

## **Sugar forum delegates visit PHILSURIN experiment station**

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On the Bacolod leg of the 5-day International Sugar Development Forum and the CFC/ISO/20 Project Results Dissemination Workshop, PHILSURIN shared its best kept secrets with over 30 foreign sugar experts from 16 countries.

"The secret behind Philippine sugar's success is the active involvement of stakeholders through the Mill District Development Councils. They define their own problems, decide which projects to prioritize, outline methodologies and craft solutions that would best address their needs," PHILSURIN Director General and CFC/ISO/20 Project Manager Leon M. Arceo said in a presentation on the role of MDDCs in accelerating the adoption of improved technologies.

Acknowledged as PHILSURIN's backbone, 26 MDDCs speed up the delivery of services to beneficiaries all over the country. Activities in the MDDCs, Mr. Arceo says include the propagation and dispersal of high yielding sugarcane varieties, variety testing, soil rejuvenation, disease prevention, pest control, publications, as well as seminars and farm tours for planters.

With trips to the PHILSURIN Experiment Station, the Hawaiian Philippines Company (Silay-Saravia) MDDC and First Farmers in Negros Occidental, participants observed firsthand the successes achieved by the country's research, development and extension arm funded by sugar producers.

They visited the Common Fund for Commodities-funded Biotechnology Laboratory where PHILSURIN's breeders, microbiologists and pathologists briefed them on the advances made in breeding such as DNA fingerprinting and the utilization of molecular markers.

Microbiologist Lucille Villegas treated participants to a sneak preview of PHILSURIN's latest opus, the development of a biofertilizer which carries microorganisms which help sugarcane increase their nutrient uptake. With the tests having run over eight years and showing promising results, the institute is set to commercialize the fertilizer soon.

Also part of the group's itinerary were briefings on PHILSURIN's other projects including the Hot Water Treatment facility, the development of small farm machinery, sugarcane micropropagation, the biological control of the sugarcane borer using *Trichogramma chilonis*, the Geographical Information System, as well as soil analysis and recommended applications of fertilizer.

As with researchers from Thailand, China, and Africa who toured PHILSURIN's Experiment Station in recent years, many of the forum's delegates expressed interest in adopting a number of the organization's sugar technologies.