

**1st Philippine Farmers' National Conference-Workshop on Agbiotechnology for Corn
18-20 May 2005 University Hotel, Diliman, Quezon City**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The workshop was jointly organized by Asian Farmers Regional Network-Philippines, the Philippine Maize Federation Inc. and the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture-Biotechnology Information Center (SEARCA BIC). The principal sponsors were the Department of Agriculture, the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), and the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Program II (ABSP2) while the secondary sponsors were Monsanto Philippines and CropLife Philippines. The SEARCA BIC served as the workshop secretariat.



The 3-day conference aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- 1.) provide participants with the basic concepts of modern biotechnology, clarify biotechnology issues and agree on a common framework towards responsible acceptance and/or adoption of modern biotechnology;
- 2.) provide opportunities for technology sharing and exchange among agbiotech users and would-be adopters as well as venues for discussion of issues on technology exchange, promotion and stewardship for endorsement to policy-makers; and
- 3.) organize regional core groups that shall work closely with ASFARNET-Philippines in promoting agricultural technologies that would contribute towards food security, poverty and malnutrition alleviation, and environmental sustainability.

The 81 participants represented a diverse group of stakeholders. While the majority of participants were leaders of farmer-groups/non-government organizations from Luzon and Mindanao, the representatives from the academe, local government units, regulatory agencies, government agencies, private sector, and the media provided a rich interaction and exchange of experiences and ideas on various issues surrounding agricultural biotechnology, in general and biotech corn, in particular.

On the first day, the resource persons discussed various biotechnology applications particularly for corn. Substantial discussion was also devoted to insect resistant management strategies for Bt corn.

On the second day, the participants trooped to Los Banos, Laguna-a designated science and nature city of the Philippines. At the University of the Philippines Los Banos (UPLB), they learned about the R&D programs of the Institute of Plant Breeding (IPB) particularly its crop genetic engineering research and germplasm conservation and management. They visited IPB's genetic conservation facilities at the National Plant Genetic Resources and Laboratory and seed production facilities at the National Seed Foundation. They also visited international centers of the Los Banos Science Community. Briefings about the mission and programs of SEARCA and IRRI were conducted. A tour to IRRI Rice World provided participants an appreciation of the integral role of rice in the life and culture of various peoples in the world.



The third day was devoted to plenary discussion of issues that need follow-through actions from concerned entities. Focal persons in the regions for ASFARNET networking were also identified. The workshop recommendations included the following:

- (a) a nationwide consultation to come up with a practical application of a farmer-managed IRM strategy;
- (b) a conduct of information awareness activities on the importance and current IRM strategies for Bt corn;
- (c) pursue the concept of active participation by the corn growers via their corn federation/organization and ASFARNET to ensure compliance of biosafety regulations and enhance technology appreciation/utilization;
- (d) tap financial support for IRM implementation and monitoring;

- (e) strengthen collaboration among government, farmer groups and technology developers for sustained support on public education on IRM;
- (f) enhance farmer-awareness of the relevance of the work concerned research and development institutions such as the UPLB-Institute of Plant Breeding (IPB) and DA-PhilRice, etc. and of their valuable services including conservation and management of crop germplasm;
- (g) prod government to sustain if not increase the budget as required by research & dev't institutions; and
- (h) endorse further research on IRM such as the proposal Dr. Pio Javier, NCPC, UPLB.

During the closing program, Ms. Alicia G. Ilaga, Director, DA-Biotechnology Program, expressed the continuing support of the Department to biotechnology research and development as well as its commitment to put in place policies that would provide an enabling environment for the safe and responsible use of the technology for the benefit of the Philippines. She likewise updated the participants of the current initiatives undertaken by the Department in strengthening the competencies and capabilities of institutions for biotechnology R&D and extension.

