



## DA-PhilRice, IRRI foster stronger ties

KATRINA JANELLE T. ALARCON



*Dr. Jean Balié (right in green shirt) explores the latest innovations in Philippine rice farming developed by PhilRice during his visit in its 90-ha experimental field.*

**T**he International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) expressed its commitment in collaborating with PhilRice to help address future challenges in the rice sector.

In a roundtable discussion on March 28 at PhilRice-CES, IRRI director General Dr. Jean Balié and PhilRice Executive Director John C. de Leon explored possible tie-ups on direct

dry-seeded rice, nutritious products and diets, and climate resilient farming.

"As PhilRice is IRRI's primary partner, I would like to reiterate that it is critical for us to maintain this level of engagement and ensure our partnership stays cohesive, strong, and relevant. It is both our roles to provide services and nourish the farmers and networks. We can work together and make sure to make this a success," Balié said.

Among the highlights of the discussions include PhilRice's new strategic plan, global rice R&D direction, and developing a hero rice.

Also participating in the Institute's *Lakbay Palay*, IRRI officials took note of the Filipino rice farmer's entrepreneurial skills as they engage in directly marketing their produce. 🍌



**Benchmarking for best practices and services.** As one of the leading private universities in the country, Holy Angel University (HAU) shared its best practices on educating the public in a recent visit led by Dr. John C. de Leon, PhilRice executive director, HAU alumnus and recipient of the Order of Saint Gabriel Archangel Outstanding Achievement. The Pinatubo museum, Vicente Manansala collection, and the HAU history room were among the learning sites visited at HAU. 🍌 ELOUEZA MARIE P. DELA CRUZ

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# PhilRice maintains quality informal learning

ELOUEZA MARIE P. DELA CRUZ

**P**hilRice in the Central Experiment Station (CES) receives 95% satisfaction rating from its learners during the first quarter indicating that the Institute has met their educational goals.

CES is sought out as a benchmarking institution by various organizations including Central Mindanao University, Apayao State College, and agencies under the Department of Agriculture.

From January to March this year, PhilRice has shared information about rice S&T to more than 4,000 individuals and 200 groups through tours and briefings.

To sustain learner satisfaction, branch stations will be oriented on the headquarter's best practices for accommodating learners and designing their itineraries to fulfill their learning objectives. This knowledge

sharing and learning activity already kicked off in the PhilRice's Negros station.

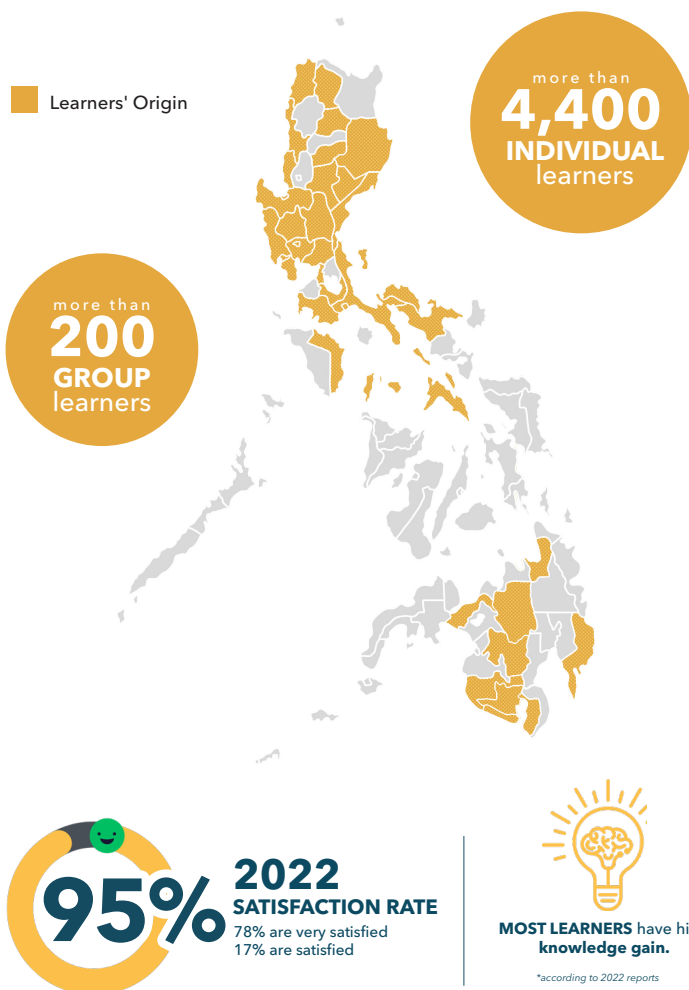
Almost half of PhilRice learners are farmers and extensionists who have gained knowledge on new varieties, modern rice farming, and rice-based farming system.

