

PRESS RELEASE**Briones supports SEARCA's innovations in agricultural development; new SEARCA director introduced**

Los Baños, Laguna, November 4, 2019 – DepEd Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones presided the investiture of the new Southeast East Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) and Opening Ceremony of the 67th SEARCA Governing Board Meeting on October 28, 2019 held at the Umali Auditorium, the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), Laguna.

In her message, the Education Secretary emphasized the crucial role of SEARCA in the agricultural development of the country and the ASEAN region.

“The agricultural sector is vital to all ASEAN countries; we always assume that it is important. It is a major portion of our economy, but the latest statistics tend to tell us that in the ASEAN, the total contribution of agriculture to the GDP for 2017, for example, is consistently going down,” Briones said.

Furthermore, the Secretary expressed hopes for a stronger academe-industry-government partnership that will bolster agri-business development in the country and the entire Southeast Asian Region.

“I am very happy to learn that SEARCA in today and perhaps tomorrow’s meeting about their 11th five-year plan, will involve the strengthening of Academe-Industry-Government Interconnectivity to strengthen agricultural innovations and promote market-driven agri-business development in the Philippines and also the rest of the Southeast Asian Region,” Briones enthused.

Briones underscored that SEARCA and DepEd could rouse lasting passion and interest of learners towards agriculture by integrating researches into the basic education curriculum.

“For us in the Department of Education, it is most important to promote agriculture to our youth by integrating it in basic education programs. As an academic and as a faculty member of the University of the Philippines, I am aware of the great researches that are being conducted in SEARCA. However, I believe in teaching agriculture to college students at the tertiary level will be already a little too late. We have to develop a passion, interest, and excitement for agriculture at the basic education level. This can only be done if SEARCA researches are translated and integrated into the curriculum,” Briones added.

New SEARCA Director introduced

Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio assumed office on May 1, 2019 as the 11th Director of SEARCA since its establishment in November 1966 by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO).

In his investiture address, Dr. Gregorio expressed confidence in SEARCA’s organizational development plan at the beginning of his term.

“Today marks many new beginnings: a first governing board meeting here in a long time; Ma’am Liling’s first visit to SEARCA; a new chapter in my life as SEARCA’s 11th Director; and especially the start of the new 11th Five-Year Plan. The goal and implementation of the Plan, as well as the implications to society, makes it a daunting task. The “new normal” conditions in the Southeast Asia region compels SEARCA and all its key partners to initiate a paradigm shift to increase its visibility and coverage and deliver greater impact on the lives of the primary stakeholders – the farmers and farming families, including the youth. [And] so we hope to further this in the 11th Five-Year Plan.”

A distinguished Academician at the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) of the Philippines, and Professor at the Institute of Crop Science, College of Agriculture and Food Science (CAFS), University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), Dr. Gregorio also served the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) for almost 30 years, including a five-year stint as IRRI’s rice breeder in Africa based at the Africa Rice Centre station at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Nigeria from 2004-2009.

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