

Mountain Province rice varieties to be exported to US

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BONTOC, Mountain Province – After successfully helping Ifugao and Kalinga provinces export their native rice varieties to the United States, the Cordillera Heirloom Rice Project hopes to do the same with rice varieties from the Mountain Province.

At least 13 of the 30 native rice varieties grown from the rice terraces here were identified for export by the National Irrigation Administration and the Revitalize Indigenous Cordillera Entrepreneur (RICE).

Eighth Wonder Inc. and RICE are the marketing arm of CHRP, which had helped export up to 20 metric tons of native rice from Kalinga and Ifugao last year to gourmet shops and restaurants in 15 states in the US. In 2006, they had exported seven tons.

The rice varieties would be marketed by CHRP under one trade name known as "Ginolot." It will supplement the other CHRP's varieties like the Tinawon Fancy and White, Kalinga Unoy and Ulikan Red.

Participating towns included Sagada, Bontoc, Barlig, Bauko, Besao, Natonin, Sadanga and Tadian. CHRP conducted field consultations with the farmers in these towns before embarking on the project.

NIA regional director Abraham Akilit said exporting of the native rice varieties is expected to revitalize the *payew* or the rice terraces in the Mountain Province.

Many of the native rice varieties, though far more delicious, are harvested only once a year and are meant only for sustenance of the villagers.

One thing going for them, Akilit said, was that these varieties are organic, which means that they are grown with no chemical pesticides and fertilizers. In most of these *payews*, only sunflower leaves and stalks were used as mulch.

Akilit said that this type of cultivation made the *payew* sustainable for centuries. He said that the traditional way is needed if the Mountain Province wanted to preserve their remaining forests.

Akilit said that many of the *payews*, particularly in the low-lying towns, were already planted with commercial varieties which were already applied with chemical inputs.

He said that they needed to remain in fallow, or the ground was left to remain idle, for at least three years before they could be included in the CHRP "Ginolot" variety. -

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