

Working toward rice self-sufficiency

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Philippines

The Philippines has long aimed for self-sufficiency in rice as the country works to overcome problems of limited land area for rice production, rising population, and inadequate infrastructure for irrigation and transport of rice. Reeling from the Asian rice crisis of 2008 and driven by its desire to achieve rice sufficiency by 2012, the government, through the Department of Agriculture (DA), funded the project *Accelerating Rice Sufficiency through Integrated Research, Training, and Extension* (more commonly referred to as the Philippine Rice Self-Sufficiency Plan [PRSSP]).



The IRRI Super Bag, an example of a hermetic storage, is a specially designed polyethylene bag that effectively preserves grain and seed quality.

The PRSSP seeks to accelerate the delivery of rice research and production technologies to farmers through a more strategic approach in disseminating them to the various regions or provinces. The IRRC joins in this pursuit by providing suitable rice technologies that come from adaptive and collaborative research with its partners. The Consortium aims to integrate these technologies through the IRRC Country Outreach Program (ICOP) in the Philippines.

The PRSSP is one of the platforms through which these integrated technologies are disseminated. The goal is to spread knowledge and technologies from IRRI and the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) to rice farmers throughout the country so they can adapt these to suit the specific condi-

tions in their fields. The PRSSP brings together rice experts specializing in various fields and disciplines from IRRI and PhilRice. They work under three interrelated subprojects.

IRRC anthropologist Flor Palis heads the partnership, monitoring, and evaluation component of one of the three PRSSP subprojects—the Unified Capability-Building Support or subproject 3 (SP3).

SP3 targets the human element of rice farming by focusing on the improvement of agricultural extension efforts. Dr. Palis's team assessed farmers' needs in the provinces of Camarines Sur, Bohol, Iloilo, Isabela, Agusan del Norte, and Agusan del Sur. Group discussions with farmers revealed that they face these problems: insufficient capital, high cost of inputs, low price of paddy, lack of sufficient knowledge on rice farming, and location-specific stresses (e.g., high salinity, drought, flooding).

Interviews with municipal and provincial extension workers and DA regional officers were also conducted to help understand the agricultural extension dynamics in the country and the issues related to it. The initial results of the needs assessment were presented in an IRRI-PhilRice workshop convened to develop the Philippine Rice Knowledge Bank in January.

The farmers' natural resource man-

agement needs are addressed by the IRRC's platform of technologies, such as site-specific nutrient management (i.e., *Nutrient Manager for Rice*); pest management (e.g., ecologically based rodent management); water-saving techniques (e.g., alternate wetting and drying); and postharvest management (e.g., hermetic storage, flat-bed dryer). These were disseminated through training activities conducted for farmers, extension agents, and other stakeholders in Baguio City, Tagbilaran City, and Cagayan de Oro City.

Evaluation of community-organizing capacities in relation to multi-stakeholder partnerships of selected villages in Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur provinces was conducted from June to July. Dr. Palis served as a resource person and her team members served as training evaluators during the island-wide training of trainers, focusing on dissemination of rice technology updates in Baguio City, Bohol, and Cagayan de Oro City.

IRRC postharvest engineer Pat Borlagdan and extension specialist Joel Janiya served as resource persons during the training courses.

Baseline surveys and ethnographic research on rice farms across the six provincial sites are set for the last quarter of 2010 until 2011 to further assess economic inputs and outputs, knowledge, attitudes, practices, and level of adoption of rice technologies.

The IRRC will continue working closely with its partners through the ICOP and the PRSSP to bring Filipino farmers closer to self-sufficiency in rice. 🌾



SP3 team member Ben Pamatmat conducts an assessment of capacity-building skills of farmer groups in Agusan del Sur.