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## Germany to help Iloilo increase rice prod'n

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ILOILO – This province is among several in the Philippines selected for the implementation of a German-government funded project that aims to increase rice production.

The project is “Better Rice Initiatives Asia – Fostering Agriculture and Rice Marketing by Improved Education and Rural Advisory Services (BRIA-FARMERS).”

Funded by the German government’s Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit or GIZ, BRIA-FARMERS aims to support small-holder rice farmers in increasing their income by optimizing their production techniques, marketing access and the strengthening of the whole rice value chain.

This shall contribute to make the Philippine rice sector more competitive, said Matthias Radek, chief advisor of GIZ.

On March 18 this year, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and GIZ signed a memorandum of agreement on BRIA-FARMERS which will run until November 2017.

Radek said the project is in collaboration with a wide range of partners such as the Agricultural Training Institute, Philippine Rice Research Institute, International Rice Research Institute, and private partners such as Yara and Bayer CropScience.

Six municipalities in Iloilo will be involved in the project – Leganes, Mina, Oton, Pototan, Santa Barbara, and Zarraga.

GIZ and partners considered several factors in choosing the project areas. These were:

- \* The municipalities have a majority of their agricultural areas planted with rice.
- \* Their yield per hectare is equal to or less than the provincial yield.
- \* There is a share of irrigated and rain-fed lowlands.

“Also, there should be the presence of local traders in the area for the marketing component and the involved municipalities shall have a positive record in terms of good housekeeping,” Radek said.

As part of BRIA-FARMERS, municipal agricultural officers, agricultural extension workers and field technicians of Iloilo underwent a training at the Western Visayas Integrated Agricultural Research Center in Jaro, Iloilo City from May 25 to 28.

“We aim at strengthening the agricultural extension service by offering specific modules such as the use of a learning technique called Adult Learning,” said Radek.

In the months to come, BRIA-FARMERS will offer a series of trainings with new training modules and new topics.

“The training is just a part of the whole package. We are also providing support to participating local governments. We will assist the municipalities establish demo plots, conduct field visits and improve the information drive for farmers,” said Radek. (DA-6/PN)

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