



DA-PhilRice-IRRI Collaboration For rice research and development

Heirloom rice

Raising productivity and enriching the legacy of traditional rice varieties by empowering indigenous communities in unfavorable rice ecosystems

The Heirloom Rice Project is an initiative under the DA-PhilRice-IRRI Collaboration. The project aims to enhance the productivity of and enrich the legacy of heirloom or traditional rice through empowered indigenous communities in unfavorable rice-based ecosystems.

Heirloom rice varieties are handed down for several generations and are grown by small landholders. There is high demand for these varieties, which thus command higher prices in both local and international markets.

Growing heirloom rice holds the promise of becoming a remarkable endeavor for culturally rich communities in isolated regions of the world, particularly the hinterlands of Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

Heirloom rice in the Philippines

Heirloom rice varieties are mostly grown in the Cordilleras, near the northern tip of the country, and in certain regions down south, such as the Arakan Valley Complex and around Lake Sebu in Cotabato.



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Since 2005, the Rice Terraces Farmers Cooperative has exported about 100 metric tons of grain from heirloom varieties, such as Tinawon and Unoy, to the U.S. market. This includes a 2012 shipment of 24.4 metric tons valued at PHP 1.3 million. Production of heirloom rice varieties has increased by almost 80% in 6 years.

Objectives

1. Characterize existing heirloom or traditional varieties or landraces and modern climate-resilient varieties in selected provinces.
2. Enhance local capacity and enterprise-building in farming communities.
3. Identify opportunities for adding value and creating market linkages for heirloom or traditional rice varieties.

Updates

- A major focus was on product development through varietal characterization, in which nutrition, texture or sensory profiles, grain quality, susceptibility to pest, tolerance for drought, and other biological assays established the unique traits of 55 and 25 traditional rice varieties and their identified variants from the Cordillera region and North Cotabato, respectively.
- A season-long Farmers' Field School for members of indigenous farming communities was held, as were other training activities and workshops that gave the farmers exposure to recommended farming practices as well as added to their knowledge of management options before, during, and after rice production.
- The project also helped farmers develop entrepreneurial skills and identify opportunities for value addition (packaging and branding) and market linkages for premium heirloom rice. To provide traceability and protection for these varieties, selected heirloom rice from Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, and Mountain Province were prioritized for geographical indication (GI) registration.
- Other project outputs include a catalogue of varieties, a community registry, and a code of practice.

Partners

Department of Agriculture
DA-Bureau of Agricultural Research
DA-Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice)
DA-Bureau of Plant Industry
DA-Cordillera Administrative Region
DA-Region XII
RICE, Inc.
Consortium for Unfavorable Rice Environments
International Rice Research Institute

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November 2016

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