

Cordillera mountain rice farmers get special day at IRRI



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Farmers, extension officers, and local government units from the [upland rice-growing areas](#) in the [Cordillera](#) region of northern Philippines visited the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in [Los Baños](#) for a series of field day activities to share ideas to help improve their rice production.

About 40 farmers, extension officers, municipal and provincial agriculturists, and project staff from the Cordillera provinces of [Mountain Province](#), [Kalinga](#), and [Ifugao](#) attended.



Farmers from Cordillera, Philippines (Mountain Province, Ifugao, and Kalinga) participated in mini-seminars, exhibits, and a forum on various problems affecting their rice production at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

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"We organized this activity because we felt that rice farmers in the hill and mountain areas, which are often stress-prone environments for rice, could benefit from learning about IRRI's activities such as the development of stress-tolerant rice varieties and use of post harvest tools," said [Dr. David Johnson](#), IRRI's coordinator of the [Consortium for Unfavorable Rice Environments \(CURE\)](#).

"The problems of farmers in the hill and mountain areas don't get highlighted as much as their counterparts in the lowlands so we wanted to tackle some of these during the series of farmer field day activities," he added.

The lineup of activities included mini-seminars, exhibits, and a forum on various problems affecting rice farmers such as pests and diseases, postharvest challenges, and fertilizer management. Farmers and scientists discussed the most pressing concerns in

the hill and mountain areas such as "giant" earth worms, rice blast, rodent control, and poor quality and availability of seeds – and how to address them.

The farmers attending the field day were given farmer kits that included [IRRI Super Bags](#) – special airtight bags that protect stored rice. IRRI Super Bags can improve the recovery of stored grain by 10%, extend the germination life of seed for planting from 6 to 12 months, and control insect grain pests without chemicals.

"Rice production can be challenging for farmers in the upland or mountain areas because of likely occurrence of pests, weeds, and diseases so varieties that can withstand these problems or are more tolerant are badly needed," said Dr. Johnson.

"There's also a high incidence of problems related to soil fertility," he added. "But, probably, the most serious constraints to rice farming in these areas are drought and shortage of irrigation water.

"For these reasons, farmers in the hill and mountain areas are at greater risk of not producing enough food to feed themselves and their communities – so we need to find ways to help them reduce risk and increase their rice production. Working closely with them to demonstrate and test technologies thoroughly first helps increase adoption rates of helpful technologies."

Farmers attending the field day were shown IRRI's work on rice varieties, seed health management, postharvest technologies, and demonstrations of ecological engineering to better manage pests with less insecticides.

Farmers were also keenly interested to see heritage rice varieties from the Cordillera region that are conserved at the [International Rice Genebank](#). [IRRI shares seed](#) conserved in the International Rice Genebank.

"The Cordillera region in the Philippines has traditionally been an important rice-producing area in the country, occupying a special place even in export markets," said Dr. Johnson. "We'd like to help by providing technologies to help this local rice-producing region continue to thrive and flourish."

"We're also happy to have Dante Delima, who is Assistant Secretary and National Coordinator for the Philippine Rice Program, to have graced this important activity," he adds.

IRRI's work with CURE is supported by the [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) and is done in collaboration in the Philippines with local government, farmer leaders and groups from Kalinga, Mountain Province, and Ifugao; and the [Philippine Rice Research Institute](#), through the [Department of Agriculture](#) project [Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project \(CHARMP2\)](#).

Fast facts

- Upland rice production in hill and mountain areas is challenging because of the likely occurrence of pests, weeds, and diseases; soil problems; and water availability.
- IRRI held a special field day for upland rice farmers to share with them potential ways to improve their rice production and tackle their problems.
- IRRI helps rice farming communities in stress-prone areas through its Consortium for Unfavorable Rice

Environments (CURE).

Resources

- [Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project](#)
- [The Seedkeeper's Treasure](#) (*Rice Today*, Jul-Sep 2010)
- [Preserving the Vanishing Culture of the Ifugao \(YouTube video\)](#)

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