



## 2024-2028 Institutional plans refined

AUBREY VISTA P. MANALO



**T**he PhilRice management has finalized details of its 2023-2028 operational plan during its Annual Review and Planning Workshop at its Central Experiment Station in Nueva Ecija, Jan. 15-17.

Focusing on improved productivity and income for prosperous rice farming communities; better consumer access to affordable, safe and nutritious rice; and stable rice supply, the plan includes implementing innovative farming technologies, improving the rice seed system, and linking farmers to market.

It also includes, among other outputs, distribution of high quality seeds of inbred and public hybrid varieties, organized farmers' engagement in rice and rice-based agroenterprises, and commercialized farm machinery/postharvest and other technologies.

Nutritious rice and rice-based products will also be made available; digital technologies, platforms, and big data analytics will be developed and promoted; and extension support, education, and services that reach the next-users will be provided.

It was also emphasized during the workshop to pursue blockbuster

innovations in R4DE for focus and impact in addressing the industry's challenges such as climate change and resource scarcity.

Climate-smart adaptation mechanisms will be identified and mainstreamed; new technologies as future sources of growth will be developed; and policy recommendations will be advocated.

Dr. John de Leon, executive director, further enjoined his team to contribute ideas to Secretary

Francisco Tiu Laurel's three-year plan to boost the agriculture and fisheries sector.

Recently, the secretary outlined the DA's plan, addressing key challenges in local agriculture, focusing on expansion, modernization, and logistics.

The plan involves the development of efficient logistics systems and a robust digitalization strategy to ensure accurate production data for effective supply chain management.

"In our three-year plan, we're investing over PhP90 billion in upgrading rice and corn post-harvest facilities. Four decades of neglect in this area have led to significant losses, estimated at 12.7% to 15% of rice production. We aim to rectify these shortcomings," Laurel said.

He added that the department will establish new irrigation facilities, zoning, and identification of key areas, and improve infrastructures to boost production in land and water areas. 🍌



**Strategic convergence.** PhilRice held an annual planning workshop for the convergence of RiceBIS 2.0 and SMART Farm held at Development Bank of the Philippines, Baguio City on Jan. 8-11 discussing the progress and plan for future implementations. Key objectives included reviewing program status, strategizing for future years, and developing a cohesive convergence plan. The workshop concluded with renewed commitment towards advancing agricultural innovation and resilience, with stakeholders optimistic about the programs' potential to shape the future of farming practices and enhance food security. 🍌

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# Director's Message

**M**any of us, if not most, tend to look for the exception rather than become exceptional. That is to paraphrase my favorite author and leadership guru, John C. Maxwell. If truly "everything rises and falls on leadership" most of the time, then why would we rather beat on the bush than grab that chance to lead others well beyond all expectation? One reason perhaps lies in the uncertainty of a season, literally and figuratively. That is why we cannot help but admire the courage of a farmer or a fisherfolk to face each season that opens - repeatedly - everything including surprises. And then we realize the value of vision, seeing through and not flustered by the uncertainties of seasons as they change and sharpen a leader's foresight. Ways of working and attitudes soon make up self-discipline that spreads into high performing team "drills" as a matter of influence. Creating changes that lift up in honor our people, our workplace, and our leader(s) is the ultimate test of leadership, to my mind at least. And they are worth reprising.

It has been said that learning, leading, and leaving a legacy are the seasons of a leader's life. When the true season of leadership arrives, then the leader must lead - and thereby create his ways of working and attitudes legacy. The sum of all of that is the story of leadership that will be left behind when the season(s) close(s). It is perhaps my great fortune to have lived in a country where fall is a season and also observed when "the trees show us how lovely it is to let things go." Truly, every shift in season is a signal that we are not stuck. Grace finds us. We have another chance to write a better story.

Meanwhile, thank you PhilRice for the seasons of leadership. Thank you for enabling me to also have moments for growth, reflection, fixing up, and transition; to enjoy planting, maintaining, harvesting, recharging, and repeating all these while innovating with you.

