high. In 2018, the study finished gathering data, which are yet to be processed and analyzed in 2019.

The second study is the Review of Credit System for Rice Farmers. Based on initial assessment, farmer-borrowers of formal and informal lenders had almost the same characteristics, except that informal borrowers were more dependent on rice farming than formal borrowers. This implies that formal borrowers have more varied sources of income; hence, are more confident to be tied-up with responsibilities involving legal documents.

Some of the available credit sources for rice farmers are informal lenders, cooperatives, and banks. Farmer-borrowers identified convenience, low-credit interest, and quick processing time as the major considerations in availing credit. Hence, the Production Loan Easy Access (PLEA) appeals to them although only a limited number of farmers can access it.

The study on understanding the Philippine rice industry had consolidated, analyzed, and presented some important data and information through briefing materials (i.e., powerpoint briefers and reading material) that will be useful in understanding the trends and current status of the industry. Some of the analysis made were presented in several internal and external briefings by the SED and the PhilRice management. A reading material covering 2010-2017 data, which documents and analyzes the major parameters of the growth of the rice industry in the country for easy reference is also being prepared.

The study titled, “Rice Production Systems in Change: Patterns, Pathways, Perspectives” hopes to address key issues of global change and a topic of great socio-political importance. The study is ongoing and is currently consolidating the results gathered from interviews in the University of Bonn in Germany.

The Economics of Hybrid Rice Seed Pricing in the Philippines

AB Mataia and RC Alcantara

Encouraged by the success of hybrid rice technology in improving productivity and enhancing rice production in China, rice-producing countries throughout Asia see hybrid rice technology as an opportunity to increase rice yields; thereby, ensuring a steady supply (Virmani and Kumar, 2004). In the Philippines, hybrid rice is seen as a key engine of production growth given limited prospects for additional area expansion. However, despite the yield benefits of hybrid rice technology, the adoption rate of hybrid rice is still not encouraging.

The high price of F1 seed remains the main obstacle of the low adoption of hybrid rice technology. As such, wider adoption of hybrid rice will only be realized if good quality hybrid seed is readily available at affordable prices. Hence, this study determined the factors affecting the price of hybrid rice seed. For 2018, the study has completed its data gathering. The following highlights were gathered from key informants:

1. Make parental lines available. Some AxR producers were unable to plant due to lack of parental lines.
2. There should be a Memorandum of Agreement between AxR producers and the Department of Agriculture for market assurance.
3. Production of public hybrids by small cooperatives may be supported further by reducing involvement of private companies in the procurement program. However, the government should ensure availability of parental lines for cooperatives so that farmers can provide the seed requirements of the industry.
4. Establish additional demonstration sites to showcase the performance of different hybrid varieties, adopting the system of private hybrid companies. These demonstration sites have to be sufficiently funded.

Review of the Credit System for Rice Farmers

AC Litonjua, AB Mataia, JP Curibot, and RF Ibarra

This study reviewed the Philippine credit system. Based on initial assessment, farmers have almost the same characteristics, except that informal borrowers are more dependent on rice farming than formal borrowers. It implies that formal borrowers have more varied sources of income; hence, are more confident to be tied-up with responsibilities involving legal documents. Informal borrowers preferred convenience; formal borrowers preferred low-interest credit. Borrowing from informal lenders, however, can be too expensive for farmers. Meanwhile, loaning from formal lenders involves more time, documents submission, attendance to briefing/seminars, and collateral (in some services). The Production Loan Easy Access (PLEA) is appealing to farmers, except that only marginalized farmers can access it; other farmers are also interested to avail it. From this result, there is a need to study the best conduit of credit services like PLEA.

The Philippine Rice Industry Situationer

AC Litonjua and JP Curibot

Time-series data and rice information on rice are already available. However, some are not easily understood by stakeholders. This study consolidated significant data and information and produced briefing material useful in understanding the trends and current status of the industry. Based on 2010-2017 data, production grew by 2.06%; area harvested by 0.83%; and yield by 1.23%. Per capita rice consumption (PCRC) continued to reduce. In 2016, PCRC was 108kg/cap/year. Self-sufficiency ratio is at 95% in 2016. Rice lands cultivated by farmers increased from 1.38ha in 1996/97 to 1.51 in 2011/12. Majority of farmers still used low-quality seeds at a seeding rate of 150-250 kg/ha. There was no significant change in fertilizer rate between 2010 and 2016. Net income in real terms were almost the same for 2010 and 2016. Data also showed that climate change is a major factor in yield reduction. As such, efforts to help farmers become more resilient to climate change has to continue.

Rice Production Systems in Change: Patterns, Pathways, and Perspectives

MJC Regalado and P Vizmonte Jr.

