

Sharing rice, nurturing people's lives

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The parable of the sower depicts the resilience of seeds to grow and bear fruit. Some seeds may fall on unplowed, unturned, hard and parched ground; some on fertile and nutrient-rich soils to produce a hundredfold more.

Rice seeds are no exemption; they perform differently in various conditions. The best ones, however, adapt to any rice-growing environment, bear many grains, and become food on the table to sustain lives.

Rice varieties do adapt to diverse ecosystem- and stress-oriented environments as attested by the nursery results and monitoring results of the International Network for Genetic Evaluation of Rice (INGER).

INGER is a global partnership among the international agricultural research centers (IARCs) and the national agricultural research and extension systems (NARES). Coordinated by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the network allows worldwide sharing of rice germplasm and genetic information, thus, different rices are grown in different parts of the world, including the Philippines.

INGER influence in Philippine rices

For instance, through the INGER, the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) has access and link to accelerate the genetic improvement of Philippine rices.

Established in 1985, PhilRice commercially released six rice varieties adapted to various ecosystems that have in their pedigree, lines selected from the INGER trials, Thelma Padolina, PhilRice plant breeder and chief science research specialist stated. These are PSB Rc7 (Banahaw) — for upland areas; PSB Rc24 (Cagayan), Rc42 Baliwag) — both for rainfed dry-seeded; PSB Rc56 (Dapitan), Rc66 (Agusan) — for irrigated lowland; and PSB90 (Buguey) — for saline-prone areas.

INGER provides access to diverse materials that are useful in improving the genetic structure of Philippine rice varieties, averred Padolina. Since 1977, 55 rice varieties with INGER lines in their pedigree have been released in the Philippines. These are our country's benefits from using INGER elite rice genetic materials, nursery results, monitoring reports, and trainings the breeder added.

Promising Philippine rices

As the INGER mechanism provides member-countries free access to rice germplasm, other countries likewise benefits from Philippine rice races shared through the network.

Based on recent INGER reports, PR26679-PJ3-1 performed best in Egypt, China, and Cambodia. Also, in China, South Korea, and Malaysia, PR26768-PJ (T)-4C was reported to be performing well in nursery trials, stated Padolina.

PR 26873-PJ21-2-1, released in 2005 as NSIC Rc134 (Tubigan 4) in the Philippines was reported as the overall best yielder across all the 25 trial sites of INGER-member-countries in the same year. Its yield performance and other agronomic characteristics were also acceptable in 15 of 25 trial sites, declared Padolina.

Philippine rices for the world

Though not through exports, Philippine varieties have been consumed by other people in their locality.

For instance is the OMF1-1 rice (MRC19399) introduced in Vietnam through the INGER and released in 2002. OMF1-1 is Philippine-bred PSB Rc8 or *Talavera* commercially released in 1992.

Filipinos may locally call PSB Rc54 (IR60819-34-2-1) as *Abra*, named after the mighty river in Abra province, but to East Timorese they call it *Nakroma*.

PSB Rc54 was introduced in East Timor in 2005 along with other rice varieties and food crops through the Seeds of Life project funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

The seeds were the first shots of the young country toward achieving food self-sufficiency. The rice varieties, in particular were hoped to adapt well in East Timor having the same climatic conditions as in the Philippines. In 2007, PSB Rc54 was commercially released in East Timor for general cultivation of its farmers. This made this Philippine-bred variety a forever part of the East Timorese's daily lives.

As Philippine rice varieties are shared, sown, and bear many grains in other countries, they will continue to bring hope and nurture people's daily lives.