

US Ambassador Unveils Trial Site Marker



PHOTO BY ZB JULIANO

Ambassador Kenney poses at the confined trial facility site marker with UPLB Chancellor Luis Rey Velasco. With them are (L-R): USAID's Mr. Daniel Moore, Deputy Mission Director Elzadia Washington, Drs. Patricio Faylon, Randy Hautea, and Jose Hernandez.

United States Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie A. Kenney unveiled a commemorative site marker with University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) Chancellor Luis Rey I. Velasco on March 10, 2008 at the confined trial facility of the Papaya Ringspot Virus-Resistant (PRSV-R) Papaya and the Fruit and Shoot Borer Resistant (FSBR) Eggplant projects at the UPLB Crop Science Cluster-Institute of Plant Breeding (UPLB CSC-IPB). Ambassador Kenney visited the confined trial site facility together with officials from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and US Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA-FAS).

The CFT site marker symbolically marks the significant progress being achieved in the US-Philippine governments' cooperation in agri-biotechnology development. The papaya and eggplant projects are both being developed using biotechnology with assistance from the US government through USAID.

In a short program during the visit, Dr. Jose E. Hernandez, Director of CSC and IPB, thanked the Ambassador for visiting UPLB again. He recalled that the Ambassador's first visit to IPB was on July 14, 2006 when she, together with Secretary of Finance

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PRSV-R Papaya Planted in Second Confined Trial Site



Project staff transplant PRSV-R Papaya in confined trial site, CSC-IPB Experiment Farm.

On February 8, members of the University of the Philippines Los Baños Institutional Biosafety Committee (UPLB-IBC), and the Bureau of Plant Industry witnessed the transplanting of PRSV-R papaya plants of four candidate transgenic lines in the confined trial site at the UPLB Crop Science Cluster-Institute of Plant Breeding (UPLB CSC-IPB) Experimental Farm. Non-transgenic 'Davao Solo' papaya plants were also planted at the 0.9 hectare papaya experimental area located in Brgy. Paciano Rizal, Bay, Laguna as control variety for comparison.

The confined trial will enable the papaya project team to complete the horticultural evaluation of the transgenic lines and conduct the final selection prior to advancing the best line to multilocation trials. Among the characters that the team will observe include plant characteristics

at flowering stage, fruit qualities, and compositional and nutritional traits. In addition, the trial will also allow the conduct of additional biosafety related-studies recommended by the National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines (NCBP).

Last year, the candidate transgenic papaya lines were planted at a smaller confined trial area in the UPLB CSC-IPB compound to determine their resistance under heavy inoculum load induced by artificial inoculation of PRSV. The current trial will also assess the field resistance of the transgenic lines to natural PRSV infection conditions.

The second site is located away from housing areas and far from any commercial papaya plantations. Residents of nearby communities have given their support for the conduct of the trial through their local government council officials. *(ZB Juliano and VMCruz)*

FSBR Eggplants Harvested from Confined Trial Site

Biotech eggplants have been harvested from the confined trial of the Fruit and Shoot Borer Resistant Eggplant (FSBR Eggplant) Project based in Crop Science Cluster-Institute of Plant Breeding (CSC-IPB) in the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB).

The confined trial was established in late December, 2007 and harvesting started in early February. Immature fruits were analysed for their nutritional composition, molecular characterization, fruit characters and potential yield across selected lines. Damage caused by the fruit and shoot borers (FSB) were assessed by monitoring frequency of damaged fruits. The number of fruits per plant and weight are also being noted. On the other hand, mature fruits were saved for seed production for future plantings, storage and for further studies. The seeds produced will be used for future planting seasons, and for storage of the materials for further studies if still necessary. The information gathered from the confined trial will be compiled and used for the regulatory dossier that will be submitted to the National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines (NCBP) and the Bureau of Plant Industry when applying for the multi-location trials, which is the next phase of the project.



PHOTO BY ZB JULIANO

Harvested FSBR Eggplant fruits are placed in net bags and stored in labeled boxes before transporting them to the laboratory for analysis.

Prior to transplanting of the biotech eggplants in the confined trial, the seedlings were grown inside the contained trial BL2 facility, also located in the UPLB CSC-IPB premises. During the contained trial, the FSBR eggplants were checked for the presence of the Bt protein through qualitative ELISA. The eggplants were then transplanted to the confined trial site last December 21, 2007 to assess the

horticultural performance and bioefficacy against FSB under field conditions.

The harvesting activities were done under the supervision of the UPLB Institutional Biosafety Committee and the Post-entry Quarantine Services of the Bureau of Plant Industry. After the assessment, the fruits were disposed by chopping, boiling, and burying them inside the trial site. (ZB Juliano)



PHOTO BY ZB JULIANO

Dr. Desiree M. Hautea (left), ASBP/II SEAsia Regional Coordinator, gives a background of the PRSV-R Papaya Project to Barney Popkin, USAID/ANE Environmental Protection Specialist, during the USAID officials' visit to CSC-IPB, UPLB.

