



Secretary Piñol (in blue polo) shows 3rd district representative Fernando Gonzales (in checkered polo) and Ligao City Mayor Patricia Alsua (in long sleeved polo) some of the equipment to be turned over. Right photo shows the secretary addressing the farmers during the forum.

Sec. Manny F. Piñol meets with Bicol farmers and turns over agri assistance

by Emily B. Bordado

Agriculture secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol visited Bicol on March 24 for two special events – a dialogue with farmer leaders and local officials via a forum hosted by the City Government of Ligao in Albay province, and in Casiguran, Sorsogon for turn-over of fiber glass fishing boats and fishing paraphernalia to fisherfolk.

In Ligao City, some 500 farmers actively participated in the dialogue with the secretary. Sec. Pinol also turned over agricultural production inputs and facilities worth P20 million to various farmers, rural women's organization and local government units. These include 100 bags hybrid seeds, 200 bags urea fertilizers, 300

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Agri Chief turns over fiber glass boats to Sorsogon fisherfolk

CASIGURAN, SORSOGON – “Stop illegal fishing.” This is the appeal of Department of Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol during the ceremonial turnover of fiber glass boats to fisherfolk in Casiguran, this province on March 24, 2017.

Together with Senator Francis “Chiz” Escudero, Bureau of Fisheries and

Aquatic Resources' (BFAR)-Bicol Director Dennis V. Del Socorro, 2nd district of Sorsogon Rep. Deogracias Ramos, and DA-Bicol RED Elena B. delos Santos, the DA Chief personally handed 200 units of 37-footer motorized fiber glass boats worth P90,000 each, complete with 400 sets of fishing gears, engine and

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5,000 hectares Rice Model Farms to rise in Bicol

SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR – Leaders of SWISA and Irrigators Associations from all over the Bicol region convened at the DA conference room for a consultation on DA's new program – Rice Model Farms. Rodel Tornilla, OIC Chief of the Operations Division who met with the farmers said that these farmer leaders will be

tapped by the DA to monitor the hybrid rice adoption of Rice Model Farm program by the farmer beneficiaries. A total 4,800 hectares had already been planted to hybrid varieties under the roll out techno demo conducted by DA Bicol. To date (dry season planting) there are 10,317 hectares planted to hybrid rice in the region.

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Secretary Piñol confers with Sorsogon 2nd district Rep. Deogracias Ramos while Senator Chiz Escudero looks on.

Free irrigation to surge agri production and ease farmers woes

For decades Filipino farmers have been clamoring and struggling for free irrigation but it had been an elusive dream. But this year, this dream will now be a reality with the commitment of the Duterte administration to provide this vital government support to our small farmers who feed our nation. When farmers are unburdened of the irrigation fees their production cost will be reduced and their production will subsequently be improved.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol who had aggressively pushed for the provision of free irrigation since he assumed his post as DA chief said that starting the first planting season (2nd quarter) this 2017 farmers will now avail of free irrigation. An additional P2.3 billion for irrigation fee subsidy was included in the recently approved national budget. This extra budget is on top of the over P30 billion allocation for the construction of irrigation systems and restoration or rehabilitation of existing ones.

But even with this intervention

in the budget there is a need for the government fully institutionalize its commitment so as not to depend on yearly additional subsidies. A policy guideline is needed to define or delineate the roles and responsibility of the NIA and the irrigators association in the operation and maintenance of the irrigation facilities which were previously funded out of the collection from Irrigation Service Fees.

For example, it must be made clear to the farmers that "free irrigation" means that they will no longer pay to NIA the irrigation service fees (ISF). However, they can agree among themselves to collect certain amount for the maintenance of their irrigation system.

The Senate and Congress are now working to amend NIA's charter to totally remove irrigation service fees collection. Senator Loren Legarda, chair of the committee on Finance is now pushing for the immediate passage of the proposed Free Irrigation Reform and Restructuring Act which seeks to remove from NIA

the functions of maintaining irrigation projects and collecting irrigation services and other fees and supports improvements in the sector through various measures and policies.

Alongside with policy reforms there is a need to harness water resources for hydroelectric power, and to explore other technologies and cost efficient ways and means of operating irrigation systems such as the use of solar power which is now being rolled out by the Department of Agriculture in several regions of the country including the Bicol region.

