



Sec. Laurel counts on science to improve rice industry

AUBREY VISTA P. MANALO



Executive Director for Development Karen Eloisa Barroga, and program lead Diadem Gonzales-Esmero received the symbolic check from BPI officials, including trustee Mary Catherine Elizabeth Santamaria and project manager Melanie Magbuhos.

In the opening program, Undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian discussed the MASAGANA Rice Industry Development Program and outlined the government's plan for the rice industry, which includes a whole value chain approach to ensure a steady supply of affordable rice for consumers, increasing income for rice farming communities, and nutritional security.

The conference focused on various strategies to improve agricultural practices. PhilRice Executive Director John de Leon highlighted the MATatag strategy, which aims to optimize yield, increase resilience, reduce risks, and maintain ecological integrity. Deputy Director Karen Eloisa Barroga explained the SAma-sama strategy, which enhances bargaining power, market access, and economies of scale. Dr. Aurora Corales discussed the GANado strategy, which aims to increase farmer engagement, value addition, and market linkage. Dr. Eduardo Jimmy Quilang outlined the NAPapanahon strategy, which improves access to data and services, reduces transaction costs, and ensures efficient service delivery.

The Nov. 29-Dec. 1 Ugnay Palay had five plenary sessions with four concurrent sessions that presented 30 research papers centered on the MASAGANA thematic areas and 63 posters on relevant technologies and practices. Close to 600 in-person participants from PhilRice Central Experiment Station (CES), branch stations, and partner agencies joined the national conference. 🍌

Dr. John de Leon (L) presents the PhilRice posters and exhibits to the newly appointed Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. (R), during the Ugnay Palay: 35th National Rice R4DE Conference.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has underscored the need for a science-based approach to enhance local food security and lessen reliance on imports during the Ugnay Palay: 35th National Rice R4DE Conference in Nueva Ecija, Nov. 29.

In his keynote address, the freshly confirmed cabinet member said, "Our ultimate goal is to swiftly reduce rice imports for food security and efficiency. We also aim to inspire a new generation of farmers, researchers, and innovators to ensure long-term food security for a prosperous Philippines. Together, let us fulfill our shared dream of a strong, prosperous, and food-secure country."

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. conveyed his support through a message read by Laurel. The chief executive expressed optimism with the growing support from government agencies, private

partners, and stakeholders to energize and fortify the rice industry as envisioned by his administration's goal of a food-secure nation.

"I enjoin all of you to continue working better to ensure that the benefits of our initiatives reach every farmer in our country. As we do this, let us be guided by the science-based strategies presented in the PhilRice Strategic Plan 2023-2028, emphasizing the necessity to educate farmers on modern technologies for integration into their daily work," Marcos said.

On the same occasion, the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) Foundation granted the farmers under the Rice Business Innovations System (RiceBIS) Program in San Carlos, Negros Occidental with P5.2 million to help them increase their income.

With the presence of Agriculture Secretary Tiu Laurel Jr., Executive Director John de Leon, Deputy

Lawmakers support “Be RICEponsible” campaign

CHRISTINE MAE A. NICOLAS

Several legislators expressed their support for the National Rice Awareness Month (NRAM) BeRICEponsible campaign as they visited the recent exhibit titled, “Palay. Bigas. Kanin. Alamin” at the Senate building in Pasay City.

The lawmakers affirmed their commitment to the campaign by endorsing the ABKD practices: (A) Adlay, mais, saba, atbp. ay ihalo sa kanin; (B) Brown Rice ay kainin; (K) Kanin ay huwag sayangin; at (D) Dapat bigas ng Pilipinas ang bilhin by signing the BeRICEponsible pledge wall.

The exhibit, co-hosted by PhilRice and the office of Senator Loren Legarda, was attended by Senators Pia and Alan Peter Cayetano, Cynthia Villar, Raffy Tulfo, Bong Go, and JV Ejercito. Representatives Mark Cojuangco, Wilbert Lee, and Joey Salceda, and DA undersecretary for Rice Industry Development Leocadio Sebastian also participated in the event.

