



# Newsletter

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## Message from Parviz Koohafkan GIAHS Partnership Coordinator

Over the last 5 years, the GIAHS Initiative has been piloting an innovative model for engaging local communities and national governments in the dynamic conservation of agricultural heritage, and to convert all these conservation efforts into marketable incomes and incentives. In the first issue of our GIAHS Newsletter, we presented the milestones in China, India, Japan, Peru and Chile, where agricultural heritage was placed at the root of their future, and the link between "agri and culture" in enhancing food security. In this edition, we will take a deeper look on various project interventions to revitalize local communities, stories from the field, hopes and aspirations of local peoples (Philippines, Noto peninsula in Japan, the win-win model of the Chinese) as well as activities leading to social learning process, knowledge transmission and creating an enabling environment in the countries where GIAHS takes place.

We would like also to announce and extend a warm invitation for all GIAHS partners and stakeholders to the **4th International Forum on GIAHS**, to be held in Ishikawa, Japan from 29 – 31 May 2013. The GIAHS Forum is a gathering of all agricultural heritage supporters from around the world to share and exchange knowledge and experiences on dynamic conservation approaches, engaging stakeholders both from public and private sectors, in stewardship of resilient and unique agricultural systems. We are looking forward to welcoming you in the Forum – to support GIAHS in building a bridge for a sustainable future.



## An Invitation: International Forum on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems

FAO in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan will organize the 4th International Forum on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems from 29-31 May 2013 in Ishikawa Prefecture. Stakeholders and supporters of agricultural heritage from around the world will meet to share and exchange knowledge and experiences on dynamic conservation practices.

During the Forum, a High Level Session featuring Ministers, major UN and international organizations' officials and distinct panel of experts will be held. The High Level Session will examine and provide public with a better understanding of the GIAHS concept and raise awareness about evolving traditional and sustainable management of natural resources that contributes to world food security. The High level Session will also explore how to further sustain conservation and development efforts while taking into account the diversity of various agricultural conditions at local, national and regional levels. [\[MORE INFORMATION ON THE FORUM\]](#)

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

### Portrait of a GIAHS Tour Guide from Nagacadan, Ifugao



Maria Galeon; one of the 47 trained tour guides in Kiangan

Maria Galeon currently lives in Kiangan Poblacion, Kiangan town center, but she grew up and raised her six children in a small village in Nagacadan. Before Maria retired, she worked as an elementary school teacher in Hungduan and Nagacadan (both GIAHS-sites). For some years, during her childhood, Maria lived in a traditional girls' dormitory in her community. The young girls were fascinated to hear stories told by the elder women from the village; who taught them about the history of their ancestors and their community.

When Maria tells her stories the listener is plunged into another era. Maybe her life as a teacher, constantly being surrounded by children, has kept her young at heart because, despite her 75 years, she has retained an innovative mind and critical spirit. As an active member of the local farmers' association, Maria is helping her community develop.

Today, Maria is one of forty-seven GIAHS tour guides who have been accredited by the local tourism council after participating in a five-day training and workshop evaluation. She offers her knowledge and experience to foreign tourists interested in her culture, traditions, and way of life because she is convinced this will help her community move into the future. Maria is not worried that tourists taking pictures and walking through rice fields will bother the local farmers, her main concern is that expanding tourism may cause possible loss of values.

"We, the older people here in Nagacadan, fear that too much tourism will provoke a change of values in the community", Maria shared.

Local farmers' deeply rooted hospitality can easily switch to that of competitive business spirit. Without price regulation for traditional goods, there may be under and overbidding between farmers, which may affect all involved. Another issue is that children are being taken out of school to work in tourism. This has been observed in other tourist destinations in the Philippines.

To tackle these issues, the GIAHS Initiative, is collaborating with the local tourism council. Together they are working to establish tourism guidelines to ensure this sector develops smoothly and sustainably. Competition will be supplanted by a system based on sharing that is mutually beneficial to the community.

With community-based activities, such as the establishment of a community-based Open Air Museum, GIAHS focuses not only on the promotion of tourism but also on

transferring the benefits to the local population. Besides the tour guides, GIAHS is collaborating with the local tourism council to train all actors directly or indirectly involved with the tourism sector.

An example is the tricycle drivers, who are among the first people arriving tourists meet. They have been trained by local historians about the history of Kiangan and Ifugao, which they share with their passengers. The same training is organized for owners of bed and breakfasts, massage-groups and community store-owners.