PhilRice also hosted international partners including the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Korean International Cooperation Agency, and International Rice Research Institute.

Meanwhile, the Rice Science Museum and PhilRice Hostel were accredited by the Department of Tourism as a tourist facility and as a Local Government Unit-licensed tourist establishment in 2015 and lodging facility under the *Mabuhay* Accommodation in 2022, respectively. 🍌

## LEARNERS OF DA-PHILRICE CES

from January 2022 - March 2023

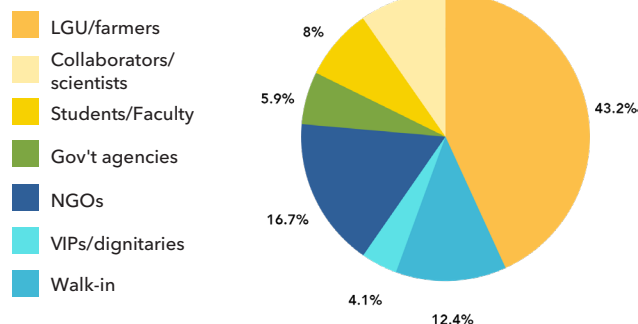


Infographics by Katrina Janelle T. Alarcon

## International Visitors

Bangladesh Agricultural Dev't Corp.  
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation  
British Embassy of Manila  
Danforth Plant Science Center  
Dutch Government with BPI  
Hungarian Embassy  
Indonesia National Development Planning Agency  
International Rice Research Institute  
Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences  
Korean International Cooperation Agency  
Korean Mission Team  
North Carolina State University  
Ostrom Climate Solutions Inc.  
Pan-Asia Farmers' Exchange Biotechnology Coalition, Croplife Philippines And Croplife Asia  
The Gambia Standards Bureau  
University of Ghent  
University of Tokyo

## Learner Profile







# Farmers thank RCEF

KIARA MAE E. PANYO

**F**armers lead the expression of gratitude to the implementation of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) Program in a rice growers' gathering in Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, March 29-30.

With the theme, "RCEF, Ano na?!", *Lakbay Palay* provided a platform for farmers including Friantina Resplandor, Atty. Mamaerto Villanueva, Eulogio Federizo, and Nariza Tan to share their experiences on availing program's provision on training, seed, machines, and credit.

Under its Extension Program, around 5 million rice-related information were extended and disseminated while about 200,000 farmers and extension workers were trained since 2019.

"The Rice Specialists Training Course did not only help us but also our community. We were able to enhance our knowledge and skills on farming, which we are now sharing to our fellow farmers. The farmers we have trained in six of the 10 villages have already formed their associations while our yield increased from 5.6t/ha to 7.5t/ha," Resplandor of Guimba, Nueva Ecija said.

Records also show that more than 11 million sacks (containing 20kg each)

of certified inbred rice seeds were distributed to the rice farmers who have received the provision four to six times over the past four years.

"Before RCEF, we used to harvest a little over 4t/ha. By planting the certified inbred rice seeds from the program, we're now enjoying an abundant harvest of at least 6t/ha," Villanueva of Candaba, Pampanga, said.

Meanwhile, more than 20,000 units of farm machines such as hand tractors, precision seeders, reapers, mobile grain dryers, and mobile rice mills were also awarded to farmers and cooperatives.

"Through the machines provided by the program, our cooperative's assets grew from PhP116,000 to PhP5.9M,"

Federizo of Bongabon, Nueva Ecija shared.

Meanwhile, Tan of Zaragoza, Nueva Ecija shared that their harvests have increased by almost 2t/ha with enough inputs, which they were able to afford through a loan with 2% annual interest from the program. RCEF has already released more than PhP3B in loans to farmers and farmer-cooperatives to support their agricultural ventures with minimal interest.

A ceremonial distribution of 120 bags of certified inbred seeds and awarding of PhP5,000 worth of financial aid for RCEF-Rice Farmers Financial Assistance beneficiaries were also held during the program, which was participated by more than 1,000 farmers from Luzon and Mindanao. 🍌



# GAD launches new recurring theme

GLAIZA D. CARRERA

The Gender and Development Focal Point System introduces the new recurring theme of the National Women's Month celebration, which will be used from this year until 2028.

The theme, "WE for gender equality and inclusive society," was presented in an "edutainment" approach including 'GAD You Know' trivia, #PurpleWednesday, and #PurpleYourIcon advocacy.

