

AB II SP

Southeast Asia



Newsletter of the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II

Vol. II No. 4

October 2006

Philippines Gets Funding for Agric Modernization

United States Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney, Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Margarito Teves and Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban signed last July 14, 2006 the Public Law (PL) 480 Loan Agreement between the Philippines and the United States. The signing of the loan was held at the Biological Laboratory (BL) 2 containment facility at the Institute of Plant Breeding, University of the Philippines Los Baños (IPB-UPLB).

The signing of the PL 480 is one of the significant partnerships between the Philippines and the US. The 30-year \$20 M loan, which carries a one-percent interest rate per annum for the Philippines, will provide funds for agri-biotech research, postharvest management, infrastructure and livestock sector development, and capacity building activities. According to Ambassador Kenney, a considerable amount of the loan will be allocated to agri-biotech research and commercialization to boost the country's efforts.

The agreement also stipulates that part of the loan be used to finance the importation of approximately 69,000 metric tons of rice from the United States which will arrive in early 2007. The proceeds from the sale by the government to the private sector will be invested in the program.

The Ambassador was impressed with the hard work and the substantial progress made by Filipino scientists, particularly those from the IPB in developing crop varieties using biotechnology tools. Included in the Institute's current research activities are the USAID-funded and Cornell University-led Agricultural



Philippine Finance Secretary Margarito B. Teves and U.S. Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney (third and fourth from left) are joined by Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban (second from left) and UPLB Chancellor Rey Velasco (extreme left) in the signing of PL 480 Program.

Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSP II). The ABSP II-SEAsia Center, which is based at the IPB, is responsible for developing transgenic papaya resistant to papaya ringspot virus (PRSV), eggplant varieties resistant to fruit and shoot borer, and multiple virus resistant tomatoes.

Continued on page 3.

FSBR Eggplant and PRSV Resistant Papaya Get Funding from EMERGE

USAID Philippines through the Economic Modernization through Efficient Reforms and Governance Enhancement (EMERGE) approved a grant for the implementation of two projects namely, "Development and Commercialization of FSBR Eggplant in the Philippines: Support to Product and Regulatory File Development" and "Papaya Ringspot Virus (PRSV) Resistant Papaya for the Philippines: Strengthening Public R & D, Biosafety/Food Safety Regulations and Commercialization of Improved GM Crops". The funding support from USAID country missions was sought as a matching fund for ABSP II SEAsia.



The projects will focus on activities leading to the development of advanced lines of FSBR eggplant and PRSV resistant papaya, evaluate these lines at the isolated/confined field and develop the regulatory file of the products. During the projects' implementation, information and data relevant to regulatory compliance for commercialization will be generated along with the development of improved FSBR eggplant and PRSV resistant papaya varieties. The two projects are multidisciplinary and will involve researchers from other clusters of the University of the Philippines Los Baños College of Agriculture.

ABSP II Collaborators Attend Training Course on Commercialization

Three ABSP II collaborators attended a five-day training course on the "Commercialization of biotechnology crops in Asia: Moving from ideas to useful products". They were Drs. Josefina Narciso, from the Institute of Plant Breeding, University of the Philippines Los Baños; Saptowo J. Pardal from ICABIOGRAD in Indonesia; and Karnan of Sathguru Management Consultant in India. Held last June 19-23, 2006 at the Somerset Millenium Hotel, Makati City, Philippines, the workshop aimed to provide in-depth information on the commercialization process of biotech crops from lab to field.

The ABSP II collaborators joined 30 other participants from Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. Majority of the participants are involved in biotech research in their respective countries as researchers, regulators or administrators.

Using a combination of lectures, case studies, exercises, and field visits, the workshop discussed topics such as: requirements for the commercialization of biotech crops; regulatory process of Philippines and India; requirements and the importance of regulatory compliance; the Philippine experience on the commercialization of biotech crop i.e. Bt corn MON 810, and soon to be commercialized crops, PRSV papaya and FSBP eggplant; risk communication; and the different IP and licensing agreement involved in the commercialization of biotech crops.