USAID Expert Evaluates CFT Compliance to IEEs

Dr. Barney Popkin, Environmental Protection Specialist at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Asia & Near East Bureau, visited the confined trial sites of biotech papaya and eggplant at Barangay Paciano Rizal, Bay, Laguna on March 6, 2008 with USAID Philippines staff Mr. Oliver Agoncillo and Ms. Teresina Calabia. Dr. Popkin commended the project team after viewing the site and the exhibits that the project team had set-up.

The visit was part of the monitoring inspection of Mr. Popkin pertaining to conditions stated in the approved USAID Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) on the confined trials. Among the IEE conditions that he reviewed include those related to the application of agro-chemicals, handling of materials, gene flow, and disposal of plant parts.

Before going to the confined trial site, Drs. Randy Hautea and Desiree Hautea presented the project overview and status of activities to Dr. Popkin, including highlights and activity milestones. (VRLee and VMCruz)

USDA Officials Visit PRSV-R Papaya and FSBR Eggplant

Four officials of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) visited the Institute of Plant Breeding (IPB) last February 6, 2008 to familiarize themselves on the Institute's Biotechnology Program and see the progress of the PRSV-R Papaya and FSBR Eggplant projects.

Ms. Emiko Purdy, Agricultural Counselor, Mr. David Wolf, Agricultural Attache, Mr. Jim Dever, Area Director for Southeast Asia, Foreign Agricultural Service and Mr. Perfecto Corpuz, Agricultural Specialist of USDA, were welcomed by Dr. Jose E. Hernandez, Director, Crops Science Cluster (CSC) and Institute of Plant Breeding (IPB). Dr. Hernandez briefed the four officials about the Institute and its programs. During their discussion, the group was joined by Dr. Emil Q. Javier, President, National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) and IPB founding director.

The visitors, together with Drs. Javier and Hernandez, then proceeded to the PRSV-R Papaya and FSBR Eggplant confined trial sites. Dr. Desiree M. Hautea, ABSPII Regional Coordinator for Southeast Asia and Product Manager of PRSV-R Papaya and FSBR Eggplant, briefed the guests about the two projects. Dr. Randy A. Hautea, Global Coordinator, International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) and collaborator of the projects, emphasized the contributions of the US and Philippine governments in the success of the projects. He pointed out that the US government gave support through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) while the Philippine government supported the PRSV-R Papaya Project through the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry



PHOTO BY ZB JULIANO

Ms. Lolita M. Dolores (extreme left) and Dr. Filomena Sta. Cruz (second from right), PRSV-R Papaya Activity Leaders, explain to USDA visitors activities inside the BL2 Greenhouse.

and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD).

The visitors were then led inside the FSBR Eggplant confined trial site. Dr. Josefina O. Narciso, FSBR Eggplant Project Leader explained that the eggplant is the leading vegetable crop in the Philippines, planted to more than 20,000 hectares. She further explained that the Bt eggplant is a collaborative project among Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Co. Ltd. (Mahyco) based in India, UPLB-IPB and other ABSPII consortium partners. Mahyco's Bt eggplant inbred line carrying the Bt *cry1AC* gene was used as donor parent line to improve Philippine eggplant

varieties such as Mistisa, Dumaguete Long Purple (DLP), Casino and Mara.

Dr. Pablito M. Magdalita, Project Leader, and Ms. Lolita Dolores, Activity Leader, PRSV-R Papaya Project showed seedlings inside the Biological Level 2 (BL2) greenhouse that were being prepared for the second confined trial.

Dean Candida B. Adalla of the College of Agriculture and consultant of the FSBR Eggplant project, UPLB-IBC Member Dr. Severina B. Exconde, and BPI-PQS representative Ms. Ma. Lorelie U. Agbagala were also present during the visit. (VRG Lee)

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Margarito B. Teves and the former Secretary of Agriculture Domingo F. Panganiban signed the Public Law (PL) 480 Loan Agreement between the United States and Philippines inside the Biological Level 2 (BL2) greenhouse of PRSV-R Papaya project.

The program emceed by Ms. Teresina Calabia, Cognizant Technical Officer of USAID Philippines, focused on the significant partnerships between the United States and the Philippines in developing biotech products that would benefit the Filipinos. Dr. Randy A. Hautea, Global Coordinator, International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), one of the PRSV-R Papaya's funding agencies and collaborator of both the PRSV-R Papaya and FSBR Eggplant projects, explained the degree of

biotech crop adoption in the Philippines and the progress of the UPLB projects highlighting the contributions made by USAID in research and development (R&D), capacity building and biotech policy development activities. He pointed out that the Philippines now ranks 10th among the countries that grow biotech crops. Dr. Patricio S. Faylon, Executive Director, Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD) further explained the Philippine government's contribution and involvement through PCARRD in the PRSV-R Papaya project.

