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SEARCA and Bayer Crop Science celebrate 20th year of Bt corn in the Philippines

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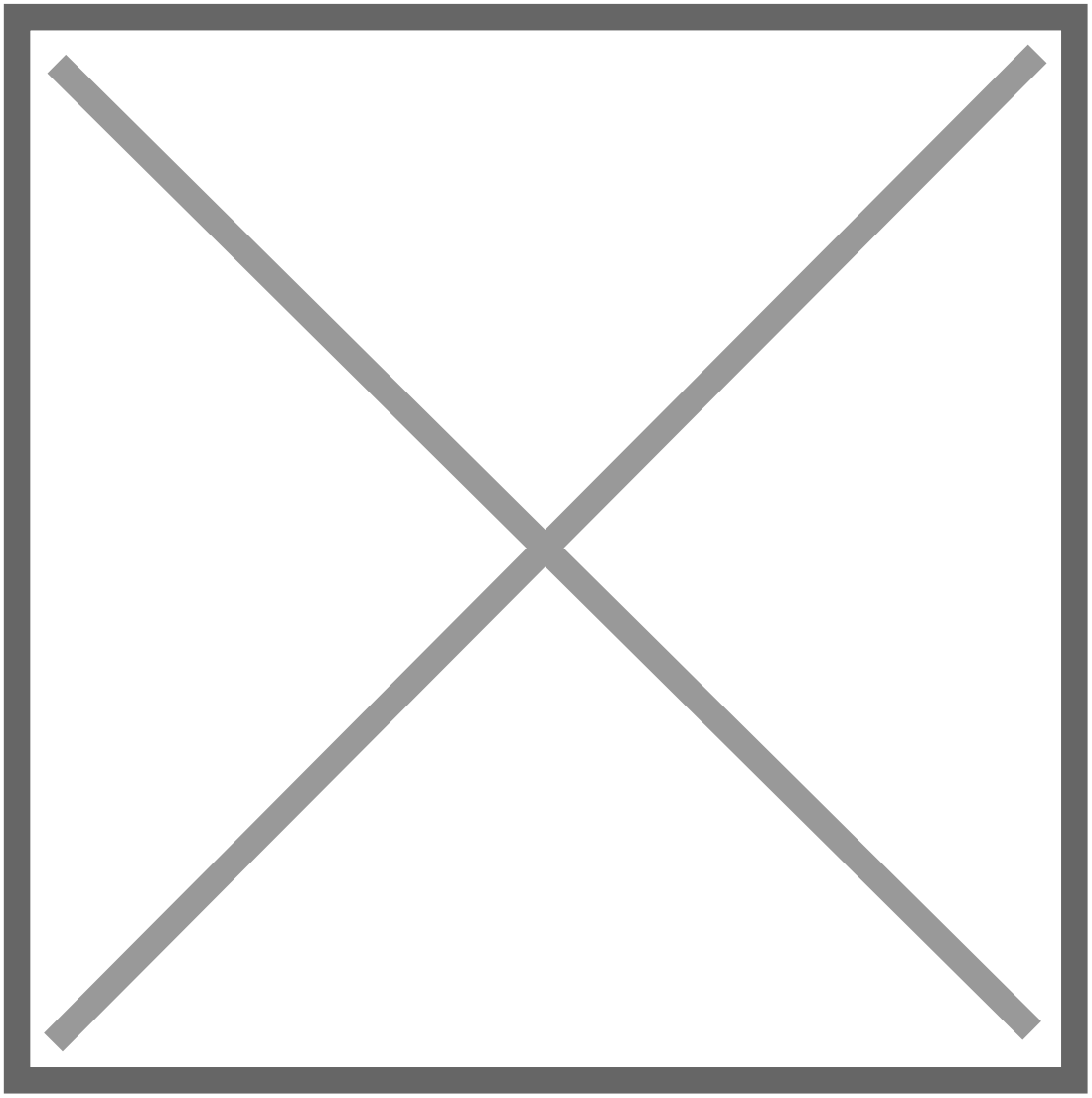
The Southeast Asian Regional for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) together with Bayer Crop Science in the Philippines held the "**20 Years and Onward: Advancing the Future of Philippine Yellow Corn**" Forum, marking the two decades of use of Bt corn, or more locally known as yellow corn, after its first commercial planting in 2003. The event created a platform for discussion to sustain and scale up innovative approaches to boost productivity and improve farmer livelihoods.

More than 160 attendees from public and private sectors attended the forum onsite and online, including from the academe, industry, business chambers, farmer groups, nongovernmental organizations, and the government. The forum looked back at key enabling policies as well as the situation of yellow corn across the value chain. It also assessed the sector's opportunities, challenges, and competitiveness; and discussed key actions and recommendations on how to ensure its continuous advancement amid the pressures arising from people's consumption, supply chain issues, and the natural environment.



Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban of the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Plant Industry (DA-BPI) highlighted in his opening message that the Philippines was among the first countries in Asia to adopt yellow corn, a genetically modified (GM) crop, and implement a regulatory framework on genetically engineered crops. Dr. Gerlie Tatlonghari, Program Head of SEARCA's Research and Thought Leadership Department, gave a brief background on the event.

Dr. Abraham Manalo, Executive Director of the Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines underlined the crucial role of policy in promoting the technology and supporting the growth of yellow corn over the years.

"Regulations should be stringent, science-based, but streamlined," Dr. Manalo stated. "There should also be other policies to back up these regulatory issuances to allow a policy environment that is evidence-based. Yellow corn stands on solid ground today because of our regulations. But our continued battle cry is for safe and responsible use of modern biotechnology," he added.

The government's interventions to boost the industry include capacity-building, providing large-scale postharvest machinery and facilities to farmer organizations, providing quality seed and fertilizers, strengthening linkages with the livestock and poultry racers, and connecting farmers directly to the market.

Iiinas Lao, Country Commercial Lead from Bayer Crop Science, said that the future of corn farming is regenerative agriculture, which aims to increase productivity and income while renewing the environment. Innovations such as Bayer's Preceon Smart Corn System, which includes short-stature corn and digital farm insights, and modern breeding techniques will enable this future