The study aimed to address key issues on global change. For 2018, 20-paged questionnaire was developed and 200 irrigated farmers from Muñoz, Nueva Ecija and 140 rainfed farmers from Sta. Maria, Pangasinan were interviewed. The team will visit the site before year end to interview six rainfed farmers. Data were encoded and processed for analysis by collaborators from the University of Bonn in Germany. Error reported for each farmers' variable uploaded in the website of University of Bonn was also submitted.



PROJECT 2:

BUILDING UNIFIED RICE NETWORK THROUGH CAMPAIGN AND ADVOCACY

MG Layaoen

As an organization, PhilRice had produced data that can significantly influence policies at the national and local levels. These data were drawn from the Institute's meticulous and well-thought-research initiatives but remain inaccessible to policymakers, much less to general public.

Hence, Project BURN was formed to translate policies into actionable strategies. It intends to actively influence policy direction toward improved rice policy environment. It optimizes the use of strategic communication, specifically knowledge product development and advocacy campaigns, to communicate policies and rally support from policymakers and other stakeholders. The study, Create SPARC (Development and production of popularized knowledge products on rice and rice-based policies) handles content development and packaging of messages for Ignite SPARC's (Influencing rice policy directions through advocacy campaigns) use in disseminating information to promote science-based policies.

Create SPARC: Development and production of popularized knowledge products on rice and rice-based policies

MG Layaoen, AP Gomez

The development of knowledge products is an important strategic communication tool to convey messages in policy advocacy. This study translated science-based policy recommendations into popular forms for better understanding of policy makers and other

stakeholders in the rice industry. It aimed to help influence policy directions and eventually promote competitiveness in the rice industry through crafting and packaging advocacy messages. It involved scrutiny of issues to focus on, target audiences, appropriate medium for sharing, and production of materials to create awareness on and shape opinions. As outputs, the study developed knowledge products on narrowing yield and cost gaps, rice tariffication, shortage and importation, seed price deregulation, and the TRAIN Law and rice production. The crafting of materials considered the needs of specific audiences. To promote visibility and use, the advocacy team then distributed these materials through the most appropriate medium of dissemination. Due to the controversial nature of rice in the public, media, and political agenda, close consultation among the concerned authorities in the Department of Agriculture and PhilRice executive management has become critical in the conduct of the study. They had to unanimously agree on all decisions and releases; hence, affecting the study progress. Some of the topics identified in the work plan did not correspond to the evolving requirements, thus changes in study priorities resulted in activity lags. This circumstance implies that the success of knowledge product development depends on the magnitude and importance of policy issues as they emerge. Consultation with the management should therefore be practiced at all times. Despite the constraints, the study delivered the required knowledge products that created awareness and understanding among policy makers on science-based information to support the rice industry. The development of knowledge products should be continuously done in a proactive manner to address emerging policy issues.

Ignite SPARC: Influencing rice policy directions through advocacy campaigns

AP Gomez, MG Layaoen

Ignite SPARC focused on policy advocacy to disseminate rice information to policymakers and the public. It aimed to influence program planners and policymakers to formulate science-based interventions and policies to improve the country's rice industry. It uses various advocacy campaigns such as promotion through events, partnership/networking, knowledge sharing and learning activities, among other modalities of strategic communication.

Generally, the study was able to promote its advocacies in at least 68 events and partnered with more than 45 agencies, both from public and private sector. National launching of knowledge products promoting science-based policies in advancing rice communities was also conducted. This hopes to inform policymakers and rice stakeholders about the new and existing knowledge products of PhilRice that can be used as reference for policymaking.

Seminar-workshops on rice value chain and comparative efficiency in the Philippines were also conducted to assist program planners and policymakers in developing strategic interventions to narrow yield gaps and reduce cost gaps in every region/province. The study also worked on promoting farmers' competitiveness and responsible rice consumption through the NRAM celebration with the theme "Quality rice. Quality life.", and strengthening the promotion of brown rice consumption in partnership with PHilMech and RiceBIS program. Hence, it linked the farmers' cooperative in Negros Occidental to government offices and food establishments through the brown rice resolution in Bacolod City and Murcia, Negros Occidental. This initiative led to the proposal of a house bill, "Half-Cup Rice Act 2018". Generally, the study promoted its advocacies in at least 68 events and partnered with more than 45 agencies, both from public and private sector.

We are a government corporate entity (Classification E) under the Department of Agriculture. We were created through Executive Order 1061 on 5 November 1985 (as amended) to help develop high-yielding and cost-reducing technologies so farmers can produce enough rice for all Filipinos.

With a "Rice-Secure Philippines" vision, we want the Filipino rice farmers and the Philippine rice industry to be competitive through research for development in our central and seven branch stations, coordinating with a network that comprises 59 agencies strategically located nationwide.

We have the following certifications: ISO 9001:2008 (Quality Management), ISO 14001:2004 (Environmental Management), and OHSAS 18001:2007 (Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series).

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