GIAHS has helped strengthen the institutional and social structures necessary to sustainably entrench Agro-Eco-Tourism within the community. Today, with this enhanced capacity for tourism, the town is ready to receive increasing numbers of arriving tourists and the economic and social benefits they will bring to the community.



One of the local tour guides trained by GIAHS.



## GIAHS Sets up a New Win-win Model in China

China is a 'mega-biodiversity' country, holding about one-tenth of total world species; it is also a country of 'mega-cultural diversity' with 56 minorities, each having its own unique culture, traditions, folk arts and languages. Despite this biological and cultural diversity, China's agricultural heritage, rooted in over a 1,000 years of history, was about to be lost forever. Thanks to the efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and other

international and local organizations, the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) initiative was introduced, and today China is benefiting from increased national awareness of the importance of its own agricultural heritage.

During the last eight years, China has created a win-win GIAHS model that other countries can learn from and easily duplicate when establishing their own GIAHS initiative. GIAHS has attracted much public attention in China and around the world. An important factor in this success is its timeliness; the GIAHS initiative was created when issues related to rural ecological degradation, environmental

pollution, climate change and rural development, particularly food safety, rose to the top of the public and political agenda. For example, one of the GIAHS activities was focused on agricultural product labelling. Currently, many people worldwide do not trust product labelling and certification. This is because poor management and supervision has weakened the certification process, which has directly compromised food safety. In China GIAHS stakeholders have agreed to adhere to strict certification guidelines, and today the GIAHS logo is perceived as trustworthy, restoring public confidence in labelling and certification.

[\[READ MORE\]](#)

## Satoyama-Satoumi Meister Training Program Revitalizing Noto peninsula

GIAHS Noto peninsula is on the brink of unprecedented challenges posed by decreasing and ageing population. "Experiencing these tough challenges has encouraged us to develop activities for a holistic approach to help reactivate and build a stronger Noto Satoyama and Satoumi" says Prof Koji Nakamura, the deputy president of Kanazawa University and the mentor of the Meister Training program. "The

recognition of Noto's Satoyama and Satoumi and Sado's Satoyama as the first sites of Globally important Agricultural Heritage Systems in Japan had complemented our efforts to promote the long term conservation of ecologically-friendly, valuable farming systems and agricultural practices that are neglected and dying", added by Prof Nakamura. The Satoyama-Satoumi Meister Program was implemented,

aimed to educate those who are willing to revitalize Noto region in the field of satoyama-satoumi related businesses. The students, varying in ages from their early 30s to mid-40s, coming from the cities, enrolled in practical courses and seminars during weekends. After completing the two-year practical program, the graduates are expected to continue to live in Noto region and to engage in new businesses linked to local economies, such as environmentally-concerned agriculture or fisheries, processing and marketing business, and eco-tourism. Meister students, undergoes practical training on "wise and sustainable use of satoyama-satoumi resources" and any practices should be in harmony with ecological and environmental conditions in each locality. [\[READ MORE\]](#)



Many people were attracted to the red rice from the Hani Rice Terrace System at the Agricultural Products Trade Fair in Yunnan province



Group of Chiloe farmers participating in the Territorial Learning Programme

## Transmitting Chiloe's Agri-Cultural Heritage, empowering farmers

Chiloe Island, located off the coast of southern Chile, is a territory of great cultural, ecological and home to biodiversity of global significance. What strategies do GIAHS project implement to meet the needs of the local communities and to sustain this crucial habitat? Through the GIAHS project and in collaboration with all the local organizations (Center of

Education and Technology, Procasur-DTR-IC and others), a Territorial Learning Programme has been initiated, to promote transmission and sharing of agricultural and cultural heritage, and to sustain local economies. The programme is a series of activities or modules engaging farmers and community leaders as teachers and trainers, and thus becoming a platform for a dynamic and innovative educational experience between and among Chilotans. Among others, the platform promotes the unique agricultural features of Chiloe, community level innovation in managing and conserving agricultural biodiversity which is embedded in farmers' daily interaction and practices. It uses the opportunities of transforming this agri-cultural heritage in identifying opportunities for markets and responsible agro-ecotourism – all of which have a role in conserving the territory of Chiloe and sustaining local economies. Recently, students from Peru, Colombia, Bolivia and other regions in Chile participated in the knowledge exchange activity. The participants were impressed by the capacity of the Chiloe farmers in sharing their knowledge, values and practices in the conservation of biodiversity and traditional knowledge. With this exchange,

farmers became active participants in ensuring a sustainable agriculture development for the future. "Chiloe is a very rich culture and practices; it is an economic advantage and will benefit the overall quality of life of the island communities. But at the same time, it has to be told and transmitted" says Carlos Venegas, from CET.

