



Philippines Approves 2nd Confined Trial of PRSV-R Papaya

The National Biosafety Committee of the Philippines (NCBP) approved the planting of the Papaya Ringspot Virus-Resistant (PRSV-R) papaya during its meeting last October 13, 2007, after a thorough evaluation of the proposal to conduct another confined trial. This will help researchers further evaluate and observe the PRSV-R papaya's horticultural performance and resistance to PRSV in its natural environment.

NCBP's approval letter dated October 26, 2007 includes among other things, proposed confinement measures to properly manage and run the trial site in compliance with the regulatory procedures and conditions set by NCBP. The confined trial will be conducted in a fenced and regulated-access experimental plot in the Institute of Plant Breeding, University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), which was inspected by the NCBP, Bureau of Plant Industry-Plant Quarantine Services (BPI-PQS) and the UPLB Institutional Biosafety Committee (UPLB IBC) last September 11, 2007.

In preparation for the confined trial site, an NCBP approval was sought to sow the PRSV-R papaya seeds. Upon its approval on October 5, 2007, the seeds were sown last October 19, 2007 in the presence of representatives from UPLB-IBC and BPI-PQS.

A previous confined trial for the same PRSV-R papaya project also in IPB was approved last December 19, 2007 and planting was done on February 23, 2007. The previously approved site was to evaluate resistance to PRSV. This time around, the PRSV-R papaya will be planted under natural conditions in order to determine and further evaluate the horticultural characters, and to also look at the physiological and compositional analyses of the transgenic papaya.



Papaya seeds being sown last October 19, 2007 in the presence of Ms. Laurie Salumbides of BPI-PQS (third from left) and Dr. Severina Exconde of UPLB IBC (fourth from left). (Photo by ZB Juliano)

The PRSV-R papaya project in IPB-UPLB is being supported by ABSPII with several partners such as the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources Research and Development (DOST-PCARRD), the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), SEARCA, and Program for Biosafety Systems (PBS). The project aims to ensure that small-scale papaya growers in key papaya-growing areas will recover from and/or avoid severe economic losses from PRSV in the future. (ZB Juliano)

Fire Guts 2nd Floor of IPB's Module A; USAID Assists ABSPII Projects



(Photo courtesy of IRRRI Fire Brigade) <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ricphotos/sets/72157601449229422/>>

The 2nd floor of Module A of the Crop Science Cluster-Institute of Plant Breeding, University of the Philippines Los Baños (IPB-UPLB) was razed last August 8, 2007. No one was injured, but the estimated cost of damage is around P9,138,800.00.

According to eyewitness Florentino Alcaide, roving security guard of IPB, the blaze started after he heard an explosion from the building's second floor at 5:55 pm. Within 10 minutes, fire trucks from the nearby International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) arrived at the scene. A total of nine fire trucks from neighboring towns helped put out the fire.

Among the razed offices included that of Drs. Simeona V. Siar and Pablito Magdalita of the Fruits and Ornamental Crops Section; Vegetable section offices of Drs. Melquiades Reyes and Josefina O. Narciso; and the Legumes section office of Dr. Remedios M. Alibay. Drs. Magdalita, Narciso and Reyes are involved in ABSPII's PRSV-R papaya, FSRB eggplant and MVR tomato Projects, respectively.

USAID/ABSPII provided financial assistance to re-construct an office within IPB for affected staff of the PRSV-R papaya and FSRB eggplant projects as well as to purchase equipment and supplies. The funds, amounting to P400,000.00 will ensure continuity of the on-going research projects. (TP Lawas)

USAID Visits FSBR Eggplant and PRSV Papaya Projects

Economist Tyler Holt and Teresita P. Calabia, Development Assistant Specialist, both from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), visited the trials sites of the Fruit Shoot Borer Resistant eggplant (FSBR eggplant) and Papaya Ringspot Virus-Resistant papaya (PRSV-R papaya) projects located at the Institute of Plant Breeding, University of the Philippines Los Baños (IPB-UPLB) last August 28, 2007.

Among those who welcomed Mr. Holt and Ms. Calabia were Drs. Desiree M. Hautea, Regional Coordinator of the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II Southeast Asia, Josefina O. Narciso, Principal Investigator of the FSBR eggplant project, and Pablito M. Magdalita, Principal Investigator of the PRSV-R papaya project, Dr. Randy A. Hautea, Global Coordinator of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), and Mr. Perfecto G. Corpuz of the US Department of Agriculture. Regulators from the Bureau of Plant Industry-Post Entry Quarantine Services and the UPLB Institutional Biosafety Committee were also present.