Staff were oriented on gender sensitivity, GAD mainstreaming, and gender equality and women empowerment to ensure that PhilRice projects will help address the gender gaps in agriculture.

Women's role and contribution to the rice sector was also highlighted in the social media.

During the International Women's Day on March 8 with the theme, "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality," the Institute showcased digital innovations such as Binhing Palay and Minus-One-Element Technique (MOET) app.

"Many of us still lack the knowledge on modern rice crop management. Some even don't bother learning them

because they've been so accustomed to conventional practices or they don't have the necessary means. As a local farmer technician, it has been my dedication to help change the situation so rice farming can be more rewarding," Sarah C. Villaflor, farmer from Negros Occidental, said.

While also using several apps since 2016, Villaflor found the MOET app more fitting in their area as it does not require internet connectivity.

"Many apps require the internet to generate recommendations, which proved challenging as we don't have that often. With the MOET app, we can provide recommendations immediately without the internet," she said.

Meanwhile, Dr. Diadem G. Esmero, the Institute's Focal Point System-Technical Working Group focal person said that PhilRice also seeks to provide economic opportunities for women.

"To inspire them, we will conduct a webinar on community-supported agriculture and the use of digital platforms in marketing agricultural products," Esmero said. 🍌

## News from the Branch Stations

### DA-RFO 8, PhilRice partner in scaling rice for adverse rice ecosystems

AZRYL MAY M. JIMENEZ

DA's Regional Field Office in Region 8 will initiate a project that will benefit rice farmers in saline-prone areas in Eastern Visayas this wet season.

In a discussion, Dr. Victoria Lapitan, PhilRice Bicol branch director, presented the branch's R4D projects such as the scaling integrated crop management for saline-prone rice ecosystem, rice intensification and sustainability enhancement for water-scarce rice ecosystems in Samar, and the Malusog Rice Program.

Regional Technical Director for Research and Regulation Elvira Torres also expressed commitment



DA-PhilRice Bicol collaborates with DA-RFO 8 in expanding R&D projects to Eastern Visayas rice farmers.

to implement the "Scaling of rice varieties for adverse rice ecosystems' in each province of Region 8" project,

in which PhilRice technologies and rice advocacies will be promoted. 🍌



# New high yield record of 8.3t/ha reaped for Malusog rice

VIDA GRACE P. GANIBAN

**T**he second planting of Malusog Rice, which took place this 2023 dry cropping season, posted a new record for highest yield at 8.3t/ha. Measured at 14% moisture content, the harvest produced in Ilagan, Isabela bested last season's 7.8t/ha in Maguindanao.

As of May 31, a combined yield of 71.3 tons of fresh paddy of Malusog Rice has been harvested from this season's production. Covering 13 hectares, the seeds were harvested from Catanduanes, Agusan Del Sur, Agusan Del Norte, Nueva Ecija, Isabela, Cagayan, Antique, Pangasinan, and Ilocos Norte. The rest of the sites will be harvested this June.

Malusog Rice is a type of rice enriched with beta carotene that can be converted into vitamin A as the body needs it.

One of the farmer-cooperators who planted Malusog Rice for the first time shared that this new type of rice is easy to grow. Expressing his support for the project, he affirmed that Malusog rice is nutritious and hoped that the project continues.



*Malusog Rice field in Isabela yields 8.3t/ha. Deployment commenced in 2022 following approval of the commercial propagation permit by the DA-Bureau of Plant Industry*

As part of the program-based deployment of Malusog Rice, local government units are enjoined to purchase the harvest, which will then be integrated into their nutrition programs.

Balungao, one of the municipalities who have committed to buy back the Malusog Rice harvest, is very supportive of the program for its benefits.

"As we see it, Malusog Rice can be a big help in providing nutritional value in the diet especially for children. This

would be a great advantage if they would incorporate it in their diet," Balungao Mayor Maria Theresa R. Peralta said.

Meanwhile, selected Business Development Divisions/Units of PhilRice branch stations will be selling milled Malusog Rice. In addition, it will be made available in select local markets as part of the program's market-based deployment approach. 🍌

## PhilRice Agusan to help farmers in mining-affected rice fields

CRIS MAE T. NECESITO

**R**esearchers in DA-PhilRice Agusan are collaborating with Surigao del Sur farmers in identifying the effects of laterite runoff or red soil from mining sites in the rice fields.

A package of technology recommendations will be released based on the data to help farmers enhance productivity and reduce their production costs.

Farmers' survey and field validation with 15 affected farmers were conducted to characterize the soil, evaluate crop productivity, and identify socio-economic effects in the 706ha mine-affected rice areas.