**What a fabulous journey we had - creating positive changes for our continuous improvement. I hope you agree. We can do it again –God willing.**

**Salamat 2019-2023. Mabuhay 2024!**

**John C. de Leon**, Executive Director



**Innovation workers meet GAD.** The Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development (PCIEERD), led by Deputy Executive Director Niñaliza H. Escorial (4th from R), gathers insights on how Gender and Development (GAD) is mainstreamed in the rice sector. Discussions on cultivating a more equitable and inclusive environment were also tackled in their visit in Nueva Ecija on Jan. 27. 🍌  
GLAIZA D. CARRERA



**Acquire, enhance, and retain.** Staff Development and Learning Committee (SLDC) and its members convened in a review and planning workshop to revamp its Staff Learning and Development Program (SLDP) on Feb. 27-29 in PhilRice Isabela station. The workshop focused on reviewing existing guidelines, identifying areas for improvement, exploring strategies for enhancement, and assessing the status of scholars. The initiative underscores PhilRice's commitment to fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth among its researchers, development workers, administrators, and support staff. 🍌



# Villar cites PhilRice RCEF, proposes program extension

AUBREY VISTA P. MANALO

Sen. Cynthia Villar, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, commended PhilRice as she graced the 2023 RCEF Seed and Extension Programs Annual Review on Feb. 6-8, in Nueva Ecija. She strongly supports an extension of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) to continue providing crucial support to local farmers.

Villar emphasized the need for sustained efforts to increase rice output per hectare and reduce production costs under the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL). She highlighted the positive impact of the RTL since its inception in 2019 with consistent growth in average production per hectare—from 4.05 in 2019 to 4.15 metric tons in 2021.

"I am sponsoring the Rice Tariffication Law extension bill, and I look forward to PhilRice's support on this," Villar declared in front of agriculture stakeholders, stressing the importance of maintaining the momentum achieved through the RCEF.

As the five-year implementation of the RCEF programs concludes this year, Villar announced her intention to have them extended. She underscored the necessity of reviewing and recognizing the programs' impact on agri-productivity, to justify their continuation.

Dr. Flordeliza Bordey, director of the PhilRice RCEF Program Management Office, reported that seed recipients increased their average yield as shown in the midterm and seasonal monitoring and evaluation surveys conducted in the 42 original target provinces of the RCEF Seed Program.

In the dry season 2023, their average yield increased from 3.63t/ha in



*Sen. Cynthia Villar receives a rice portrait from Executive Director John de Leon as appreciation for her hard work in advocating for the farmers' welfare and the industry's progress. The rice art, created by PhilRice artist Sonny Pangilinan, serves as a reminder of our shared mission to uplift farmers' lives and ensure the country's food security.*

2019 to 4.36t/ha while the use of the recommended packages of technology in PalaySikatan demonstration sites reached an average of 5.22t/ha.

The program has distributed 16.04 million 20-kilogram bags of inbred rice seeds to 2.4 million unique beneficiaries who received in multiple cropping seasons. The component achieved a 93 percent accomplishment rate out of its target of 17.22 million bags. The distributed inbred rice seeds have been planted to 1.8 million hectares of land annually since 2019.

Meanwhile, Dr. Karen Eloisa T. Barroga, RCEF-Rice Extension Services Program vice-chairperson, said that the training of rice specialist and trainers has significantly enhanced the participants knowledge and skills on rice S&T, boosted their confidence in technology dissemination specifically focusing on pest and nutrient management technologies,

and empowered them to actively engage in conducting training activities.

She also reported that each region now has 25-48 rice experts who will help farmers diagnose field problems while more than 4,300 graduates of training of trainers nationwide now teach farmers and set up varietal trials in more than 300 farm schools. More than 4,000 farmers have undergone season-long training on rice production using and on pest and nutrient management both using the PalayCheck learning platform.