The visit enabled Mr. Holt and Ms. Calabia to personally see the updates of the said projects. After their visit, both proceeded to ISAAA for a meeting to talk about the projects' future plans and goals.

USAID is among the many partners involved in the FSBR Eggplant and PRSV-R Papaya projects. *(ZB Juliano)*



Tyler Holt (right), USAID Economist, listens to Dr. Desiree M. Hautea's briefing about the PRSV-R papaya project during his IPB visit last August 28, 2007. *(Photo by LJA Pabro)*

FSBR Eggplant Activity Leaders Meet With Potential Multilocation Partners in Mindanao

Dr. Josefina O. Narciso and Mr. Reynaldo Quillo, project leader and study leader, respectively, of the Fruit-Shoot Borer-Resistant eggplant (FSBR eggplant) project, went to Mindanao last July to meet with potential multilocation partners and officials from the different state universities and agricultural agencies in North Cotabato, Davao and Butuan.

The discussions delved on the overview and the actual proposed multilocation projects in their respective universities and institutes. Assessment and evaluation of the proposed areas of the trial sites were also conducted.

Dr. Narciso met with the University of Southern Mindanao (USM) officials in North Cotabato last July 16-17, 2007 led by President Dr. Virgilio G. Oliva, Vice President for Research, Development and Extension Dr. Eugenio Alcalá, Dr. Connie Bravo of the USM Department of Entomology, and Dr. Hersie Nicor of the University of Southern Mindanao Agricultural Research Center, which is a member of the Cotabato Agriculture and Resources Research and Development Consortium. According to Dr. Narciso, a favorable response to the proposed multilocation trial of the FSBR eggplant project in the area was given by the officials. The meeting was followed by the site assessment within the USM campus.

The team also visited the University of the Philippines Mindanao (UP Mindanao) in Davao on July 17-19, 2007, to meet



with Dr. Eufemio T. Rasco, Technical Consultant on Regulation of the FSBR eggplant project based in Mindanao. Meetings were also held with Drs. Antonio Obsioma, Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics, Reynaldo Abad, Chair of the Department of Biological Sciences and Environmental Studies, and Severo Bastian, Head of the Molecular Biology Research Laboratory. Similarly, the UP Mindanao officials showed support for the proposed

multilocation trial project in the area. There were three proposed sites offered by the officials which were all visited and evaluated by the team. This is not the first time that UP Mindanao is involved with multilocation trials. Previously, it implemented trial studies of Bt corn.

On July 24-26, 2007, Dr. Narciso and Mr. Quillo went to Agusan del Sur to visit the Northern Mindanao State Institute of Science and Technology (NORMISIST). This visit was made possible through the arrangements of Dr. Gaudencio Petalcorin Jr., Director of CCARD. Dr. Edgar Ignacio, president of NORMISIST, was briefed on the proposed project. A positive response from the potential multilocation partner was also made. Dr. Ignacio invoked the need of an academic institution like NORMISIST to be open to all aspects of science and research. He accepted in principle the proposed multilocation trial in the institute. *(ZB Juliano with reports from JO Narciso)*

Southeast Asia Farmers Visit IPB

Thirty-one participants of the 2007 Regional Farmers' Exchange Program visited the Papaya-Ringspot Virus-Resistant (PRSV-R) papaya and Fruit-Shoot Borer-Resistant (FSBR) eggplant trial sites at the Crop Science Cluster-Institute of Plant Breeding (CSC-IPB), University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) last August 28, 2007.

The site visit was part of the program which was organized by the Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines (BCP) together with the CropLife Philippines and CropLife Asia. The program enabled participants to share their knowledge and experiences on modern agricultural biotechnology and update them on current research and local developments in the field. Participants from China, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines were accompanied by Ms. Barbara Parr from CropLife and Abraham Manalo and Godfrey Ramon, both from BCP.

Among the resource persons during the visit were Drs. Pablito M. Madalita and Josefina O. Narciso, project leaders of the PRSV-R papaya and FSBR eggplant projects, respectively, and Dr. Desiree M. Hautea, Regional Coordinator of the ABSPII Southeast Asia Center.

The visit was an opportunity for the visitors to personally see the progress being made in agricultural biotechnology by public scientific institutions. This helps the participants appreciate the actual and potential



Dr. Pablito M. Magdalita (left), Project Leader, gives a brief explanation of the PRSV Papaya project to the participants of the Regional Farmers' Exchange Program. (Photo by LJA Pabro)

benefits of modern biotechnology for the rural community.

