

Current initiatives in genomics include improving the brood stock for the cultured bangus and tilapia, fighting bunchy top virus affecting abaca, and addressing the dreaded Panama disease now affecting banana growers in Mindanao, Montejo said.

Montejo emphasized in his speech that translating genome-based research into practical solution is trans-disciplinary and multi-sectoral responsibility. It involves intricate collaboration across scientific disciplines and linkages between public research and development institutions, policy makers, academe and industry sectors.

“Putting together a cohesive genomics initiative in a developing country, however, is no easy task. It requires a critical mass of scientists and experts to develop a sustainable program, and appropriate resources to support the operational and infrastructure demands of research and development,” he said.

To achieve critical mass of scientists and experts, DOST embarks on Balik Scientist Program that will bring home top Filipino scientists, informatics experts and engineers now working outside the Philippines to mentor domestic scholars and supervise genome-related projects. DOST will also support genomics research projects aligned with development priorities through grants from its councils such as Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development, Philippine Council on Health Research and Development, and Philippine Council on Agriculture Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development. (*Luisa Lumioan, S&T Media Service*)