“We often overlook the significance of everyday things, and we hope that these kinds of exhibits make us look inward at how we consume



Sen. Loren Legarda (C) together with Sen. Pia Cayetano (L) and Usec. Leocadio Sebastian (R), encourages fellow policymakers to create laws that will contribute to the country's goal of rice self-sufficiency, raising farmers' incomes, and enhancing the health of rice consumers.

and waste a precious commodity,” Legarda said.

The exhibit showcased various aspects, including the PhilRice Genebank, rice breeding processes, milling techniques using portable and pedal-type brown rice machines, and the essence of the BeRICEponsible campaign.

Sen. Pia Cayetano, impressed by the pedal-operated brown rice machine, expressed her interest in proposing to distribute it to small rice farm shareholders. This proposal received

support from Legarda, who remarked, “Donating these machines to barangays would be truly beneficial, providing them with the means to produce brown rice.”

Dr. Hazel Antonio, the lead for NRAM celebrations, supported this initiative. She explained how the machine would be beneficial, stating, “The issue with brown rice is that it tends to become rancid quickly. Allowing local rice shareholders to acquire this machine will assist them in milling brown rice and having it fresh whenever needed.” 🍌

Agencies affirm help for agripreneurs

Public agencies in Region II and Cordillera showed unity in assisting farmers become agripreneurs during the regions' launching of RiceBIS 2.0 in Dupax Del Sur, Nueva Vizcaya, Nov. 16.

The event, held concurrently with the mass graduation of four batches of Philippine Good Agricultural Practices (PhilGAP), strengthened the ties among key stakeholders including the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), and Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

Local government units, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and DA-Regional Field Office (DA-RFO) also reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing the income and resources of organized farmers.

Dr. Diadem Gonzales-Esmero, program lead, emphasized the importance of building alliances, stating, “We highly

encourage our partners to strengthen our alliances, because together we can ensure the success of our RiceBIS farmers to become millionaires.”

Vincent Gonzales, chairperson of the St. Vincent Parish Multi-Purpose Cooperative, commended the collaborative efforts, declaring, “The DA and its attached agencies tirelessly work together to uplift our farmers. So, I also call them the Department of Love and Passion.”

The event also celebrated the graduation of 200 farmers completing the Philippine Good Agricultural Practices (PhilGAP) training.

“We are so grateful for the assistance that PhilRice and other agencies have given us. You are gradually changing and improving our farming activities. We have never thought that farmers can become rich, too,” Eva Carpiso of the Marasat-Dagupan RiceBIS Cooperative in San Mateo, Isabela said. 🍌

Rice month espouses RICEponsible practices

AUBREY VISTA P. MANALO



PhilRice heightened its BeRICEponsible advocacy during the National Rice Awareness Month (NRAM) conducted every November to encourage the public practice the "ABKD" of rice consumption.

To "Be RICEponsible," Filipinos are encouraged to follow the "ABKD": A - Adlay, mais, saba, atbp. ay ihalo sa kanin (Mix rice with other food staples), B - Brown rice ay kainin (Eat brown rice or unpolished rice), K - Kanin ay huwag sayangin (Eat what we can consume), D - Dapat bigas ng Pilipinas ang bilhin (Patronize locally-produced rice).

These were disseminated through online contests such as Pinasarap na Kanin, Brown Rice Challenge, Iwas Aksaya, and "Be Riceponsible" Buyer Challenge. Teresa de Leon, won the Pinasarap na Kanin cooking contest; Deodolino Quito, Iwas Aksaya video contest; and April Rose Melicado, Brown Rice Challenge.

As the country observes the National Rice Awareness Month, the Department of Agriculture is encouraging consumers to avoid rice wastage and to buy locally produced rice to help the farmers boost their income.

Dr. Karen Eloisa Barroga, Deputy Executive Director for Development, said in a Palace press briefing that under the DA's "Be RICEponsible" campaign, the agency is involving the consumers in preventing rice wastage which is around P7 million a year, aiding local farmers and providing the public with healthy food choices.

Some members of the country's lower house of congress are also backing the call for half-cup rice servings, supporting a bill that was first submitted in the Senate in 2013 by then Sen. Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Antonio clarified that the half-cup rice servings are not intended as a mandatory measure, but aim to provide an option that aligns with the individual preference of consuming less rice.

