

ISAAA Joins Celebration of National Biotechnology Week 2026



(From left to right) Dr. Jaime A. Manalo IV, Scientist II and Head of the Socioeconomic Division at the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), leads the panel discussion during the hybrid forum, joined by Ms. Agnes Catherine T. Miranda, CESO III, Director of the Department of Agriculture Climate Resilient Agriculture Office (DA-CRAO), and Dr. Leilani D. Pelegrina, Director of the Crops Research Division at DOST-PCAARRD.

Quezon City, September 30, 2026 — Hosted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the celebration of the National Biotechnology Week (NBW) 2026 concluded on September 24, 2026, at the DENR Multipurpose Hall, Quezon City with the forum *Cultivating Resilience: A Forum on Ag-Biotech Solutions for Climate-Smart Agriculture*. Organized by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), Inc. and the DA Biotech Program Office (DA-BPO), the forum promoted informed discussion on the impacts of climate change in Philippine agriculture and the role of biotechnology in building climate resilience.

Mr. Panfilo De Guzman, ISAAA Deputy Director, welcomed the participants, which included students from various schools, emphasizing this year's NBW theme, *Biotech para sa Kinabukasan: Kalikasan, Kalusugan, Kagandahan, Kabuhayan, at Kaunlaran*. "Climate-smart agriculture is an integrated framework designed to achieve three vital objectives: number one, sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and income to support growing communities; number two, adapting and building resilience of agricultural systems to climate shocks; and lastly, reducing environmental footprints," he said. "Achieving these ambitious goals requires more than good intentions and traditional methods. It demands cutting-edge innovations. These innovations can be created using modern biotechnology tools." Mr. De Guzman ended his opening remarks by noting that by

combining the holistic vision of climate-smart agriculture with the transformative power of biotechnology, a resilient, sustainable, and food-secured future can be built.

Ms. Agnes Catherine Miranda, Director of DA's Climate Resilience Office (CRAO) and Program Director of the Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA), gave an overview of the landscape of Philippine agriculture amidst climate change. "Agriculture has a lot of challenges now, and more than ever, it will be exacerbated because of the impacts of climate change," she opened. Ms. Miranda presented what is currently happening, especially with the occurring moderate to strong El Niño phenomenon. She then discussed how these changes are affecting our farmers, fisherfolk, and the broader agricultural sector, and how DA is responding through climate-resilient agriculture. "The important point is that the response brings together several DA programs and regional offices rather than relying on one single intervention. Together, these actions strengthen preparedness and provide support to farmers and fisherfolk as climate conditions become more challenging," she mentioned.

Dr. Leilani Pelegrina, Director of the Crops Research Division of DOST Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD), discussed agri-biotech solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation. She highlighted the R&D priorities and investments to advance productivity, strengthen resilience, create value, and contribute to the national resilience of the agriculture sector, zooming in on the crops sector. "As a climate-vulnerable country with high exposure to typhoons, drought, and major emerging pests and agricultural system concerns, our system must evolve rapidly, and agri-biotechnology enables us to respond to these pressures more efficiently by shortening breeding cycles, improving trait accuracy, and increasing the predictability of our outcomes. It allows us to move from reactive initiatives to proactive, data-driven commodity improvement and management," she highlighted. Dr. Pelegrina then discussed the DOST-PCAARRD's R&D initiatives related to agricultural biotechnology, including the Industry Strategic Science and Technology Programs (ISPs), Harmonized National Research and Development Agenda (HNRDA), and the Crops R&D Agenda covering priority initiatives across the supply and value chain.

The panel discussion, moderated by Dr. Jaime Manalo IV, Scientist II and Head of the Socioeconomic Division of the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), allowed further elucidation of key areas and answers to questions raised by the audience. The discussion included clarifications on the DA's AMIA Villages, which model productivity, adaptation, and mitigation; the DA's efforts to support farmers' mental well-being as they face the impacts of climate change; post-impact rehabilitation; the commercialization of robotics and AI-inspired technologies for farmers; and other smart approaches to agricultural reintegration. It also shed light on how these efforts and technologies directly translate to tangible outcomes for farmers in terms of productivity, empowerment, and quality of life.

The program ended with the awarding ceremonies for the *Biotech for Reel* Competition. The top three winners were Jeneniah Feticio, Roxanne Inocencio, Princess Navas, and Prince Garcia from San Mariano National High School; Carl Marco Amon; and Vianca Piñera, Maysha Villegas, Harly Bautista, Alexa Palicpic, and Marq Capacion from Cavite Science Integrated School - Regional Science High School. Their entries focused on cultured mushrooms and tofu, Bt crops, and CRISPR-Cas9, respectively. The winners received plaques and cash prizes. Special recognition awards were also given to three entries.

Mr. Pian Huelva delivered the closing remarks on behalf of Dr. Paul Limson, Director of DA-BPO. He closed the program by encouraging policymakers, experts, educators, and emerging young leaders to recognize their shared responsibility in shaping the future of Philippine agriculture.

The NBW was co-presented by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and Department of Education (DepEd).

About ISAAA

The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications, Inc. (ISAAA, Inc.) is a non-profit international organization that advances biotechnology knowledge by supporting transformative technologies, fostering impactful partnerships, and facilitating the development of science-based policies for food-secure communities.

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