*"Chiloe is a very rich culture and practices; it is an economic advantage and will benefit the overall quality of life of the island communities. But at the same time, it has to be told and transmitted"*

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

### China's Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (NIAHS)

Traditional farming systems are often considered 'backward', doomed to be phased out during agricultural modernization. Before GIAHS was introduced into China around 2005, agricultural heritage was not valued by national or local governments or the farmers themselves. Although a few Chinese researchers studied aspects of traditional farming practices, policy-makers and farmers ignored their message.

Since 2005, when the Qingtian rice-fish culture system was launched, much progress has been made and there have been many new developments in GIAHS interventions. GIAHS is no longer 'an unknown' and has become a 'rising star', among world heritage sites in China, increasingly attracting the attention of governments, the public and the media.

Over the last three years, GIAHS has become increasingly popular among decision-makers. China has demonstrated a growing interest and determination to promote and conserve its rich agricultural heritage systems and to become a good example for GIAHS conservation worldwide. This ambition is reflected in the legislation to establish and institutionalize Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (NIAHS).

Conservation and development of traditional agricultural systems was once considered an 'institutional orphan', there was no systematic legislation or policy-making at the national level. Before 2012 there was no organizational framework for NIAHS because many ecological and cultural values, inherent in traditional farming systems, were not included in cost-benefit analyses and local farmers were not compensated for the cost of conserving their agricultural heritage.

Eventually, in the face of climate change, environmental pollution and food safety, the Chinese Government took note of the value of GIAHS. Using the general definition of GIAHS, proposed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation's (FAO), nationally appropriate selection criteria were formulated.

At the same time, standing organizations, or functional departments were created within existing organizations at the national level to urgently establish, promote, identify, designate, monitor and evaluate NIAHS. [\[READ MORE\]](#)

## International GIAHS Seminar





## Creating an enabling environment for the conservation of the Historic Gafsa Oasis

**G**afsa Oases ecosystems are true biodiversity laboratories in an extremely harsh environment. They display the wisdom and knowledge of the oasis people who live in this particularly difficult setting, but manage to create their livelihoods through adaptive management of land, sharing of water resources and crop diversification. These ecosystems, however, continue to face threats such as desertification, modernization without regulation, and inappropriate agricultural practices that lead to misuse of scarce resources.

Wishing to preserve the historic Gafsa Oasis, and to ensure the sustainability of agricultural heritage of the oasis, in 2006 the GIAHS project, through the Association pour la Sauvegarde de la Médina de Gafsa (ASM Gafsa), introduced a number of activities to strengthen the capacities of local communities, particularly women and youth.

All agreed there was a need and urgency to conserve and protect Gafsa. Thus, conservation efforts began with local communities in Gafsa and have now moved beyond the local level to other regions. Apart from the local communities, others need to be involved. So, between April 2012 and January 2013, the Association organized several workshops in the different oasis governorates (Gafsa, Tozeur, Kébili and Gabès) to launch and present the Oasis Charter, which comprised 25 articles, advocating the establishment of a legal basis and allocation of resources and appropriate technology to ensure the sustainable development of these historic sites.

Local and national administration offices, research institutions, NGOs and farmers quickly adopted the Oasis Charter. The momentum continues; it is anticipated that national level authorities will adopt the Charter as a framework for action by and for all oasis communities.



Workshop on the National Charter for Oases Conservation in Gabès, Tunisia

The enabling environment created will guarantee promotion of dynamic conservation of the historic Gafsa Oasis agricultural heritage, thereby safeguarding Tunisia's socio-economic stability and development.



## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

### Agricultural Heritage Learning Center: A New Form of Knowledge Transfer in Hungduan, Ifugao

**R**owena lives in Hapao, a town in the municipality of Hungduan. The rice fields of Hapao are surrounded by high mountains resulting in limited access to the Barangay from outside; together with the road construction that slows traffic, people do not leave Hapao very often. Rowena owns a rice farm in Hapao where she and her children used to live; this is now rented as they decided to move to Manila and run a local bakery instead. Although she does not depend on the yearly yield of the harvested rice, she still works in the fields during the work-intensive periods of the year to support her neighbours and family.