Irrigation is a vital component to increase productivity and is crucial in the production of major staples like rice and corn. It also plays an important role in crop diversification and multi-cropping systems which can significantly contribute to our country's food security and sustained agricultural growth and development. It is only just, fitting and proper that our farmers enjoy the benefits of free irrigation.



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Published quarterly by the Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Information Section of the Department of Agriculture, Regional Field Unit No. 5, San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur, Tel No. (054) 477-5113 Fax 477-0381 E-mail Address: darafid5@yahoo.com

Re-entered as a Second Class Mail Matter at the Pili Post Office, Pili, Camarines Sur under Permit No. 2017-18 on March 17, 2017.

Circulation: **Blesilda A. Nuñez**
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Emil Pasumbal,
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Records Unit

PRDP sub-projects for marine conservation in Bicol approved by reg'l advisory board

A total of P19.5 million-worth of marine protected area sub-project proposals were approved by the Regional Project Advisory Board of the Department of Agriculture's Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) in Bicol on January 18, 2017 in Legazpi City.

These sub-projects, to be funded by a P287 million-worth grant from the PRDP-Global Environment Facility (GEF), one of the World Bank Group's trust-funded programs, are projected to contribute to biodiversity conservation and strengthen the coastal and marine resource base in the region. The Donsol-Ticao-Burias Pass shared by the provinces of Sorsogon and Masbate is one of the target GEF sites

listed in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and is cited by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Conservation International (CI), and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as a key marine biodiversity area. It covers marine protected areas (MPAs) in the municipalities of Magallanes, Matnog, Pilar, and Bulan in Sorsogon and the Municipality of San Fernando in Masbate. The Donsol-Ticao-Burias Pass possesses globally threatened species including whale shark *Rhincodontopus*, hammerhead sharks, and extensive coral reef, mangrove, and sea grass ecosystem.

Among the MPA sub-project

proposals approved by the RPAB were the P3.9 million-worth Community-Based Coastal Ecosystem Protection and Biodiversity Conservation in San Fernando, Masbate, the P4.3 million-worth Community-Based Coastal Ecosystem Protection and Biodiversity Conservation in Matnog, Sorsogon, the P3.3 million-worth Magallanes Fish Sanctuary and Marine Reserve Rehabilitation in Magallanes, Sorsogon, the P3.2 million-worth Rehabilitation of Butag Bay Fish Sanctuary and Marine Reserve in Bulan, Sorsogon and the P4.8 million-worth Bantigue Marine Reserve and Fish Sanctuary Protection and Reservation in Pilar, Sorsogon.

PRDP-Bicol Natural Resource Management Specialist Lorenzo L. Alvina underscored that the GEF sub-projects' main purpose is to limit overfishing and conserve marine protected areas by providing support interventions to boost MPA management effectiveness from level 0 to level 2 (strengthened) or 3 (sustained) in the next three to five years.

According to Municipal Agriculturist Florizel M. Lim of San Fernando, Masbate, the implementation of the MPA sub-project will improve the fish catch in their coastal waters from an average of 2.2 kilograms to 5 kilograms per day within three years. The PRDP-GEF sub-project will also promote community awareness about the significance of their cooperation in protecting the marine sanctuary.

PRDP-GEF has allocated P5M for each targeted program area to support its coastal and marine resources conservation efforts by capacitating them in implementing MPA and microenterprise sub-projects.

The RPAB is an inter-agency multi-disciplinary team, chaired by the Regional Executive Director of the DA and composed of the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Interior and Local Government and Regional Agricultural and Fishery Council. Per PRDP National Project Advisory Board (NPAB) Resolution No. 3, series of 2016, BFAR was added as a member of the RPAB in regions with GEF sites, including Bicol. The advisory board is mandated to review and approve plans, feasibility studies, detailed engineering designs and program of works proposed for PRDP funding. **(Annielyn L. Baleza)**

Porok 5, Sitio Balading,
Pawa, Legazpi City

Dr. Elena B. delos Santos
Department of Agriculture, RFO 5
San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur

Letters

February 3, 2017

Dear Dr. delos Santos:

Greetings.

