

MEDIA RELEASE

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Rice researcher wins \$US200,000 scholarship

A University of Tasmania PhD candidate whose research may help boost global rice production has been awarded a \$US200,000 (\$A193,000) scholarship by one of the world's biggest agricultural companies.

The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture's Shanshan Liang, currently involved in field work in the Philippines, is one of 14 student applicants worldwide selected for funding in Monsanto's Beachell-Borlaug International Scholars Program.

Supervised by former TIA Director Professor Don McNeil, Ms Liang's research centres on how molecular marker technology and genomics can produce new varieties of rice to lift rice production

"Rice is the staple food for more than half of the world's population," Ms Liang wrote in her application.

"Global rice production must reach 800 million tonnes in 2025 (up from 718 million tonnes in 2011) to meet future demand.

"The Green Revolution in the 1960s greatly increased rice production with at least 50% of the increase due to adoption of new cultivars. However the increased production potential of modern rice cultivars has stagnated.

"For breeding to continue to increase productivity rice breeders must effectively integrate new approaches (molecular marker technology and genomics) with well-established conventional breeding methods. They must also have a global reach collaborating in diverse, relevant locations and with international specialists in complementary technologies."

The scholarship will allow Ms Liang to participate in trials at six sites in China and the Philippines during 2012 and 2013.

It will also allow her to attend the World Food Prize Ceremony and activities in Des Moines, Iowa, in mid-October.

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