The seed distribution activities and training courses were also complemented with more than 5 million copies of IEC materials that were produced and distributed nationwide and with various formats of knowledge sharing and learning activities reaching at least 18 million rice farmers, intermediaries, and other stakeholders. 🍌

# PhilRice Bicol converges with NIA, other agencies

AZRYL MAY M. JIMENEZ



*Bicol Branch Director Victoria C. Lapitan discusses the PhilRice programs and services.*

In a move towards enhancing agricultural production and ensuring food security, PhilRice Bicol has pledged to train irrigators associations (IA) in Region 5 on agroenterprise development inked in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 14 national agencies.

Signed on Jan. 24 at the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) Regional Office Compound in

Naga City, the MOU also stated that PhilRice will link the IAs to the Rice Business Innovations System (RiceBIS) communities where farmers directly market their produce. PhilRice will also assist in building market linkages for the associations' rice and rice-based product enterprises.

The commitment signing aimed to establish inter-agency convergence for the implementation of various

programs and interventions geared at enhancing agricultural production and reducing reliance on imported products to boost IA members' incomes.

Attended by heads and key officials of the signatory agencies, NIA Regional Office 5 headed by Engr. Gaudencio M. De Vera led the signing of the Pledge of Commitment Board and MOU with the partners, with the Confederation of Irrigators' Associations of Bicol. 🍌

## Midsayap locals to see hydroponics at work

CHESHIRE FAYE R. PAGARIGAN

Palayamanan Plus model farm in PhilRice Midsayap will launch hydroponics as an additional component in its set-up this March.

Ommal Abdulkadil, lead of the station's Branch Development Initiatives, said that by testing the new component in their locality, they aim to evaluate its potential to enhance farmers' income from rice-based crops. This will be achieved by transitioning from manually fabricated hydroponics using PVC pipes to advanced technology hydroponics.

He added that hydroponics is promoted as it conserves water, reduces chemical use, maximizes land use with vertical setups, and allows year-round cultivation that ensures consistent food supply. 🍌



**Reviewing achievements.** The PhilPRAISE Committee held its annual Evaluation and Planning Workshop for 2023 on Jan. 11-12 in Gradiola Center, Benguet State University, La Trinidad Benguet. Focusing on assessing performances, refining guidelines, and setting plans for the year ahead. During the workshop, members reviewed achievements, identified areas for improvement, and crafted strategies to optimize processes and collaboration with stakeholders. 🍌

AUBREY VISTA P. MANALO

## Development Sector Gears Up for 2024

The Office of the DED for Development organized the "Arangkada 2024: Accelerating the Impact of the PhilRice Development Sector" on Jan. 26, that emphasize how to be agile given challenges and changes in the rice R4DE environment, and set goals and plans for each delivery unit. The event aimed to foster collaboration and a shared vision, equipping the sector with the necessary tools and motivation to significantly contribute to PhilRice's success in 2024. 🍌

AUBREY VISTA P. MANALO



# Youth learns smart farming

JOHN HERNAN M. TRINIDAD, DENISE BIANCA Y. SADULLO, AND MICHAEL L. SATUITO



*Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) students of Colegio de Los Baños conducts Agro-ecological system analysis (AESAs) activity during the Rice Appreciation Course.*

**Y**outh in Naga City and Los Baños have appreciated modern, easy rice cultivation through mobile apps and modern farm machines during their visit to the PhilRice stations.

About 350 students and educators of the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture in Naga City learned ICT tools including apps namely

PalayCheck, Binhing Palay, Minus-One-Element Technique (MOET), Leaf Color Chart (LCC), e-Damuhan, and Rice Crop Manager Advisory Service, on Dec. 18, 2023.

The applications provide recommendations covering aspects of farming from crop management with PalayCheck and Rice Crop Manager Advisory Service, variety

selection with Binhing Palay, to nutrient assessment with MOET and LCC, and weed control with e-Damuhan.