The training was facilitated by Dr. Andrew D. Powell, CEO of Asia BioBusiness and Prof. Paul Teng of the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, both in Singapore. The two organizations organized the workshop with the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications.



Dr. Josefina O. Narciso (extreme right) with fellow workshop participants.

ABSP II Collaborators Tackle Environmental Biosafety Issues

Researchers from collaborators of Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSP II) in Southeast Asia and Africa attended the course on environmental biosafety held at the Michigan State University (MSU), USA from July 30-August 4, 2006.

The delegates were Lourdes Taylo and Filomena Sta Cruz (Philippines), Sri Hensdrastuti Hidyat (Indonesia), Eric Danquah and Samuel Timpo (Ghana), Andrew Kiggundu, Geofrey Arinaitwe and Barbara Zawedde (Uganda).

The course provided an introduction to environmental safety issues associated with transgenic crops; case studies of environmental safety, overview of international treaties, and regulations on biosafety; as well as strategies for capacity building and regional/international cooperation in biosafety. This enabled participants to appreciate the important role of scientists involved in the development of biotech crops, particularly in identifying the important regulatory issues in biosafety that need to be addressed before and during the conduct of contained/confined field trials as well as associated risk communication strategies.

Faculty from MSU, West Michigan University and University of Guelph along with experts from the US Department of Agriculture shared information and facilitated the trainees identification of possible risks and the corresponding management solutions. A dialogue with farmers about their experiences in growing biotech soybean and corn provided an end-user perspective of using biotech crops.



An international group of participants attend MSU course on environmental biosafety.

Biosafety Workshop for PRSV Papaya and MVR Tomato

A seminar-workshop on biosafety assessments for field evaluation and commercial release of PRSV papaya and MVR tomato was conducted at the Bureau of Plant Industry in Manila, Philippines on July 21, 2006 to discuss the different biosafety issues and concerns for field testing and propagation. The workshop was coordinated by the Bureau of Plant Industry Biotech Core Team Secretariat.



The progress and status of the PRSV papaya and MVR tomato projects was presented by Dr. Desiree Hautea, ABSP II SEAsia Regional Coordinator and Lead Principal Investigator. Ms. Merle Palacpac, Plant Quarantine Service Chief and Co-chair Biotech Core Team, presented a review of the guidelines of field and propagation risk assessment, while Dr. Saturnina

Halos of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and workshop chairperson discussed the safety issues of the proposed safeguards for PRSV papaya and MVR tomato. In broad terms, the various issues and concerns raised and discussed were categorized as environmental regulatory issues, food and safety issues, wildlife issues, molecular characterization of specific transformation events and others. The collective specific points concerning these issues were discussed and summarized. These information will serve as a guide for the proponents in preparing the regulatory dossiers.

The activity was attended by Project principal investigators Drs. Pablito Magdalita and Hayde Galvez, representatives from the DA, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the Fiber Industry Development Authority.

Philippines Gets Funding... (From page 1)

According to Dr. Desiree M. Hautea, Regional Coordinator of the ABSP II-SEAsia Center, the progress that the IPB scientists have made in these projects would not have been possible without the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Cornell University, and collaborators of ABSP II from private and public sectors, which include the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (DOST-PCARRD), the University of the Philippines Los Baños, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA).

Indonesia Conducts Risk Communication Workshop



What are biotech crops being researched on in Indonesia? What are the common issues and concerns raised about biotechnology? What communication techniques should stakeholders like scientists, university faculty, and government officials use to enable them to be effective biotech communicators?

These questions were tackled in a risk communication workshop organized by the Indonesia Biotechnology Center (IndoBIC) in Bogor last September 21-22, 2006. Dr. Bambang Puwantara, director of IndoBIC said that a total of 38 participants that also included representatives from media attended the workshop where resource persons like public sector scientists Drs. Muhammad Herman and Inez Loedin-Slamet discussed the agricultural products that local scientists are working on as well as issues often raised about crop biotechnology.

