

This is the third edition of the Frontiers awards, with 3.2 million euros prize money distributed across eight categories

## The IRRI wins the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in Development Cooperation for mobilizing rice knowledge to alleviate hunger

- The International Rice Research Institute is a non-profit organization which has helped reduce hunger and poverty in Asia. In recent years, it has extended its efforts to sub-Saharan Africa.
- The BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Awards, established in 2008, recognize world-class research and artistic creation. Their eight categories reflect the main scientific, technological, social and economic challenges of the present day.
- The award in the Development Cooperation category honors interventions that have improved quality of life in disadvantaged regions, promoting education and health, fighting poverty and marginalization and/or fostering initiatives to preserve the natural environment in a way compatible with development goals and local cultures.

**February 25, 2011.-** The BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in the Development Cooperation category goes in this third edition to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) for its contribution to “reducing poverty and hunger in the world by means of rice research and farmer training”, in the words of the jury’s citation.

The IRRI is deemed to merit the award “for the quality of its research work, which has led to the development of new rice varieties adapted to different cropping areas in Asia and providing improved yield and sustainability across multiple climate regimes”.

The jury also singled out “its success in transferring the results of its research, by working with local teams and organizations in Asian and sub-Saharan countries and making its varieties freely available to farmers. By this means, the IRRI has secured the effective dissemination of its innovations with the resultant increase in production of this basic crop”.

The IRRI was nominated for the award by Japan’s National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies.

The International Rice Research Institute is a non-profit agricultural research and training center based in Los Baños in the Philippines, whose goal is to improve the quality of life of communities where rice is a subsistence food. Founded in 1960 with support from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations and the Philippine government, today’s IRRI enjoys the partnership of numerous agricultural and food institutions, as well as other non-profit organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The IRRI, the jury affirms, “has helped to improve the food security and the agricultural base of people living in less developed countries, and thereby assist them in their economic take-off. For all these reasons the IRRI stands as a clear example of scientific research applied to development goals”.

Over the last five decades, the Institute has had an instrumental role in boosting rice production levels, especially in Asia. Through an intense research effort and commitment to knowledge transfer from the laboratory to the farm, IRRI scientists have introduced higher-yielding rice varieties that are more disease resistant and use less water. The next step is to investigate ways to reduce the pesticide use and environmental damage associated to rice cultivation in the past.

The IRRI has also set up the International Rice Genebank, the largest in the world, whose more than 100,000 types of cultivated and wild rice provide important insurance against biodiversity loss. This bank is a resource for researchers using traditional and biotech methods to search for rice varieties able to resist the vicissitudes of climate change, such as altered temperatures and rainfall patterns and a higher incidence of drought.

Another facet of the Institute’s work is its role in training farmers and agricultural researchers in developing countries.

In the last few years, the IRRI has begun to extend its scientific and training efforts to parts of Africa and Latin America.

### **The importance of the rice crop**

Rice is the staple food of more than half the world’s population. In Asia, average annual consumption is currently 108 kilos per head, while the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa consume an average of 33 kilos.

Back in the 1950s, there was a real danger that population growth in Asia could cause shortages of food and even bring about a situation of famine. It was to prevent this from happening that the IRRI was born.

Today, the global market for rice is still growing fast. According to the FAO, a total of 151 million hectares worldwide are given over to rice cultivation, of which 132 million are in Asia and 8 million in Africa. And some forecasters say that to keep up with worldwide demand, output levels will have to increase by about 70 percent in the next two decades.

The potential for significant increases in rice yields is greatest on non-irrigated land, where yields are particularly low. The farmers who cultivate this land are some of the poorest in the world, and helping them grow their crop more efficiently will not only improve their quality of life but will also contribute to meeting the rising demand for rice.

### **The Development Cooperation category**

In the Development Cooperation category, the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Awards recognize excellence in research activities and/or relevant interventions aimed at improving quality of life in poor countries or among disadvantaged groups. Special consideration goes to projects in education, health, poverty reduction and entrepreneurship, as well as initiatives to preserve the natural environment in a way compatible with development goals and the preservation of local cultures

The jury chair, Ruth Rama, Research Professor at the Institute of Economics, Geography and Demography of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) unveiled the name of the new laureate at an announcement event in the Marqués de Salamanca Palace, Madrid headquarters of the BBVA Foundation, in the company of the Foundation's Director, Rafael Pardo, and CSIC Assistant Vice-President Juan José Damborenea.

