

CFC/ISO/20: A model sugarcane project

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The International Sugar Organization and the Common Fund for Commodities heaped praise on the recently concluded CFC/ISO/20: Sugarcane Variety Improvement in Southeast Asia and the Pacific project, indicating that both institutions consider the program a worthy investment.

"For us in the ISO, and I think also for our colleagues in the Common Fund, this project will be a showcase and a reference project for others to follow," ISO Executive Director Dr. Peter Baron said. He added that "this project is a shining example of the excellent and frictionless cooperation between all parties involved, demonstrating how smoothly and efficiently complex projects can be carried out and executed with success."

CFC Project Manager Eltha Brown, for her part, says the CFC is "very pleased with the project outcome." She noted the program's impact on sugarcane planters and breeders across the region.

Endorsed by the ISO in 2000, CFC/ISO/20 is one of nine sugar development programs funded by CFC. Among other projects financed by the United Nation's established agency is the promotion of cane-based alcohol as additive gasoline, sugar waste treatment, co-cropping sweet sorghum with sugarcane, and enhancing the viability of small Caribbean sugar industries to meet global challenges. Its smaller fast-track programs include a baseline study on electricity co-generation, small-scale sweetener production, a study on integrating small-scale sweetener production, a study on integrating small-scale sugar farmers into the production system, and a symposium on the challenges and opportunities for organic sugar.

After assessing project results against previously set targets, Brown found that "Overall, from a technical perspective, the project met all, and in some cases, exceeded the targets." She lauded member-countries Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand for successfully implementing components such as sugarcane germplasm exchange, characterization of germplasm collections, and disease quarantine and indexing. Other accomplishments include improved technologies for sugarcane breeding, research infrastructure, as well as human resources.

She also highlighted the lessons learned from the 5-year program. CFC/ISO/20, for one, proved that with appropriate planning and management tools, a project can be successfully implemented in 5 countries at different levels of development in terms of their economy in general, and the sugar industry in particular. In the developmental area, she said the project demonstrated that in defining activities, it is important to assess and address the development needs of the least advanced participants.

According to Dr. Baron, the lessons learned and results disseminated to participating countries "mean that for the thousands and thousands of cane growers, the future looks a bit brighter because of the better productivity and quality of cane brought about by the research in the project. The benefits from the project will be felt for many, many years to come."

Both the CFC and the ISO recognized the role of PHILSURIN for steering the project toward a successful completion. "The project carried out with PHILSURIN as the Project Executing Agency is another example to show that the Philippines is again taking a lead role in the region," Dr. Baron said.