"Our yields have never been the same. Before the company started mining the area in 2006, I used to harvest 7.8t/ha every cropping season. But when Bagyong Basyang in 2018 hit, the discharge from the mines reached our place and I only harvested 4.6t/ha," said farmer Anaclito Anino.



*Jehru Magahud (right) and his team study the effect of laterite runoff in the fields of Panikian, Carrascal, Surigao del Sur.*

The team also assessed whether the irrigation systems and dams near the area had accumulated excessive amounts of silt, which could lead to acid mine drainage. 🍌





# Mothers campaign for kids' healthy meals

LEA CONCEPCION B. FLORES

**M**others vlogged their children's healthy meals in an advocacy run dubbed, "Malusog Moms: Nanay Hacks Dinner."

Launched during the National Women's Month by PhilRice in San Mateo, Isabela, mothers shared their recipes to the public.

Mothers who participated receive 10kg of Malusog rice, a biofortified rice enriched with beta-carotene. It is a unique rice variety bred to address vitamin A deficiency, a prevalent problem among Filipinos affecting about 2 million children under the age of five. 🍌



## Rice varieties for CALABARZON being evaluated

CHERRY ROSE F. PIÑON



*Planting of NSIC Rc 626 (Tubigan 50), an irrigated rice variety with a maximum yield of 8.7t/ha, in Nasugbu, Batangas.*

**P**hilRice Los Baños evaluates available varieties to ensure that these are high-performing location-specific rice for the Southern Tagalog Mainland.

The station and DA-Regional Field Office CALABARZON stated that the study, which will be conducted for 1-2 years, assesses the performance of rice under irrigated, rainfed, and saline-prone ecosystems.

The best performing varieties will be recommended to the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) as bases for the varieties to be distributed to the farmers listed in the

Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture.

Varieties will be assessed based on farmers' preference on yield, morpho-agronomic characteristics, resistance to pests and diseases, and grain quality or good eating quality.

Among the varieties being evaluated in the irrigated farms in Maragondon, Cavite; Morong, Rizal; Nasugbu, Batangas; Sta. Maria, Laguna; and Sariaya, Quezon include NSIC Rc 580, Rc 622, Mestiso 73, and Mestiso 99.

Meanwhile, Rc 568, Rc 578, Rc 592, Rc 192, among other varieties, are tested in the rainfed sites in Nasugbu, Batangas; Tiaong, Quezon; and Tanay, Rizal. Saline varieties such as NSIC Rc 554, Rc 604, and Rc 336 are evaluated in Sariaya, Quezon.

Special purpose aromatic including Rc 218SR, Rc 342SR, and NSIC Rc 344SR are being studied in Sta. Maria, Laguna.

The DA-Regional Field Office CALABARZON and the International Rice Research Institute co-implement this study. 🍌



# More Mindanao farmers to learn pest management best practices

SYLVIA THERESE C. QUIRING

**P**hilRice in Bual Norte, Midsayap is set to conduct knowledge sharing and learning (KSL) series on pest management and ecological engineering in three provinces.

As the Institute's pest management center, the station will promote the recommendations this second

quarter in Zamboanga del Norte, Sultan Kudarat, and Cotabato.

"We will conduct the KSL series in provinces that were not previously reached by the same interventions from the Institute. We are hoping to serve farmers here by encouraging them to avail of our services, enhancing their knowledge through

IEC materials, and strengthening our partnership with our partners," Branch Director Ommal Abdulkadil said.

The KSL series is modeled from Abdulkadil's capstone project on rice pest techno clinic that was hailed as the best project by the Development Academy of the Philippines in 2020. 🍌

# Ilocos Norte farmers increase income through mushroom cultivation

FRANZEL MONIQUE D. BONILLA

**F**armers in Pasuquin, Ilocos Norte have found a new income stream through oyster mushroom production they recently learned from a training on rice-based crop diversification or *Palayamanan*.

Joemarie Calulot, one of the farmer-trainees, said that they used to earn a monthly income of Php10,000-Php12,000 from rice farming and vegetable production. When they began producing and selling oyster mushrooms and fruiting bags, their monthly income increased to Php18,000-Php20,000.

Calulot, one of the 25 farmer-adopters, added that producing 500 oyster mushroom fruiting bags in one cycle can generate a maximum income of Php25,000. Mushrooms can be produced in eight cycles per year, amounting to potential earnings of up to Php200,000.