### **International jury**

The jury in this category was formed by seven internationally reputed experts from a variety of backgrounds. The jury chair, **Ruth Rama**, is a specialist in the food industry, agribusiness, multinationals, and inter-firm networks and innovation, who has acted as consultant for the United Nations Center on Transnational Corporations, the FAO and the OECD.

**Pedro L. Alonso**, Director of the Institute for Global Health of Barcelona (ISGlobal) and Chair of the Board of Governors of Fundação Manhiça (Mozambique), researches into the prevention and treatment of malaria. He has published over 200 papers in leading international scientific journals and holds numerous distinctions, including the UNICEF (Spanish Committee) International Award.

**Vicente Larraga**, Director of the Center for Biological Research at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), is an expert on the parasitic disease leishmaniasis who has authored numerous papers in international publications.

**José M. Lasa**, of the Aula Dei Experimental Center (CSIC), specializes in plant enhancement for the purpose of obtaining more sustainable varieties, the conservation of phylogenetic resources, and the development of crop-growing techniques for a more sustainable agriculture.

**Norman Loayza**, Lead Economist in the Development Research Group of the World Bank in Washington (United States), has participated in World Bank missions in countries such as Tunisia, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan and India, as well as authoring numerous publications on international economics, economic growth and political reform, and the prevention of crime and corruption.

**Francisco Pérez**, of the University of Valencia, is Research Director at the Valencian Economic Research Institute (Ivie). He has conducted and led studies on economic growth and international integration, regional economics and the economics of education, among other subjects, and has authored thirty-two books and over one hundred papers in international journals

**José García Montalvo**, of Pompeu Fabra University, heads the Center for Research on the Economies of the Mediterranean (CREMed) and is a consultant for the OECD, World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. He is the author of eleven books and more than one hundred papers in scholarly journals.

## 2010 Frontiers of Knowledge laureates

The BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Awards honor world-class research and artistic creation across eight prize categories. Their uniqueness lies in their close alignment with the scientific, technological, social and economic challenges of the present century. Each award category carries a cash prize of 400,000 euros.

The announcement of the award winner in the Development Cooperation completes the list of 2010 Frontiers of Knowledge laureates, as follows:

**Nicholas Stern**, in the Climate Change category, for quantifying the impacts and costs of the alteration of our planet's climate. This British economist is author of the Stern Review, a watershed study on the economics of climate change which concludes that it is makes more economic sense to take measures against climate change than to bear the costs of inaction.

**Shinya Yamanaka**, in the Biomedicine category, for showing that it is possible to reprogram differentiated cells back into a state that is characteristic of pluripotent cells. His work has accelerated the possibility of translating regenerative medicine from the bench to the clinic.

**Donald E. Knuth**, in Information and Communication Technologies, for making computer programming into a science. His book *The Art of Computer Programming* systematizes the way that human beings talk to machines and is considered the seminal work on computer science.

**Gabor A. Somorjai**, in the Basic Sciences category, for his pioneering contributions to the understanding of surface chemistry and catalysis at a molecular level. His insights have facilitated the control of key chemical reactions in productive and environmental processes.

**Edward O. Wilson**, in the Ecology and Conservation Biology category, for coining and popularizing the term 'biodiversity', and making society aware of its value. This American naturalist is also the founder of sociobiology, a discipline inquiring into the biological bases of human conduct.

**Lars Peter Hansen**, in Economics, Finance and Management, for making fundamental contributions to our understanding of how economic actors cope with risky and changing environments.

**Helmut Lachenmann**, in Contemporary Music, for a creative output drawing on an intimate knowledge of the musical past, which has enlarged the world of sounds over the last fifty years in a way unmatched by any other contemporary composer.

### Award ceremony

The BBVA Foundation supports knowledge generation, scientific research and the promotion of culture, relaying the results of its work to society at large. This effort materializes in research projects, human capital investment, and specialization courses, grants and awards. Among the BBVA Foundation's preferred areas of activity are basic sciences, biomedicine, ecology and conservation biology, the social sciences and literary and musical creation.

The presentation ceremony of the 2010 Frontiers of Knowledge Awards will take place on June 15 this year in the Marques de Salamanca Palace, Madrid headquarters of the BBVA Foundation.

A video recording of the new laureate's first impressions on receiving news of the award is available from the Atlas FTP with the following coordinates:

Server: **213.0.38.61**

Username: **agenciaatlas1**

Password: **amapola**

The name of the video is:

**Premio Fronteras Cooperación al Desarrollo**

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## Fundación BBVA

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