Thank you for responding to my letter-inquiry on ADLAI and for sending me an initial of 1-kilo Adlai seeds. Thank you also to Mr. Jason Gonzales for allowing himself to be our conduit of information about ADLAI to the D.A. Region/Adlai Office. I am really amazed on HOW FAST YOU PEOPLE ACT on matters like this.

As of today, I have about 20 who signified interest on ADLAI and looking forward/eager to attend training-of-some-sort about this matter, which we suggest on Feb. 25, 2017 from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM, at my place here at my address. I have a social hall where we can hold the training. I will host the modest snack. This 20 farmers may possibly reach 50 persons, as I am also inviting 30 more from outlying barangays of Bonga, Matanag, Buyuan, Dita, San Joaquin, and Tamaoyan.

We foresee a better future of the ADLAI technology as there is a wide area than could be planted with ADLAI and a promising use for food, feeds, medicine, and beverage. If we have sufficient ADLAI farmers with volume harvest, we foresee to acquire farm machineries like thresher & ADLAI mill, and other farm tools, from the Department of Agriculture in the form of grant, loan, or purchase. We might even form an "ADLAI COOP" if things develops, as I wish it would be.

I hope that you could also discuss the D.A.s possible support program (short term/long-term) aside from the ADLAI technology. I hope that the training will be motivating and convincing. As the saying goes, "TO SEE IS TO BELIEVE".

We hope for your training confirmation on Saturday February 25, 2017 at 1:00 PM-5:00 PM at my place here (at this address).

Looking forward for your help.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) RENATO C. VILLANUEVA

Info campaign and dog care activities marked Rabies Awareness Month

San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur---The Department of Agriculture (DA) Bicol celebrated March as Rabies Awareness Month with a series of activities in the Bicol Region to create awareness to the public regarding the dangers of rabies and its control.

Last year, there were 19 human and 21 animal rabies cases reported by the DOH and DA respectively which show that rabies is still endemic in the Bicol Region.

According to the Regional Rabies Coordinator and Chief of the Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory Dr. Rona Bernales, rabies eradication is a multi-sectoral collaboration and each sector should work hand-in-hand to achieve the goal of Rabies-Free Philippines in 2020.

For this year, the DA along with the STANDZ-Rabies Project, DA-Bureau of Animal Industry (DA-BAI), World Organization of Animal Health (OIE), Australian Aid, DOH, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the Department of Education (DepEd) conducted a number of activities to celebrate the Rabies Month with the theme



Hybrid rice techno demo in Tigaon, Cam. Sur recorded highest yield of 9.5 tons/ha.

TIGAON, CAMARINES SUR - Municipal Agriculturist Lea Beltran proudly declared the 9.5 tons highest yield recorded during the Rice Productivity Enhancement (RIPE) harvest festival in the 24 hectare cluster Hybrid Rice Techno Demo in Caraycayon, Tigaon, Camarines Sur.

Farmer co-operator Alexander Mabana said he used Pioneer 77 hybrid rice variety in this techno demo, and the secret for his high yield is keeping the soil moist all of the time. He was very happy when harvested 9.5 tons (215 cavans) from his one hectare hybrid rice farm, a far cry from the 35-50 cavans he usually harvest with inbred rice varieties in the same area.

Municipal Agriculturist Lea Beltran said 24 farmer-cooperators have qualified for the techno demo project and were given 15 kilos hybrid rice seed each and 10 bags fertilizer for a hectare area. The synchronous planting was done on December 23, 2016, two days before typhoon Nina devastated Camarines Sur province.

This is just the first cropping season for the project. Beltran encouraged other rice farmers from the 23 barangays of

Tigaon to join the techno demo in the second cropping. For each cropping, the counterpart of the farmer-cooperator are labor and his participation in the data gathering, and a cash deposit of P15,000 from his income to his chosen bank for the two cropping seasons, so that the farmer co-operator will have P30,000 savings for the hybrid rice seed for his third cropping season. Four seed companies participated in the



Alexander Mabana

techno demo and the highest yielding variety which is most suitable in Tigaon will be used as farmers choice seed.

