

The Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech)

The government created the National Postharvest Institute for Research and Extension (NAPHIRE) on May 24, 1978 by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 1380 to accelerate the development of the grains postharvest industry in the country. Its actual operations started in 1980 as a subsidiary corporation of the National Grains Authority (NGA) through Letter of Implementation No. 123. In 1982, a further expansion of its mandate incorporating all other food commodities was made through Letter of Instruction No. 1142 when NGA became the National Food Authority (NFA).

NAPHIRE became an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in 1986 through Executive Order 116. In 1992, it was transformed into a regular agency through Executive Order 494 and was renamed as the Bureau of Postharvest Research and Extension (BPRE).

However, by virtue of EO 366 or the government's 2004 Rationalization Program, the BPRE was rationalized and renamed into the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech). The functions of PHilMech were further expanded to include mechanization concerns from production to postproduction through the coordination and execution of research and extension activities and application of postproduction and agricultural mechanization technologies, in addition to its original mandate of developing the postharvest industry.

Mandates

The above mentioned laws mandated PHilMech to ***“generate, extend and commercialize appropriate and problem-oriented agriculture and fishery postharvest and mechanization technologies.”***

The role of PHilMech that encompasses postharvest development and mechanization was actually confirmed with the enactment of Republic Act 8435 or AFMA. As provided in the Implementing Rules and Regulation of AFMA:

Rule 57.1 “BPRE shall lead the formulation and execution of a postharvest technology development and promotion program for major commodities other than rice.”

Rule 59.1 “The BPRE and FOS shall develop, in association with appropriate agencies, research and testing centers and industry associations, a continuing, long-term program of development and commercialization of appropriate agriculture and fisheries mechanization.”

Rule 40.6 “The AMAS, in collaboration with PHTRC, BPRE, and other appropriate offices, shall be responsible in the provision of technical assistance in the rehabilitation and/or upgrading of existing and viable postharvest and related facilities for processing, transport and communication.”

Rule 46.2 “The Department, particularly the BPRE and the FOS shall collaborate with other offices of the Department and with Local Government Units to strengthen their agricultural and fishery engineering capacities.”

Functions

With the approved rationalization plan, the functions of PHilMech, formerly BPRE, has been strengthened. As a center, it is responsible for the conduct of innovative studies, research and development, acquisition, adaptation and development of strategies for the effective dissemination and application of technologies.

The PHilMech is tasked to empower the agri-fishery sector through the effective delivery of the following functions:

- a. PHilMech takes the lead in the formulation and execution of mechanization and postharvest systems research and development in the agriculture and fishery sector;
- b. PHilMech adopts comprehensive training, extension and applied communication approaches and strategies; and
- c. PHilMech aggressively builds strategic alliances with RFUs, LGUs, academe, equipment manufacturers and other relevant local and international institutions in the conduct of its programs and projects.