

'Rice camp' shows teens the grain is now

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While millions of people in Southeast Asia depend on rice, the grain is attracting few young people as either farmers or scientists.

"It's a sad fact of life in modern Asia that many young people in the region don't think of rice as offering an exciting or promising career, so they focus on other industries and other careers," said Robert S. Zeigler, director general of the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute.

The institute -- working with the Thai Rice Foundation and Philippine Rice Research Institute -- is trying to attract more youngsters to rice. They have created a "rice camp" where 10 teenagers from Thailand and nine from the Philippines will get an introduction to the cutting edge of rice research.

"The recent sequencing of the rice genome attracted enormous international attention, especially among the scientific community, yet most young Asians still don't know it even happened, let alone understand its implications for the food they eat each day," Zeigler said.

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