Alex Atian of the Department of Agriculture Rice Program said this is only one among the 4,800 hectares hybrid rice techno demo of the DA in the entire region which are conducting simultaneous harvest festivals. **(Lovella Guarin)**



Tigaon, Cam. Sur Municipal Agriculturist Lea Beltran shows the 24 hectare hybrid rice techno demo at the foot of Mt. Isarog in Bgy. Caraycayon, Tigaon.

(Below) Alex Atian, technical staff of DA Bicol Rice Program discussing the future plans for the techno demo project.



“Rabies Iwasan, Alaga’y Pabakunahan”.

In Bula, Camarines Sur, the Training on the Strengthening of the Rabies Eradication Program was attended by more than 30 barangay officials. Topics discussed include how to report a biting incident; to make a systematic form of accurate and on-time reporting; the practical inter-sectoral linking; and the composition of the Barangay Rabies Prevention and Control Committee (BRPCC).

The Team also assisted in the organization of the Municipal Rabies Prevention and Control Committee (MRPCC) with members from the LGU and representatives of the

DA, DOH, PNP, DepEd and DILG through the Executive Order No. 15 series of 2017 signed by Municipal Mayor Amelita Ibasco. The MRPCC committed to strictly implement the ordinance and to enforce impounding activities by the year 2018.

Bula Municipal Agricultural Office, DA and the CBSUA also conducted a free spay-castration of pet dogs; anti-rabies vaccination and information campaign in Palsong Elementary and High Schools.

Meanwhile during the Responsible Pet Ownership and Rabies Awareness Seminar conducted in Balatan, Camarines Sur, Mayor

Sec. Manny F. Piñol meets with.. *(from page 1)*

bags open pollinated white corn seeds worth P420,000 to be turned over to LGUs with corn areas. As a token for the host city, secretary Piñol also pledged P5 million to Mayor Patricia Alsua for the livelihood projects of the farmers in Ligao City.

Handed over were: one (1) unit rice processing center (RPC I) worth P6 Million to the Maporong Farmers Association, Inc.; cacao processing equipment worth P350,000 which include a roaster, grinder, cracker with cleaner and a power sprayer to the Kawa-kawa

Organic Planters Processors Association; 100 sets of garden tools and 100 packs assorted vegetable seeds worth P170,000 to the Women's groups from the 3rd district of Albay; and 100 heads of ducks and 10 heads sheep worth P135,000 for the Nabonton 4-H Club of Ligao City.

In his message, Secretary Piñol said that agriculture and fisheries are the hope of this country. "Ang mga barangay ay mga spring na pinanggagalingan ng tubig na bumubuhay sa bansa. Kung walang kabuhayan ang mga tao sa barangay pupunta sila

sa Maynila at maninirahan sa ilalim ng mga tulay. (Barangays served as spring of water that gives life to the country. If there are no livelihoods in the barangays, the rural folks will go to Manila and will live under bridges.)

Sec. Piñol added that he has three answers to improve agriculture and fisheries: 1) new farming technologies such as the solar powered irrigation; use of hybrid rice which can triple the average yield per hectare from the national average of 4 metric tons per hectare to P16 metric tons per hectare; color coded agricultural guide (CCAG) which will remove "guesswork in Philippine farming." By using the CCAG map, LGUs will be able to identify which crops are suitable to a particular area; 2) financing or easy credit without collateral; and 3) marketing.

During the dialogue, the Secretary committed to provide P5 million worth solar powered irrigation to two farmers organizations. He also directed Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) Executive Director Jocelyn Alma R. Badiola to release initially P20 million loanable amount for the farmers affected by typhoon Nina in Albay.

Also present during the dialogue were Governor Al Francis Bichara, 3rd district representative Fernando

Gonzales, Mayor Patricia G. Alsua, DA Bicol regional executive director Dr. Elena B. de los Santos, farmer leaders including Regional Agriculture and Fishery Council chairperson, Alfredo Rillo and heads of DA attached agencies. Mayors and municipal agriculturist from other municipalities of Albay were also present as well the provincial agriculturist of Albay Cheryl Rebeta.

From Ligao City Sec. Piñol proceeded to Casiguran, Sorsogon. This is the second official sortie of secretary Piñol to Bicol since he assumed his post as the highest DA official. This provincial sortie or "Biyaheng Bukid" of Sec. Piñol is capped with a face-to-face dialogue with farmers and agri and fishery stakeholders together with local officials dubbed as "Tapatan: Gobyerno at Mamamayan" to bring the government closer to the people and deliver the goods and services to them which is among the commitments of President Duterte. He was also with the president during the latter's visit to Catanduanes and Camarines Sur provinces immediately after typhoon Nina last December but did not have the chance to interact with farmers and local officials.



