Publications on Social and Economic Aspects of Biotech Crop Adoption Launched

The book “Socioeconomic Impacts of Bt Eggplant: Ex-ante Case Studies in the Philippines” and monographs “Adoption and Uptake Pathways of GM/Biotech Crops by Small-scale, Resource-Poor Filipino Farmers” and “Cadres of Change: Transforming Biotech Farmers in China, India, and the Philippines” were introduced to key stakeholders and media in the Philippines during the Social and Economic Dimensions of Biotech Crop Adoption: Book Launch and Media Conference held on February 6, 2014 at Dusit Thani Hotel, Makati City.

The “Socioeconomic Impacts of Bt Eggplant” book, co-published by ABSPPII, the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), and the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), presents the studies on the market prospects and potential economic, health, and environmental impacts of the insect resistant Bt eggplant in the Philippines. The “Adoption and Uptake Pathways” monograph co-published with the University of the Philippines Los Baños-College of Development Communication (UPLB-CDC) features the dynamics of the adoption and uptake pathways of biotech corn among small-scale, resource poor farmers and the changes it has brought in the farmers’ lives. The “Cadres of Change” monograph consolidates the findings of the research project “Adoption and Uptake Pathways of Biotech Crops by Small-scale Resource-poor Asian Farmers: Comparative Studies in China, India, and the Philippines” funded by the...

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Media Conference Presents Status of Philippine Biotech Crop Adoption

The Media Conference on the Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops in 2013 held on March 6, 2014 at Dusit Thani Hotel, Makati City gathered journalists, members of the academe, government agencies, private sector, non-government organizations, and local government units, and enlightened them on the global and local biotech crop adoption status and impacts. Launching the Annual ISAAA Report “ISAAA Brief No. 46: Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops in 2013” in the country, the activity reported that the Philippines reached around 800,000 hectares in terms of biotech corn adoption in 2013, up from 750,000 hectares in 2012, and landing it in the 12th place among the top biotech-adopting countries.

ISAAA Global Coordinator and SEAsiaCenter Director Dr. Randy Hautea presented the global status, trends, and significant benefits of biotech crop adoption, while food security and how biotech crops help contribute in its various aspects such as improvement of nutrition and agricultural productivity were discussed by ISAAA Chair of Board of Directors Dr. Paul Teng.

Also present in the conference were Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, Research and Development of the Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA) Dr. Segfredo Serrano and former University of the Philippines (UP) System President and UP Los Baños Chancellor Dr. Emil Q. Javier, both of whom talked about developments in national policy for agriculture and biotech crops, how biotech crops and modern technologies are benefitting the country, and insights on current issues such as the court case of Bt eggplant. They also reiterated the rigorous safety assessments for the technology through the national biosafety regulatory system. Meanwhile, Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) Director Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr. said in his message that the Center will continue to reinforce biotech education and promotion particularly in developing countries, in line with its 10th Five Year Plan which seeks to promote inclusive and sustainable agricultural and rural development.

The conference was organized by ISAAA, SEARCA Biototechnology Information Center, and the Biotechnology for Life Media and Advocacy Resource Center (BMARC). (MMCAVillena and SMMercado)

Coordinator of the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa (OFAB) and African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) Mr. Daniel Otunge and Senior Manager for Communications and Partnerships of AATF Ms. Nancy Muchiri learned about key biotech institutions, government agencies, and organizations in the Philippines during their visit organized by ISAAA on May 21-23, 2014.

In photo, center: Network Administrator and Special Projects Coordinator Ms. Maria Monina Cecilia A. Villena briefs Mr. Otunge and Ms. Muchiri on SEARCA BIC’s activities, projects, and publications.

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John Templeton Foundation. The research project was led by ISAAA Global Coordinator and SEAsiaCenter Director Dr. Randy Hautea and Director of the Global Knowledge Center on Crop Biotechnology of ISAAA Dr. Mariechel Navarro.

In his message, Dr. Hautea said that the publications focus on the more important questions about the technology which is on welfare benefits to farmers and the society. He also said that the Socioeconomic Impacts book is an effort of ABSPII and UPLB to help define the focus of the research in terms of its potential impact, while the Adoption monograph validated how biotech corn improved the lives of small-scale farmers, their families, and their communities. (MMCAVillena and SMMercado)
Philippine Regulators and Crop Researchers Participate in SciCom Workshop

Science communication principles and tips in communicating biotech concerns, as well as updates on crop biotechnology, its global and local status and benefits, the national biosafety regulatory system were imparted to 45 regulators, researchers, and officers of the Philippine Department of Agriculture’s (DA), Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA), Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA), and Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) based in the major island groups of Visayas and Mindanao during the Science Communication Workshop: Enhancing Biotech Knowledge and Communication Skills on April 1-2, 2014 at Cebu Parklane International Hotel, Cebu City.