CSC-IPB, UPLB is one of the project's many partners and has been providing assistance to the public sector's development efforts of agricultural biotechnology. (ZB Juliano)

Training-Workshop on Experimental Design and Analysis for Crop Biotech Researchers

An in-house training-workshop on Experimental Design and Analysis for Crop Biotech Researchers was held on September 6-7, 2007 at the Sam-Arng Room, SEARCA, College, Laguna. Thirty-three crop biotech researchers of the PRSV-R papaya, FSBR eggplant and MVR tomato projects participated in the workshop which was sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Philippines, the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSPII), the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) and the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture-Biotechnology Information Center (SEARCA-BIC).

The two-day workshop was part of the capability building activities of the projects, aimed to enhance the knowledge and capacity of the project staff in using appropriate experimental



Dr. Connie Reaño (second from right), resource person for the Training-Workshop on Experimental Design and Analysis for Crop Biotech Researchers, takes a look at the FSBR eggplant Entomology Team's practical exercise. (Photo by ZB Juliano)

designs such as collection, analysis and interpretation of data and writing of report. Participants were taught to understand and use software applicable for different experimental designs. Dr. Consorcia E. Reaño, an Associate Professor from the Institute of Statistics, College of Arts and Science, UP Los Baños, served as the resource speaker.

On the second day of the workshop, Dr. Reaño lectured on specific measures of statistical analysis and use of statistical analysis software (SAS), followed by hands-on training on the use of SAS. Participants were grouped

according to their activities and run raw data from their experiments in the field and laboratory using SAS.

Dr. Pablito M. Magdalita, research leader of PRSV Papaya, emphasized the significance of having accurate experimental design and analysis in the conduct of experiments. (VRG Lee)

Workshops on Risk Management and Social Marketing

Two training-workshops targeted for potential multilocation partners of the Fruit-Shoot Borer Resistant (FSBR) eggplant and the Papaya Ringspot Virus-Resistant (PRSV-R) papaya projects were conducted in July and August this year.

Entitled "Training-Workshop on Risk Management and Social Marketing of Public Sector Biotechnology Products", the workshops were both co-organized and sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD), the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture-Biotechnology Information Center (SEARCA-BIC), the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSP II), and the Program for Biosafety Systems-Southeast Asia (PBS-SEAsia).

The training-workshops were conducted in two locations: in Tagaytay City last July 24-25, 2007 to cater to potential multilocation farmers from Cavite, Batangas, and Laguna; and in Naga City, Camarines Sur last August 7-8, 2007 for participants from Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur and Albay. Researchers, academicians, potential institutional biosafety committee (IBC) members, local government units, media, farmer cooperators, consumers, religious groups, and nutritionists were represented.

The training workshops provided participants with knowledge on biotechnology as requisites for an effective biotechnology communication and social marketing in their respective agencies and areas. More specifically, it provided participants a better

understanding of the concepts and issues of biotechnology and its applications and how to communicate biotechnology techniques and knowledge through a strategic social marketing plan for the commercialization of the biotech products.



Ms. Sonny P. Tababa (left) of SEARCA-BIC leads the mock interview. Participants were asked to play the roles of representatives from different fields to practice their risk communication skills.

The workshops followed the same format wherein lectures on risk communication, social marketing, biosafety and risk management, and updates on the PRSV-R papaya and FSBR eggplant projects were conducted. Activities to encourage active participation and interaction among members such as K-Quest!, a game developed by ISAAA, and other group activities were also conducted. There were also video presentations and site visits for additional information. A radio interview was also conducted in Naga City wherein resource persons from PCARRD, ISAAA and ABSP II were able to share their knowledge regarding biotechnology.

The training-workshops were conducted to complement DOST-PCARRD's efforts in advocating agriculture biotechnology as a major instrument for increased productivity, global competitiveness, and food security in the Philippines. DOST-PCARRD and the other co-organizers of the training-workshop series consider communication and social marketing strategies vital in the research and development transfer process as both affect the public acceptance of biotech products. (ZB Juliano, VRG Lee)



Ms. Marivi G. Colle, study leader of the PRSV-R Papaya Project, presents the status of their research during the workshop in Naga City. (Photo by ZB Juliano)

ABSP SOUTHEAST ASIA NEWSLETTER VOL. III NO. 4 September 2007

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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.

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