Secretary Piñol (center) turns over the certificate of award for various interventions to LGU Libon. Also in photo are (L-R) DA Bicol RTD Edgar R. Madrid; Albay 3rd district Rep. Fernando Gonzales; farmer recipients; DA Bicol RED Elena B. delos Santos; and Albay Provincial Agriculturist Cheryl Rebeta.

Ernesto Bagasbas expressed his support to the Rabies Eradication Program and suggested that a barangay assembly be held for proper cascading of information to the constituents. It was participated in by more than 40 barangay officials and representatives from the government agencies. Marilou Parce of Nabua Animal Bite Treatment Center (ABTC) said the bite victims should be diligent in complying with their scheduled post-exposure prophylaxis. The ABTC staff are available even during holidays and weekends to attend to bite patients.

On same municipality, the team together with the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture (CBSUA)-College of Veterinary Medicine assisted in the Bayanihan Laban sa Rabies ng Camarines Sur and Mass Dog Rabies Vaccination. It was conducted in barangays Camangahan, Pararao, Luluasan,

Siramag, Duran, Laganac, Tapayas. This activity is conducted every Friday of March.

The Naga City Veterinary Office headed by Dr. Junios Elad spearheaded the Naga City Pet Day and Rabies Technical Updates. This activity is held every second Sunday of March according to the Proclamation No. 2016-001 signed by Mayor John G. Bongat. Events include a Dog Walk; stickers with this message "This home is Rabies protected" were posted in doors and gates of houses to show that the dogs in the house was vaccinated in barangays Concepcion Pequena, Tinago and Dayandang; castration, deworming and vaccination; a training on dog catching for barangay tanods; and an information-drive on Republic Act Numbers 9482 and 8485. **(Jayson M. Gonzales & Dr. Mardi M. Caniban).**

DA Bicol bares 2018 programs and budget through a consultation with civil societies

SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR – As mandated by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), before a proposed budget of a national government agency is approved by the congress, it needs to be endorsed by the civil society organizations following a bottom up approach in budgeting and program implementation. Thus, on March 1, 2017, the DA convened the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from all over the region and updated them on DA 5 2018 Plans and Budget Proposal. The consultation was held at the DA new administration building.

Present during the consultation were officers of the Regional Agriculture and Fishery Council, representatives from DA attached agencies such as PCIC, ATI, BFAR, PCA, PhilFIDA, provincial veterinarians, provincial agriculturists,

irrigators associations, rural-based organizations, the academe, private sector, Cam. Sur Chamber of Commerce, and Bicol Federation of Dairy Cooperatives.

Dr. Edgar R. Madrid, DA RFO 5 Regional Technical Director for Research and Regulations in his welcome remarks, said that the consultation is a means to present the guidelines to the CSOs and also to get feedback from the stakeholders.

Dr. Elena B. delos Santos, DA RFO 5 Regional Executive



DA 5 Regional Executive Director Elena B. delos Santos.

Director imparted the output of the CSO forum conducted by the Bicol Coalition for Development which presented three poverty reduction agenda: 1) Enhance accessibility of farmers/fishers to government entities and interventions; 2) Strengthen CSO organizational sustainability and promote CSO local governance; and

3) Sustainable environment through active CSO participation. “Thus, this CSO consultation is very important not only to get the endorsement of the CSOs present but to improve accessibility of DA programs,” director de los Santos underscored.

Director de los Santos
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Agri chief turns over fiber glass boats.. (from page 1)

fishing nets to 36 families, the first batch of 400 beneficiaries of the DA's efforts to address poverty in the Philippines by developing the countryside.

Each of the 200 fiber glass boats was awarded to two families during the ceremonial turnover activity and the Secretary promised to return after one or two years to evaluate the program's impact to the quality of lives of the beneficiaries. He added that the government will also generate employment for the fisherfolk by training them on boat building. He also

committed to provide a cold storage facility and ice plant to Sorsogon in support to the livelihood assistance given to the coastal communities. Moreover, Secretary Piñol shared his plan to procure a cargo plane to implement the Food Skyway, a program to bring fresh fish and agricultural products to prospective markets nationwide.