She cares about her community and the challenges they all face. Like her own children, many others leave the community for work, studies or simply in search of the more comfortable life that can be offered by the larger cities. "They are looking for jobs in offices, instead of breaking their

backs in the rice fields," Explains Rowena. The main problem is who is left to cultivate the rice, restore the walls over and over again and remove the weeds, once Rowena's generation is gone? Workers per unit area have decreased alarmingly over the past 10 years. Many farmers use chemical pesticides and fertilizers to increase their yield and offset labour shortages – but by doing this, the farmers are slowly destroying the ecosystems they depend upon.

All these changes are accompanied by a more dangerous factor: the loss of knowledge. Once the traditional living knowledge is gone, this extraordinary land management system of the Ifugao rice terraces will become a slowly eroding dead façade. For Rowena, who has lived her whole life as a rice farmer, there is still hope. Determined to halt the loss of the traditional organic practices of rice cropping and the corresponding ceremonials and rituals, Rowena has decided to share this knowledge with the younger members of her community.

The establishment of an Agricultural Heritage Learning Centre that focuses on organic farming, one of the GIAHS Initiative's activities, serves

as an ideal platform for promoting traditional knowledge. Rowena has offered her old farmhouse, in the middle of the rice fields, for use as the Agricultural Heritage Learning Centre. This location offers plenty of possibilities for practical training and visual instruction. This will ensure that the knowledge transferred and exchanged is applicable to the farmers' living environment. GIAHS supports Rowena by organizing meetings and training sessions where other knowledge holders are invited to share their experiences. The GIAHS Learning Centre also serves as the contact point for farmers who need assistance and monitoring support in specific domains.

The conventional knowledge-transfer from parents to children is thereby replaced by a knowledge-transfer from the older community members to the interested young ones, who have decided to stay in the region. All involved farmers are from the same community, facilitating the exchange and acceptance of ideas and ensuring that traditional approved technologies are revitalized – thus providing a better chance for traditional practices to be passed from present to future generations successfully.



Barangay Hapao in Hungduan.



Rowena during a training session, on her left Brenda Saquing, local GIAHS-facilitator.



Rowena's old farmhouse – the Agricultural Heritage Learning Centre





## Building effective GIAHS Knowledge-Sharing Platform in Southeast Asia

National governments and academes in Southeast Asia are continuously working to build a Knowledge Sharing Platform for GIAHS stakeholders. Effective partnerships between national and local governments, universities and academes, students and farming communities for the benefits of revitalizing traditional systems are a vital part of GIAHS conservation.

In Southeast Asia, the Institute of Geographical Sciences and Natural Resources Research (IGSNRR) of the Chinese Academy of Science (CAS), United Nations University-Institute of Sustainability and Peace (UNU-ISP), and Kanazawa University are working together to promote sharing and dissemination of GIAHS enriching activities and experiences between and among countries in Southeast Asia. For the last six months, at least 4 international workshops were held in different locations in China, Japan, and South Korea.



International Workshop on "Conservation and Management of GIAHS" Shaoxing City and Qingtian County in China.

## Revitalizing Andean agricultural systems in Peru

In the extensive high Andean plateaus of the Puno region in Peru, embankment systems or artificial land elevations interspersed with deep irrigation channels can be seen. These systems, known as sukaqollos, waru warus or camellones, were developed by the pre Inca culture, 1000 B.C and serve for drainage, sub irrigation and water storage. The sukaqollos are effective means to cultivate tubers (potatoes, oca, olluco and mashua), grains (quinoa, kañihua and tarwi), cereals (barley and oats) and beans.

The sukaqollos or trenches are filled with water, which is warmed by sunlight. When temperatures drop at night, the water gives off warm steam that serves as frost protection for tubers as well as preventing pestilence.

To revitalize and raise awareness among local communities on the value and function of these traditional Andean systems, the GIAHS Initiative, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment of Peru, have worked with the Caritamaya community in Acora province to rehabilitate sukaqollos, helping 410 family farmers.

More information on GIAHS activities in Peru:

[NEWS REPORT FROM FAO PERU OFFICE](#)

[REPORT ON WORLD WATER DAY AND SUKAQOLLOS](#)

## Share your GIAHS

WE ARE LOOKING FOR UNIQUE AND REMARKABLE TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS.

SHARE YOUR IDEAS WITH US AT:

[GIAHS-SECRETARIAT@FAO.ORG](mailto:GIAHS-SECRETARIAT@FAO.ORG)

[WWW.GIAHS.ORG](http://WWW.GIAHS.ORG)