The Ambassador in her response thanked the UPLB officials and collaborators of the projects for the warm reception. "I am glad that the small contribution of the US

government is helping in the development and commercialization of public-sector developed biotech products that will benefit many Filipinos. When I visited the Institute in 2006, I saw the papaya plants in the contained facility and now it is in the field. I am amazed that something great would come out from something so small. Biotech is a cutting edge technology and I can't wait to be back to UPLB soon and see the papaya harvests. I commend the efforts being made by the Filipino scientists", the Ambassador said.

The Ambassador and her party which included USAID, (Dr. Elzadia Washington, Deputy Mission Director, Mr. Daniel Moore, Chief, Energy and Environment Office,

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USAID EGAT Biotechnology Advisor Visits IPB



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Dr. Xiomara Sinisterra (ninth from left) visited the FSRB Eggplants and PRSV-R Papaya confined trial sites in UPLB. Also present were Dr. Emiliana N. Bernardo (fifth from right) and Dr. Romeo S. Rejesus (third from right) of the UPLB IBC, and Ms. Laurie Salumbides (fourth from right) and Mr. Arnel Banasihan (second from right) of BPI-PQS. (Weeway)

Dr. Xiomara Sinisterra of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Washington visited the Crop Science Cluster-Institute of Plant Breeding (CSC-IPB) in the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) last February 12, 2008, where the USAID supported Fruit and Shoot Borer Resistant Eggplant (FSBR) Eggplant and Papaya Ringspot Virus-Resistant Papaya (PRSV-R) Papaya projects' trial sites are located.

Dr. Sinisterra is the Biotechnology Advisor of the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade (EGAT), USAID Washington which is one of the principal supporters of the above-mentioned projects. During her stay, she specifically visited the confined trials of the FSBR Eggplant, and the PRSV-R Papaya projects. Project leaders Dr. Josefina O. Narciso and Dr. Pablito M. Magdalita as well as Team Leader Dr. Desiree M. Hautea welcomed her and gave her a short

briefing about the on-going trials. After visiting the field, Dr. Sinisterra met with the study leaders of both projects for detailed discussions and consultation.

Aside from the said meetings, a courtesy call to CSC-IPB Director Dr. Jose E. Hernandez was also made. Dr. Sinisterra also met UPLB Institutional Biosafety Committee members Drs. Emiliana N. Bernardo and Romeo S. Rejesus to discuss about the regulatory processes required in the Philippines, specifically for the USAID supported projects in CSC-IPB.

The confined trial sites of both projects consist of several studies to assess the performance of the biotechnology materials under natural environmental conditions. Horticultural characteristics and bioefficacy are also being assessed. These will help pave the way for the projects' next phase which is the multi-location trials. (ZB Juliano and VMCruz)

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and Ms. Teresina Calabria), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (Mr. David Wolf, Agricultural Attache, and Mr. Perfecto Corpuz, Agricultural Specialist) and US Embassy officials (Dr. Daniel Gedacht, Second Secretary-Vice Consul) also viewed the exhibits about the two biotech projects and other IPB activities. Dr. Desiree M. Hautea, ABSP II Regional Coordinator for Southeast Asia and Product Manager of PRSV-R Papaya and FSBR Eggplant projects briefed them on the status of product research and development.

Before the program ended, Dr. Hernandez

presented the Ambassador with IPB-developed Hibiscus hybrids, as IPB's token of appreciation for her continued support to the biotech projects.

Other UPLB key officials and representatives of government regulatory bodies who attended the program included Dr. Candida B. Adalla, Dean, College of Agriculture, Dr. Emiliana N. Bernardo, Member, UPLB Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) and Ms. Merle B. Palacpac, Chief, Plant Quarantine Service of the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI-PQS). (VRG Lee and VMV Cruz)

March 2008, Volume IV Number 1

Editorial Team

Randy A. Hautea
Desiree M. Hautea
Mariechel J. Navarro
Von Mark V. Cruz
Rhodora R. Aldemita

Writers/Contributors

Zabrina B. Juliano
Virma Rea G. Lee
Von Mark V. Cruz

Photographers

Zabrina B. Juliano
Von Mark V. Cruz

Design and Layout

Clement Dionglay

SOUTHEAST ASIA OFFICE

Dr. Desiree M. Hautea
Regional Coordinator
Institute of Plant Breeding
University of the Philippines Los Baños
College 4031 Laguna Philippines
Telefax: +63 49 5365140

US OFFICE

International Programs
213 Rice Hall, Cornell University
Ithaca, New York 14853 USA
Tel.: +1 607 2556357
Fax: +1 607 2558186
Email: absp2@cornell.edu

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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