By utilizing waste materials such as rice straws and sawdust from their



*Farmer-trainees prepare grain spawns, a commonly used substrate for growing mushrooms as it is relatively easy and inexpensive compared with other techniques.*

farm, the farmers have found a way to not only supplement their rice farming income, but also create new business opportunities in mushroom growing, processing, and marketing.

production initiative has expanded, providing more farmers with an additional source of livelihood. 🍌



Since launching the project four months ago, the mushroom



**RICE MATTERS** is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Department of Agriculture-Philippine Rice Research Institute that delivers information about the Institute's activities to its partners and internal and external clients.

**CONTACT US @**  
DA-PhilRice, Maligaya, Science City of Muñoz,  
3119 Nueva Ecija  
Email: [prri.mail@mail.philrice.gov.ph](mailto:prri.mail@mail.philrice.gov.ph)

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# Awards and Recognitions



## Digirati Distinction Award

Asian Institute of Digital Transformation



**Dr. John C. de Leon**, Executive Director, **Dr. Karen Eloisa T. Barroga**, Deputy Executive Director for Development, and Deputy Executive Director for Research **Dr. Eduardo Jimmy P. Quilang**, with **Mr. Roger Collantes** of Asian Institute of Digital Transformation

## Gold Award

2022 Innovation and Technology Support Office 2.0 Clustering Program

Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines



**DA-PhilRice**, represented by **Sophia T. Borja**, OIC-Deputy Executive Director, Administrative Services and Finance; **Jerry C. Serapion**, Head/Intellectual Property Rights Specialist IV, Intellectual Property Office; **Fidela P. Bongat**, Head/Development Management Officer V, Business Development Division

## Most Outstanding Stakeholder (Plaque of Recognition)

Catbalogan City



**DA-PhilRice Bicol**, represented by **Anthony Romeo Rivera**, Project Development Officer and **Dr. Victoria C. Lapitan**, Branch Director, with Western Samar Provincial Coordinator **Jimmy D. Boyano**

## MAY ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>2</b> RCEF seed distribution, kick-off ceremony and technical briefing in Sariaya, Quezon   | <b>11</b> RCEF seed distribution, kick-off ceremony, and technical briefing in Baganga, Davao Oriental; General Salipada K. Pendatun, Maguindanao; Tagbilaran, Bohol |
| <b>2-5</b> Fertilizer Derby seasonal reporting and workshop  | <b>12</b> RCEF seed distribution, kick-off ceremony, and technical briefing in Casiguran, Sorsogon   |
| <b>3</b> RCEF seed distribution, kick-off ceremony, and technical briefing in Porac, Pampanga; Catbalogan City, Western Samar; Naval, Biliran; Maasin City, Southern Leyte | <b>15</b> RCEF seed distribution, kick-off ceremony, and technical briefing in Tandag City, Surigao del Sur  |
| <b>4</b> RCEF seed distribution, kick-off ceremony, and technical briefing in San Rafael, Bulacan  | <b>15-19</b> Short Course on Pest and Nutrient Management in Palapag, Northern Samar   |
| <b>5</b> RCEF seed distribution, kick-off ceremony, and technical briefing in Norala, South Cotabato   | <b>16-19</b> Philippine Rice Information System (PRISM) retooling activity in Region 1   |
| <b>8-12</b> RCEF-Training of Trainers on pest and nutrient management in Ligao City, Albay   | <b>17-19</b> RCEF seed distribution, kick-off ceremony, and technical briefing in Lala, Lanao Del Norte; Mobo, Masbate   |
| <b>9</b> RCEF seed distribution, kick-off ceremony, and technical briefing in Compostela, Davao de Oro   | <b>19</b> RCEF seed distribution, kick-off ceremony, and technical briefing in Bonifacio, Misamis Occidental   |
| <b>9</b> Lakbay Palay in Ligao City, Albay   |  |
| <b>10</b> RCEF seed distribution, kick-off ceremony, and technical briefing in Ligao City, Albay   |  |

## MARCH-APRIL

### Gantimpala Agad Awardees

**National Rice Awareness Month Committee, Los Baños**

**Erven Jay Sienda, Batac**

**Lovely Espiritu, Bicol**

**RCEF PalayAralan TV Team, CES**

**Crop Biotechnology Center R&D Management Team, CES**

### Pasasalamat Awardees

**Rita Espiritu, Batac**

**Vanessa De La Cruz, Bicol**

**Catherine Tabunan, CES**

**Gladys May Cristobal, CES**

**Princes Diane Dela Cruz, CES**

**Joy Clarisse Cando, CES**

**Erika Del Rosario, CES**

**Christopher John Gonzales, CES**

**Jaime Miguel III, CES**