

## DuPont partners with IRRI to boost rice yield

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Los Baños, Laguna – DuPont and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) announced a partnership to boost rice yields. The Scientific Know-How and Exchange Program (SKEP) establishes a new model for public-private sector collaboration that can benefit farmers and consumers while stimulating commercial innovation.

“This innovative and novel partnership will enable the leading public research institution in rice breeding and genetics to collaborate with the global leader in advanced plant genetics, breeding and product development to increase global rice productivity,” said William S. Niebur, vice president-DuPont Crop Genetics Research and Development. “By partnering with IRRI to strengthen and accelerate hybrid breeding efforts, we will enhance commercialization of higher-yielding hybrids in Asia to help meet global demand.”

The goal of the collaboration is to increase the rate of yield gains and to boost the quality and diversity of hybrid rice. Collaborating scientists will further develop the understanding of hybrid vigor in rice and will work to develop hybrids with better resistance to brown planthopper, a key insect pest. Aspects of this work will be shared publicly and will contribute to making better advanced breeding lines and hybrids available to rice breeders and farmers in Asia. The project will complement the IRRI-led Hybrid Rice Research and Development Consortium.

“Yield growth rates have slowed to less than 1 percent per year since 2000. If this trend is not reversed soon, future rice supplies will tighten and prices will rise,” said Achim Dobermann, IRRI deputy director for research. “A turnaround can only come through accelerated investment in rice research, including new, innovative public-private partnerships such as this one between IRRI and DuPont.”



The new program also establishes a scholarship program to support continued interest in agricultural research. DuPont business Pioneer Hi-Bred will fund a doctorate scholarship to educate a new generation of highly qualified rice scientists for the public and private sectors in Asia.

Both partners will benefit from SKEP through sharing facilities and germplasm as well as through interaction among scientists. The research collaboration builds on the strengths of both partners. IRRI has a large and diverse germplasm pool for hybrid development. Pioneer, on the other hand, will provide critical capabilities for molecular analysis, expertise in developing commercial-scale breeding strategy, and field locations for wider testing of IRRI and Pioneer hybrids.

IRRI is the world’s leading rice research and training center. Based in Los Baños, Laguna, it is an autonomous, nonprofit institution focused on improving the well-being of present and future generation of rice farmers and consumers, particularly those with low incomes, while preserving natural resources. IRRI is one of 15 centers supported, in part, by members of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and a range of other funding agencies.

On the other hand, Pioneer Hi-Bred, a DuPont business, is the world’s leading source of customized solutions for farmers, livestock producers and grain and oilseed processors. With headquarters in Des Moines, Iowa, Pioneer provides access to advanced plant genetics in nearly 70 countries.