Communicating biotechnology using the Philippine experience was shared by Dr. Edita Burgos, an educator and head of a biotechnology communication group. This input along with the technical discussion provided the background and content for the risk communication techniques that were imparted to the participants through lecture, case studies, and role play. Participants were oriented on message mapping, popular science writing, writing written statements for media, and doing recorded interviews.

The ABSP II-sponsored workshop was supported by four other institutions: the Southeast Regional Centre for Tropical Biology, Ministry of Agriculture, LIPI (Indonesian Research Center), and the Indonesian Society for Agricultural Biotechnology.

Ex-Ante Impact Assessment Studies (Phase I) Completed

The initial phase of the ex-ante impact assessment studies that looked into the potential economic benefits of five target biotech crops in Indonesia and the Philippines has been completed. Economic surplus analysis was used to assess the potential economic benefits of late blight resistant (LBR) potato and multiple virus resistant (MVR) tomato in Indonesia, and fruit and shoot borer resistant (Bt) eggplant, papaya ring spot virus (PRSV) resistant papaya and MVR tomato in the Philippines. The results of each completed studies underwent thorough review by Dr. George Norton, ABSP II impact coordinator. Results of the studies are now available in a consolidated report.



On 13 August 2006, results of the Philippine impact studies were presented by Dr. Sergio Francisco, principal investigator for the ex-ante assessment study on Bt eggplant technology, in a symposium session of the 26th Conference of the International Association of Agricultural Economists (IAAE) held in Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia. This six-day conference was attended by more than 1000 agricultural economists worldwide. Manuscripts for each completed studies are also being prepared for publication in local or international refereed journals.

Two new component studies are included in the second phase of the impact assessment studies. The first component study looks into the regulatory costs of developing PRSV resistant papaya technology and their policy implications to public sector R&D in the Philippines. The second component study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the environmental impacts of Bt eggplant technology in the Philippines.

International Biotech Stakeholders Visit ABSP II Projects

What is the progress of crop biotech research initiatives at the Institute of Plant Breeding, University of the Philippines Los Baños? This question among others was answered by researchers led by Dr. Desiree Hautea, ABSP II Regional Coordinator, to delegates from Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam), Kenya, and the United States who attended the Biotech Issues and Communicating Biotech Workshop in Manila, Philippines from September 14-17, 2006. The workshop gave an overview of current biotech issues and how best to respond to these concerns through principles of risk communication.

Participants who were mostly decision makers on aspects of crop biotechnology in their respective countries took particular interest in the PRSV papaya and Bt eggplant in contained trials. The Philippines continues to be the only country in SEA that has commercialized a biotech crop (Bt corn) and is looking forward to more new products in the near future.

The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) with SEAMEO Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) co-organized the workshop with support from the US Grains Council.



Workshop delegates view the ABSP II SEAsia exhibit during their visit to the Institute of Plant Breeding.

ABSP II is a USAID-funded consortium of public and private sector institutions that supports scientists, regulators, and the general public in developing countries to make informed decisions about agricultural biotechnology. Where demand exists, ABSP II focuses on the safe and effective development and commercialization of bio-engineered crops as a complement to traditional and organic agricultural approaches. The project helps boost food security, economic growth, nutrition, and environmental quality in East and West Africa, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines.

Southeast Asia Office

Dr. Desiree M. Hautea
Regional Coordinator
Institute of Plant Breeding
University of the Philippines Los Baños
College 4031 Laguna Philippines
Telefax: +6349 5365140 • Email: absp2_sea@ipb-uplb.org.ph

US Office

International Programs
213 Rice Hall, Cornell University
Ithaca, New York 14853 USA
Phone: 1 607 255 6357
Fax : +1 607 255 8186
Email: absp2@cornell.edu