In addition to the Be RICEponsible and agri-career campaigns, and Farmers' Market, PhilRice Los Baños hosted its 21st Ceremonial Rice Harvesting as NRAM key event, in which 200 Salawag National High School students experienced planting and harvesting rice for the first time. Kiwanis International Philippine Luzon District co-sponsored the activity.

Meanwhile, 240 indigenous people students from Puting Bato, Cabadbaran City benefited from the feeding program organized by PhilRice Agusan at Lusong Elementary School, Nov. 17. PhilRice Negros also fed 150 students of La Castellana National High School, Nov. 14.

About 300 pupils of Agriculture Central Elementary School in Midsayap were treated with a popular snack mixed with rice, sweet potato, saba, and corn, Nov. 21.

PhilRice Bicol staged a "Palay Lakad" in Ligao City, Albay to raise awareness and encourage the citizens to join in the advocacy. Ligao National High School students, Ligao City Women's Club members, and senior citizens were also introduced to nutritious rice.

PhilRice Isabela featured Ramon's Rice Art Nation that has won several regional and national awards while PhilRice Batac and DA-Regional Field Office I distributed 1kg of Malusog Rice to 200 tricycle drivers in La Union. 🍌

Trainers refresh skills in short course

MISHELLE C. DOMINGO

PhilRice Isabela has conducted a refresher training course for graduates of the Training of Trainers program under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund Rice Extension Services Program (RCEF RESP), Nov. 15- 23.

Thirty trainers, consisting of facilitators from farm schools and State Colleges and Universities, finished the course at the Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center II (ATI-RTC II) in San Mateo, Isabela.

Dr. Andres dela Cruz Jr., RCEF coordinator, underscored the power of trainers in sharing their knowledge and expertise gained with rice farmers.

"We hope that you will impart the learnings and experiences you have gained during the two-week training and fully use them as you educate our rice farmers within your respective areas," dela Cruz said. 🍌



Fresh Greens. The PhilRice CES Development Sector leads a ceremonial harvesting in its garden called D'PHARM with healthy, good food advocate Teresa de Leon (2nd from L). In addition to rice cultivation, the Institute supports high-value crop diversification by encouraging the growing of fruit trees, vegetables, fish, livestock, mushrooms, and other food sources that fatten farmers' income. Green pepper, kangkong, lemongrass, eggplant, and string beans were the bounties. 🍌 AUBREY VISTA MANALO



Youngsters' rice production skills sharpened. To encourage youth participation in agriculture, PhilRice Negros has organized Rice Boot Camp Junior participated by about 20 junior high students from three education institutions, Nov. 10-24. Students from Cansilayan Farm School, Guiljungan National High School (NHS), and Tabu NHS learned about PalayCheck-based rice production, which stir up incoming college students' appreciation of agricultural research and development. 🍌 VANESSA A. TINGSON

PhilRice Midsayap prepares station for 2024

SYLVIA THERESE C. QUIRING

The PhilRice Midsayap Admin group is boosting station operations by updating R4DE staffers on government procurement policies in preparation for 2024 operations. In October, the Property Management Unit presented updates on RA 9184 or the Government Procurement Reform Act. The briefing aimed to improve the acumen and

skills of study and project leaders for a more efficient planning and implementation of their R4DE workloads.

The Admin group likewise led the station's year-end activity on Dec. 11-13, where accomplishments of each unit were presented and plans for next year were refined.

The continued efforts have resulted in no audit suspensions, disallowances, or charges for the first semester of 2023. Branch Director Sailila Abdula commended and encouraged all staffers to maintain integrity, transparency, and accountability in executing their tasks to uphold the station's duty to the public. 🍌

PhilRice RCEF extension team braces for 2024

AUBREY VISTA P. MANALO

Members of the RCEF Extension team took part in the annual review and planning workshop to brace themselves for an optimal execution of program plans on Dec. 6-8 at the St. Isidore The FARMer Resort, Sta. Ana, Pampanga.

Dr. Karen Eloisa Barroga reflected on achievements and areas for improvements, and challenged the group to be agile and to work as a team.

She also emphasized the importance of engaging stakeholders and understanding ground-level realities, and highlighted the transformative potentials of RCEF extension activities.



RCEF-PMO Deputy Director Flordeliza Bordey delves into discussions addressing concerns and suggestions regarding the implementation of the 2024 program plans.