The DA-Regional Field Office V also demonstrated the drone-seeding technology, showcasing its potential for advancements in rice cultivation.

Meanwhile, Colegio de Los Baños students and teachers were introduced to the use of farm machines such as boat tiller, 4WD tractor, and rice reaper, which make farming easier and cost-efficient.

In a 4-day appreciation course on Jan. 22-26, they also learned the rice and rice-based production systems called PalayCheck and Palayamanan Plus and the Agro-ecological System Analysis, an approach used in field problem diagnosis and crop management.

Youth engagement is part of PhilRice's commitment to nurturing the next generation of agricultural leaders. Through mentorship, workshops, and educational programs, PhilRice empowers young farmers and researchers to foster sustained innovation and sustainable practices in the industry. 🍌



**Collaboration enhanced.** PhilRice has strengthened its partnerships with the local government unit and agencies in the Science City of Muñoz during the 11th Uhay Festival & 23rd Charter Anniversary of the Science City of Muñoz, in which Executive Director John de Leon emphasized passion and grit in serving rice communities. The institute's advocacy on farmer-groups' organizational development and technologies such as were also promoted in the Aqua-Agri Trade Fair. 🍌 **KIARA MAE E. PANYO**



# PhilRice Batac and PhilRice Isabela celebrate branch anniversaries

DIANA P. LIM AND FRANZEL MONIQUE D. BONILLA



**P**hilRice Batac and Isabela have renewed their commitment to excellence, a core value that has been at the center of their operations, during their 25th and 32nd anniversary, respectively.

With a month-long theme, “DA-PhilRice Batac@25: Navigating Milestones, Cultivating Excellence,” the station highlighted its celebration through its Pammadayaw awarding ceremony, held on Feb. 22, to honor its exceptional employees and partners.

In 2023, PhilRice Batac, under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), was able to deliver and distribute 25,533 bags to 16,176 farmers during the 2023 dry season and 141,230 bags to 68,835 farmers.

The station has a high record of 10.39 million metric tons, where Region 1 ranks 2 as the highest rice producer nationwide and Top 2 as the highest yielder. It also attained an overall efficiency of 94.24%, producing a total of 78,940 kg of registered seeds.

PhilRice Isabela marks their anniversary with the theme “Service and Excellence for Better Rice Communities” held on Jan. 22. This milestone is a testament to the station's perseverance in advancing rice research and a sustainable rice industry.

“We celebrate hard because we work hard. We are very grateful; our hearts are overflowing that you are joining us again.” OIC Branch Director Joy Bartolome Duldulao, expressed his gratitude for reaching another milestone.

“We do not aspire for excellence, but we are after continuous improvement. With little improvement done constantly, you will be surprised by the stunning result. We try not to compete but instead complement each other,” Executive Director John de Leon stated.

With 156,734 seed supplied, 27,839 farmer beneficiaries, and 69,773 rice areas planted, PhilRice Isabela surpassed 164 municipalities during the dry season of 2023. On the other hand, PhilRice Isabela visited 164 municipalities during the wet season, delivered 389,653 seeds, benefited 165,730 farmers, and planted 176,293 rice areas.

PhilRice Isabela and PhilRice Batac also successfully completed and passed the ISO Certification Audit last October and are now ISO 9001-2015 certified. 🍌



**Cultivating community connections.** Farmers in Botolan, Zambales, learn about RCEF Seed/Extension Programs, rice mobile apps, and PhilRice services during the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair, Jan. 27-28. PhilRice also provided technical assistance and disseminated information materials on rice farming. Participated by 47 national agencies, the event gathered more than 90,000 participants. 🍌 KATRINA JANELLE T. ALARCON



# Kiwanis Rice Boot Camp in Nueva Ecija breaks ground

ROCEL DYAN C. SILVA, GLAIZA D. CARRERA



**T**he Future Rice Farm in Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, on Feb. 23, has progressed with a milestone as it housed the ground breaking of a science park called sPark.