Topics in the two-day activity include how biotech crops contribute to food security and sustainable agriculture and its global widespread use among farmers by International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) Global Coordinator and SEAsia Center Director Dr. Randy A. Hautea; the DA’s policy, R&D, and information, education, and communication (IEC) initiatives by DA-Biotechnology Program Office Program (DA-BPO) Coordinator Dr. Antonio A. Alfonso; the development of the fruit and shoot borer resistant Bt eggplant by Dr. Lourdes Taylo; and policies and guidelines of the rigorous biosafety regulatory framework of the country Co-chair of the DA-Biotech Core Team Ms. Merle Palacpac. Among the communication skills taught were infographics development and interacting with the media and the general public through print and radio. Science communication experts and facilitators were Dr. Rhodora R. Aldemita and Mr. Panfilo De Guzman of ISAAA; UPLB Professor Dr. Cleofe S. Torres, and Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture-Biotechnology Information Center (SEARCA BIC) Network Administrator and Special Projects Coordinator Ms. Maria Monina Cecilia A. Villena. The activity was co-organized by ISAAA, DA-BPO, and SEARCA BIC. (MMCAVillena and SMMercado)

Bt Eggplant IEC Activities in the Philippines Presented in Annual ISAAA Meeting

The information, communication, and education (IEC) outreach initiatives on Bt eggplant in the Philippines were shared with Biotechnology Information Centers (BICs) from around the world as part of Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) - BIC’s 2013 milestones during the Annual Network Meeting of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) at Hilton Garden Inn, Hanoi, Vietnam on March 18-20, 2014.

Included in the Bt eggplant IEC efforts imparted during the meeting were the short audio-visual segments on various aspects of the development of Bt eggplant (i.e. importance of eggplant in the country, damage of the fruit and shoot borer pest, and biosafety regulations of field trials), media engagements through connecting journalists to scientists, and regional workshops for regulators and the media conducted for Southeast Asian countries.

The meeting included an open discussion facilitated by ISAAA Chair and SEARCA Senior Fellow Dr. Paul Teng on “synergizing” the endeavors of ISAAA and the BIC network in biotech education and outreach. SEARCA BIC Special Project Coordinator and Network Administrator Ms. Maria Monina Cecilia A. Villena discussed challenges, developments, and opportunities for biotech education in the Philippines. Also presented in was the status of agriculture and issues on food security in Vietnam by Director General of the Institute of Agricultural Genetics of Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences Dr. Le Huy Ham where he also stated that biotechnology is a strong tool for attaining long-term food security and that there is the need for continuous education of the public on biotechnology.

The ISAAA BIC member-countries who participated in the meeting were Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Mali, Myanmar, Pakistan, Peru, Thailand, and Vietnam. (MMCAVillena and SMMercado)
Biotechnology in Southeast Asia in Policy Roundtable and Media Workshop

Key stakeholders from CLMV and the Philippines discuss possible collaborations for development and advancement of biotech in the region.

The back-to-back activities Eleventh Policy Roundtable on Building Capacities for Agricultural Competitiveness in Transition Southeast Asia: Modern Biotechnology for Food Security in a Climate Change Scenario and ASEAN Integration and Regional Workshop for Media Practitioners: Communicating Biotechnology for Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture encouraged policymakers, media practitioners, and key stakeholders from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam (CLMV), and the Philippines to discuss and get updated on crop biotechnology developments in the region.

The policy roundtable discussion, facilitated by the Chair of the Biotechnology Advisory Team of the Philippine Department of Agriculture Dr. Saturnina C. Halos, tackled the status and efforts of CLMV in the development and regulation of modern biotech products. It also discussed the impacts of biotechnology on agriculture, food security, and poverty in the region, and explored possible areas for collaboration and cooperation in the said field as adaptation strategy for climate change. Participants in the discussion were representatives from the Royal University of Agriculture of Cambodia, the Ministry of Science and Technology of Lao PDR, the Food Security Working Group in Myanmar, and the Institute of Agricultural Genetics of Vietnam. Also serving as resource persons were Fellow at PG Economics, United Kingdom Mr. Graham Brookes who presented their study on the economic and environmental benefits of biotech crops, and Senior Researcher at the Indonesian Center for Agricultural Biotechnology and Genetic Resources Research and Development (ICABIОGRAD) Dr. Muhammad Herman who explained the need for modern biotech.

The media workshop allowed multi-media practitioners in CLMV and the Philippines to share their experiences on how biotechnology is reported in their respective countries. Lessons for more accurate and science-based biotech reporting were also imparted. ISAAA Senior Program Officer Dr. Rhodora R. Aldemita, and SEARCA BIC Special Project Coordinator Ms. Maria Monina Cecilia A. Villena served as workshop facilitators.

Held on May 26-27, 2014 at Baoson International Hotel, Hanoi, Vietnam, the parallel activities were spearheaded by the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) and co-organized with the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), CropLife Asia, AGBiotech Vietnam, and the Agricultural Genetics Institute of Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences. (MMCAVillena and SMMercado)