Reviewed and presented were the 2023 targets and accomplishments as well as solutions and strategies to achieve remaining targets until 2024.

Korean official shares tips on managing rice salinity



Dr. Kyu Seong Lee (L) presents South Korea's experiences on sustainable, and productive cultivation in salt-affected areas.

Dr. Kyu Seong Lee, director of the Korea Program for International Cooperation in Agricultural Technology (KOPIA) Philippine Center and vice administrator of Rural Development Administration (RDA) in Korea, has encouraged local government units and the academe in Bicol to increase productivity in saline-prone agricultural areas.

In the seminar titled, "Salinity Tolerance in rice: Exploring mechanisms and advancing

productivity through effective management strategies," Lee shared the practices implemented by South Korea to reduce salt levels in rice fields.

Among these practices include integrated nutrient management or the application of proper levels of nitrogen and phosphorus and the optimal split application of nitrogen: leaching or removing excess salt through irrigation during rice growth; and use of salt-tolerant rice varieties. 🍌

Abonong swak promoted in the Visayas

VANESSA A. TINGSON

To address soaring prices of fertilizers and optimize its application, RCEF Seed Program has introduced sets of fertilizer recommendations to its partner local government units in Western and Central Visayas.

These recommendations were derived from a thorough soil analysis conducted by PhilRice using the Minus-One-Element Technique (MOET) kit and app.

The app facilitates farmers in obtaining answers to queries regarding the appropriate fertilizer type and optimal application timing. Implementing MOET-based recommendations is expected to enhance fertilizer optimization and consequently contribute to achieving satisfactory yields. 🍌

PhilRice joins nationwide movement to end violence against women

GLAIZA D. CARRERA



PhilRice has kicked off the national advocacy of the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) dubbed as the 18-day Campaign to End Violence Against Women (VAW) with the theme "United for a VAW-free Philippines."

The national advocacy seeks to heighten public awareness and garner support for multi-stakeholder efforts aimed at eradicating Violence Against Women (VAW).

The 2022 Philippine National Demographic Health Survey released by the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that 18 percent of women aged 15-49 years have experienced forms of physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological violence.

Despite the Philippines ranking-16th globally in gender equality, according to the 2023 Global Gender Gap Index Report by the World Economic Forum, the PCW and other stakeholders recognize ongoing issues of violence and abuse in the country.

Sophia Borja, OIC deputy executive director for Administrative Services and Finance and chair of the Committee on Decorum and Investigation of Sexual Harassment Cases is calling for more advocates,

influencers, and champions among the agriculture sectors, and the general public to raise awareness about VAW and how they can support in ending this pervasive social problem.

Likewise, similar activities were simultaneously conducted in the branch stations. Other initiatives included conducting offline and online seminars on VAW-related laws and GAD-related training, wearing of

advocacy shirts, and implementing social media advocacy campaigns.

The advocacy is backed by Proclamation No. 1172 and RA 10398, which mark Nov. 25-Dec. 12 as an 18-day campaign aimed at ending violence against women and children. This aligns with the National Consciousness Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC). 🍌



Bag of Life. To provide the most vulnerable with an adequate, secure, and high-quality blood supply, 69 PhilRice personnel and two Bureau of Plant Industry-National Seed, Quality Control Service (BPI-NSQCS) staffers donated blood on Nov. 9, in observance of PhilRice's 38th founding anniversary and to support the Philippine Red Cross Nueva Ecija Chapter. 🍌 AUBREY VISTA MANALO

Rice education for youth strengthened

GLAIZA D. CARRERA

To help alleviate the potential ill effects of the aging of farmers, PhilRice and two Kiwanis clubs are intensifying efforts to revitalize agriculture through youth education.

Citing reports from the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, Glenda Hufano, governor of Kiwanis International-Philippine Luzon District, said that with Filipino farmers now aged between 55 and 59 years old, experts have forecasted that the country will face a critical decline of farmers in 10-12 years.

"The project we are collaborating on aims to educate children not only about rice S&T but also to raise them to be progressive, entrepreneurial food producers," Hufano said during the signing of a memorandum of agreement in Nueva Ecija, Nov. 7.