Funded by the Kiwanis International Philippine Luzon district under the leadership of Gov. Glenda Hufano, the sPark serves as a venue for teaching rice science to the children and honing their leadership skills.

"Let's start teaching them young and see a better nation. Let's ignite a spark in children through this initiative. By engaging them in activities here such as team building and rice appreciation, we are kindling a passion that will inspire them to contribute to the growth of the agricultural sector and boost their self-confidence, empowering them to take on leadership roles and responsibilities in the future," she said.

The campsite, set up in a 1000sqm, is an alternative to activities held in gyms and classrooms.

Simultaneously, the international organization in partnership with Lingap Leads Foundations Inc., conducted a medical mission benefiting over 100 members of rice communities. The mission, which included comprehensive health

check-ups, nutritional counseling, and provision of essential medicines, helped ensure that farmers maintain good health and optimal physical condition as they continue to work in the fields. 🍌



**Unleashing creativity.** During the National Arts Month, research, development, and admin workers put their artistic skills on the basic acrylic painting workshop hosted by Rice Science Museum. According to Andrei Lanuza, senior science research specialist of PhilRice, art helps to express and propagate science concepts. The activity led by designer and illustrator Katrina Janelle Alarcon also served as a health hour to improve the mental well-being of our staff. 🍌



**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.

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# Awards and recognitions

## Asian Institute of Digital Transformation Digirati Distinction Award



**Consolacion D. Diaz**, Information Technology Officer I, **Joselito A. Kalaw**, Head of Corporate Services Division, **Rosaly V. Manaoais**, Senior Science Research Specialist/ Scientist I, and **Rhemilyn Z. Relado-Sevilla**, DA-PhilRice Los Banos, Director I

For successfully completing the **Executive Masterclass in Digital Transformation** and successfully defending their **Capstone Digital Innovation Projects**

## Central Luzon State University Alumni Association Inc. Outstanding Achievement Award



**Edwin C. Martin**

Supervising Science Research Specialist



**Elmer G. Bautista**

Science Research Specialist II

## New Professional Food Technologist Professional Regulatory Board of Food Technology



**Dr. Marissa V. Romero**

Chief Science Research Specialist



**Henry F. Mamucod**

Senior Science Research Specialist



**Amelia V. Morales**

Science Research Specialist II

**Gantimpala Agad Awardees**  
RCEF Support Services Unit, CES  
RCEF Awards Committee, CES  
Honey Lyn P. Barroga, CES  
PhilRice Agusan RCEF Unit  
PhilRice Batac RCEF Unit  
PhilRice Bicol RCEF Unit  
PhilRice CES RCEF Unit  
PhilRice Isabela RCEF Unit  
PhilRice Los Banos RCEF Unit  
PhilRice Midsayap RCEF Unit  
PhilRice Negros RCEF Unit

**Pasasalamat Awardees**  
Mark Joseph B. Bitanga, Batac  
Ruben C. Macugay, Batac  
PhilRice CES NRAM team  
PhilRice Batac Authorized Drivers  
Jerwin G. Valencia, Batac  
Mhilton Arvy R. Bacarisa, Batac  
Christian Paul Q. Gorospe, Batac

## Public Management Development Alumni Club Galing PMDP Awardee



**Sailila E. Abdula**

DA-PhilRice Midsayap  
Branch Director

## Pammigbig ken Pammaadayaw 2024

**Distinguished Alumnus Awardee**  
of the College of Agriculture, Forestry and  
Sustainable Development,  
**and Pammigbig Awardee**



**Rizal G. Corales**

Division Head, RCEF-FOMD

## Retirement



**Guadalupe C. Miranda**, former Administrative Officer IV of PhilRice-CES was granted a farewell program on February 16. She worked for 27 years in PhilRice, and was recognized as an Outstanding Administrative Staffer (Level 3) in 2009, and received a Gantimpala Agad Award (Individual) in 2022. 🍌