

Sugar-producing countries note lessons learned from PHILSURIN, CFC/ISO/20

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Expect more sugarcane researchers from Asia and elsewhere in the world to come to the Philippines for training on research and development in the next few years.

This after groundbreaking studies spearheaded by the Philippine Sugar Research Institute Foundation, Inc. (PHILSURIN) impressed over 30 foreign sugar experts who participated in the recent International Sugar Development Forum and CFC/ISO/20 Project Results Dissemination Workshop.

"Many of the participants, especially from African and Latin American countries, have approached me and expressed their plan to send their researchers to train here," PHILSURIN Director General and CFC/ISO/20 Project Manager Leon M. Arceo said.

Participants from sugarcane-growing countries which are not part of the CFC/ISO/20 consortium such as Brazil, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Sudan, Swaziland and Tanzania highlighted the lessons they learned from various presentations, as well as visits to the Institute of Plant Breeding in the University of the Philippines – Los Banos, the PHILSURIN Experiment Station in Victorias City, Negros Occidental, and several Mill District Development Councils.

"The tour in Negros has been an eye-opener. I have taken with me useful information for my research," Dr. Jean Claude Autrey, Director of the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute said. He added that "the Forum and the Workshop have been a resounding success not only on the organizational side, but also on the scientific and technical aspects."

Dr. Autrey also mentioned that he will organize his team, and return to the Philippines soon to further study technologies such as Infracana, an automated cane analyzer he saw at the First Farmers MDDC. Sugarcane variety exchange with PHILSURIN is another project which he plans to pursue.

Like Dr. Audrey, Swaziland Sugar Association Crop Agronomist Bernardo Mfundo Shongwe is also interested in exchanging sugarcane varieties with PHILSURIN to boost his country's sugar gene bank. He also noted PHILSURIN's approach which responds to sugarcane planters' specific needs. Swaziland, he says, implements the same effective strategy.

Jamaica Sugar Industry Research Institute Agronomist Uriel Green, on the other hand, is looking forward to studying CANEPOINT (Philippine Sugarcane Genetic Resources Data and Information Management System), CFC/ISO/20's showcase project which is the first of its kind in the world. "We have been working on something similar to this, but have not really achieved something as comprehensive and complete as what PHILSURIN has developed," Mr. Green said.

Mr. Arceo welcomed the sugarcane experts' requests, saying PHILSURIN will collaborate with them on various areas of sugar research and development. "We will become the training hub for sugar-producing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America."

CFC/ISO/20 member countries include Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. Project financier Common Fund for Commodities however, felt that successful implementation of the project warrants the organization of an event that would enable the sharing of project results with a wider set of sugarcane producing countries.

"To ensure the maximum dissemination of results and accomplishments, we decided not to limit the event to CFC/ISO/20 members. We invited representatives from 16 sugar-producing countries to participate in the workshop," Mr. Arceo said. A key achievement of the CFC/ISO/20 project is the fact that it has increased the flow of sugarcane technology and know-how among participating countries.