The agreement provides that the Kiwanis Club of Pasay and Rice Granary Science City of Muñoz will collaboratively establish and maintain a campsite at the PhilRice FutureRice Farm.

"This campsite, to be called The sParK, will offer an engaging, educational alternative to malls and digital entertainment," Hufano said.

Campers will see high-yielding rice varieties and experience farm automation and diversified farming.

The Kiwanis also co-sponsored the recent annual ceremonial harvesting



Governor of Kiwanis International Glenda Hufano (L), Deputy Executive Director Karen Eloisa Barroga (R), and Executive Director John de Leon sign the memorandum of agreement to establish a mini campsite at FutureRice Farm that will educate youth about rice science and technology.

at the Rice Garden in Rizal Park, in Luneta, which was established for urban dwellers, especially the youth, to appreciate the importance of rice to the country's nourishment, economy, and culture.

This partnership builds upon earlier initiatives between Kiwanis and PhilRice supporting farming communities of the Rice Business Innovations System (RiceBIS) Program. 🍌



Illuminating Tradition. Spanning over three decades, PhilRice CES opened its gates to the public for the Tower Lighting Ceremony on Dec. 5, heralding the holiday season. This year's design symbolizes the dedication, unity, and collaboration within the entire Institute. The utilization of recyclable materials highlights its commitment to frugality, and innovation and environmental awareness. The tower prominently features the words from Isaiah 9:6, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given," embodying the essence of Jesus' birth for the Christmas season. 🍌 KATRINA JANELLE T. ALARCON



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

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor in Chief

Laarnie L. Mandia

Associate Editor

Charisma Love B. Gado-Gonzales

Managing Editors

Aubrey Vista P. Manalo
Katrina Janelle T. Alarcon

Layout and Graphics

Katrina Janelle T. Alarcon

Circulation

Aprilyn Q. Bulatao

Writers

Aubrey Vista P. Manalo
Katrina Janelle T. Alarcon
Mishelle C. Domingo
Franzel Monique P. Bonilla
Vanessa A. Tingson
Christine Mae A. Nicolas
Glaiza D. Carrera
Sylvia Therese C. Quiring

Consulting Editor

Constante T. Briones

Editorial Advisers

John C. de Leon
Karen Eloisa T. Barroga

Awards and recognitions

Scientific Career System

Newly appointed Career Scientist II



Dr. Jaime Manalo IV
Socio Economics Division, CES

Newly upgraded Career Scientist III



Dr. Ricardo Orge
Business Development Division, CES

Galing ng Midsayapeño Awards

Outstanding Agriculture and Rural Development Awardee



Sylvia Therese Quiring
PhilRice Midsayap

Outstanding Government Service Awardee-Group



PhilRice Midsayap

Gantimpala Agad Awardees

Masagana Audio Visual Team
(Jaime Miguel III, Shereen Francia, Charisma Love Gado-Gonzales), CES

Marissa Romero, CES

Hazel Alfon, CES

Michelle Pantaleon, CES

Pasasalamat Awardees

Maricar Mimis, CES

Arjelynn Esmeralda, CES

Vida Grace Ganiban, Batac

**Michael Jake Anthony
Bagasol, Batac**

Eduard Edison Cacao, Batac

Career Executive Service Board

Shortlisted Nominee of the 2023 Presidential Gawad CES



Dr. Eduardo Jimmy Quilang

OIC, Office of the Deputy Executive
Director for Research

Wag-wag Club 1949 Inc.

Outstanding Muñozonian in the Field of Agriculture



Dr. Flordeliza Bordey

Director of RCEF-PMO and Deputy
Executive Director for Special Concerns
on the Implementation of RCEF

Retirement



Rosana Sabella Ganotisi, former treasurer of the National Tobacco Administration, and administrative officer of PhilRice was accorded a retirement program on Oct. 27. She worked for 24 years in PhilRice, and garnered Dangal ng PhilRice award in 2004 as Most Outstanding Administrative Staffer (Level 2). 🍌



Leonora Quemquem, former Administrative Aide IV of PhilRice Batac was granted a farewell program on Dec. 18. In addition to receiving the 20-year service contractors' loyalty award in 2020, she worked for four more additional years at PhilRice and was recognized with a Special Citation as Outstanding Utility Worker in Dangal ng PhilRice 2018. 🍌