

News Update
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Peasants and Scientists forged strong partnership towards genuine rural development

On July 30 to August 1, 2014 the 2nd National Peasants-Scientists Conference (NPSC) with the theme *“Forging Strong Partnership and Exchanges for the Advancement of a Farmer-led Agricultural Research and Practices towards Genuine Rural Development”* was successfully held in Quezon City, Philippines. The NPSC aims to unite peasants and scientists to forge a strong partnership and exchanges to advance a farmer-led agricultural research and practices towards genuine rural development.



One hundred forty two (142) participants from various parts of the country joined the conference sponsored by Resist Agrochemical TNCs (RESIST) with support from Action Solidarity Tiers Monde (ASTM) and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC).

The session started on July 30. Rafael “Ka Paeng” Mariano, national chairperson of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas or Peasant Movement of the Philippines (KMP) gave the welcome remarks. He traced the background of peasant-scientist cooperation going back to the First



National Peasant-Scientist Conference held on September 2002. He said that science and technology should serve the people and not the few who rake in billions of profits at the expense of the people’s welfare and interests. He explained the need for a science and technology which is geared towards genuine agricultural development and farmer-led agricultural research that serves the objectives of genuine land reform and national industrialization programs.

Ms. Rosario Bella Guzman, Executive Editor of the IBON Foundation, talked on “Agrarian Reform and Corporate Agriculture.” She stressed how a handful of transnational corporations (TNCs) dominate the global food industry. She explained how corporate agriculture, through globalization, subverted agrarian reform. She closed with a challenge to the audience, “How do we fight it?”

Dr. Chito Medina of Farmer and Scientist for the Development of Agriculture (MASIPAG) discussed “Farmer-Led Agricultural Research and Practice towards Genuine Rural Development.” He presented a brief history of peasant-scientist partnership. Dr. Medina stressed that since 1986 MASIPAG has been practicing a “people-led research” wherein scientists are the ones who adapt to the concrete practices of farmers. Dr. Medina cited the gains of MASIPAG in empowering small Filipino farmers.



Ms. Finesa Cosico of Advocates of Science and Technology for the People (AGHAM) started her talk on “Food Security and Self-Sufficiency and Agricultural Modernization” by discussing the current state and trajectory of Philippine agriculture. She highlighted the dismal condition of Philippine agricultural technology and mechanization. Ms. Cosico ended her input with a hopeful discussion of the relation of agricultural modernization and overall national industrialization pointing out that the former is the only proper basis of any hope for the latter.



Ms. Estrella Catarata, Executive Director of the Philippine Network of Food Security Programmes (PNFSP) talked about “Addressing Climate Change through Community-Based Initiatives.” Ms. Catarata cited several anecdotes of personal experiences with farmers themselves as she explained the more widespread dangers of the change of cropping season, subsequent change in crops and cropping patterns, infestation of pests and diseases and reduced overall productivity of farmers in general. She discussed how farmers’ respond to these challenges.

Dr. Gene Nisperos, national vice-chairperson of the Health Alliance for Democracy (HEAD) started a brief comparison of two medicinal practices: traditional and western. This was

followed by discussing familiar traditional medicinal concepts. Wittingly, Dr. Nisperos dispel the myth of any benefit that Golden Rice claims.

Lastly, Ka Paeng Mariano talked about “Advancing the Genuine Land Reform Movement.” Ka Paeng reiterated that the struggle of the peasantry for land is not only for social justice but also for economic development, and not only of the farmers but of the Filipino people. He enumerated some of the victories of the peasant movement all over the country, hailing various regional chapters of KMP and its affiliate organizations.

Simultaneous workshops

On July 31, simultaneous workshops were held on the following topics: (1) *Farmer-led agricultural researches and practices towards genuine rural development*; (2) *Agricultural modernization to accelerate agricultural productivity geared towards national industrialization*; (3) *Climate change and agriculture adopting pro-people climate resilient varieties and agricultural program*; (4) *Indigenous and traditional community health practices*; and (5) *Advancing the genuine land reform movement*.

The conference was so honoured to have Engineer Igmedio Tabianan and Prof. Edward Deveza who humbly shared their knowledge and experiences on peasants and scientists partnership. Engineer Tabianan, is an “Outstanding Agricultural Engineer for Agricultural and Rural Development” as proclaimed by the Philippine Society of Agricultural Engineers (PSAE) last February 2014. Prof. Deveza, is a Physicist from the University of the Philippines (UP) in Diliman, Quezon City. He is also a scientist who gives assistance to farmers in matters about science and technology.



Rep. Fernando Hicap of the Anakpawis Partylist talked about “Advocacy Work towards Genuine Rural Development.” Rep. Hicap presented proposed bills for genuine rural development that Anakpawis Partylist sponsored and co-sponsored in the Congress such as the following: Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARB) or House Bill (HB) 252, Rice Industry Development Act (RIDA) or HB 4252, Accelerated Irrigation Act , GMO-Free Food and Agriculture Act and the Repeal Presidential Decree (PD) 1620. Cong. Hicap pointed out that the passage of these bills would require the

highest political readiness which could only be achieved by strengthening people’s organizations.

