

Postharvest learning alliances take flight in 2009

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Tom de Bruin of GrainPro, Inc. talks about hermetic storage systems with participants of the learning alliance in Bohol, Philippines.

Postharvest learning alliance (LA) meetings were held in the Philippines, Vietnam, and Cambodia as an offshoot to the series of participatory impact pathway analysis (PIPA) workshops held in Vietnam and the Philippines in early 2009.

The LAs in each country were facilitated by the Asian Development Bank- and IRRI-funded project *Bringing about a Sustainable Agronomic Revolution in Asia by Reducing Preventable Pre- and Postharvest Losses*. These LAs will eventually be led by suitable stakeholder groups.

The LA concept for postharvest was established in April 2009 as a flexible multistakeholder platform composed of representatives of government agencies, research institutions, nongovernment organizations, farmers' organizations, and seed growers who share an interest in postharvest.

Starting with hermetic storage

The first postharvest LA meeting in the Philippines was held in November in Bohol, in conjunction with the 6th National Grains and Postproduction Conference.

Hermetic or airtight storage systems, a mature postharvest technology, emerged as the initial topic for this meeting. It attracted a lot of attention because of its remarkable advantages—high germination of seeds even after a year of storage, high head rice recovery in milled rice, control of de-

terioration of paddy, and reduced pest infestation without pesticide.

“A learning alliance is a platform for disseminating postharvest technologies to farmers,” says Martin Gummert, Irrigated Rice Research Consortium (IRRC) Postproduction Work Group leader.

Tom de Bruin talked about GrainPro, Inc., the Philippines-based manufacturer of hermetic storage systems such as commercial cocoons with 5- to several hundred ton-capacity and the 50-kilogram IRRI Super bag. He explained how he had started hermetic storage research in the Philippines in collaboration with the National Agency for Post Harvest Institute for Research and Extension (NAPHIRE) almost 20 years ago, established the import of the cocoons, and, finally, initiated local production of the systems in Subic, Philippines.

Building on business models

The LA meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in September was the first phase for its stakeholders. The participants determined that the “entry points” for their alliance will be toward creating market business models and communication strategies. To achieve sound business models, a thorough analysis of existing market conditions will be done. After a communications audit, effective communication strategies will be formed.

Business model specialist Alfred Schmidley and IRRC anthropologist Rica Flor facilitated the workshop, with the communications audit conducted by IRRC communication specialist Trina Mendoza.

In Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, the stakeholders held their LA meeting in November. As in Cambodia, the participants also identified priority technologies and were also keen on creating a roadmap toward sound business models. They will have to review existing versions to establish more effective models for priority technologies.

Martin Gummert and Rica Flor facilitated the workshop sessions. Participants identified the outcome pathways and strategies to close the gaps that prevent further or faster adoption. Outputs from Cambodia and Vietnam will be converted into a solid business plan to secure funding for their respective project proposals. In all the meetings, they identified the roles of key stakeholders in the dissemination of a priority technology and ways to move forward.

The support of the LA has provided capacity building among its partners by developing human resources, organizations (outside and within), and an institutional and legal framework. Action plans for 2010 were drafted. 🍌



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Postproduction Work Group leader Martin Gummert emphasizes the importance of learning alliances to disseminate postharvest technologies that help prevent losses.