Salvador Bellen, 71, of Brgy. Somal-ot, Casiguran, Sorsogon, who has been fishing since 1962 and one of the beneficiaries expressed his gratitude to the DA, “Masaya

po ako dahil sa pamamagitan nito, makakapangisda na kami sa malayu-layo at makakahuli na kami ng marami-rami--nabigyan kami ng kabuhayan. Noon, nakakadalawa o tatlong kilo na huli lang kami dahil sagwanan lang na bangka ang gamit namin, kahoy lang at luma na.”

In his message, Escudero asked the beneficiaries to take good care of the fiber glass boats to prolong usability.

“Sinubukan kong pukpukin ng maso ito, hindi kaya, gustuhin nyo mang sirain hindi kayang sirain pero

kailangan pa rin ng konting pag-aalaga. Pangarap namin, kada mangingisda, fiber glass boat ang gamit para hindi lamang pangmatagalan, panghabambuhay na serbisyo na ito para sa inyo,” he said.

Casiguran has a total population of 37,428 composed of 6,790 households. According to Casiguran Mayor Edwin Hamor, 4,270 households or 89.31% of the municipality's population are dependent on agriculture while 1,953 households are fishermen.

(Annielyn L. Baleza)

NEWS IN PHOTO

Ground breaking ceremony of the P.5 billion Bulan fish port complex

Senator Francis "Chiz" Escudero and DA Undersecretary for Fisheries Eduardo Gongona led the groundbreaking ceremony of the Bulan Fish Port Complex in Bulan, Sorsogon on March 23, 2017.

Usec. Gongona said that the more than half billion peso facility will benefit more than 6,000 fisherfolks and workers from the different parts of Sorsogon, Masbate, and even Samar. While in the province of Sorsogon, more than 800,000 residents and consumers will directly benefit from the fish port.

Usec Gongona also reported that in 2016, the province of Sorsogon contributed more than 27,000 metric tons of fish and other marine products equivalent to P1.8 billion income.

Also present during the groundbreaking were Governor Robert Lee Rodriguez of Sorsogon; Bulan Mayor Romeo Gondola; DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Elena B. de los Santos; DA RTD for Research Edgar Madrid; BFAR Bicol director Dennis del Socorro; PFDA General Manager Atty. Glen Pangapalan; Port Manager Carlos Hagosojos.



WOMEN'S MONTH

DA engages rural women's participation in government programs

A battery of speakers representing various government agencies discussed their programs and services.



Ma. Cecilia T. Andalis of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)

PILI, CAMARINES SUR – March 8 is celebrated annually as international women's day since 1909 to commemorate the movement for women's rights.

From awareness raising to concrete action, the Department of Agriculture in Bicol together with other concerned government agencies took giant steps in championing women empowerment.

To celebrate women's day, close to a hundred women leaders, Rural Improvement Club officers and cooperative women leaders joined the celebration of Bicol Women's Day staged by the

Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria, Chief of the DA 5 Planning Division and GAD focal person in her welcome remarks, said that President Duterte mandated the full implementation of RA 9170 or the Magna Carta for Women by all agencies, oversight bodies and local government units down to barangay level during his first SONA. The pursuit of development under the new administration is anchored on the commitment of "Malasakit at Pagbabago" or true compassion and real change.

Bañaria added that on March 24, 15 DA women employees and 10 rural women took part in DILG's One Billion Women Rising Dance Revolution held in Legazpi City, on March 29, DA employees also participated in the DSWD sponsored Expressive Art Therapy for Women and Single Mothers and Yoga Wellness held at Bicol University, Legazpi City.

Bañaria also discussed DA's program for women and the Gender Responsive Economic Action for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) Project 2. This is a Canadian government funded project with the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) as the lead implementing agency, which aims to assist women's organizations through trainings or capacity building and link them to markets so they can develop better products, learn good practices and establish formal market linkages and agreements.

Other resource speakers invited to discuss their programs and services for women were: Ma. Cecilia T. Andalis of Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Camarines Sur; Marian T. Monsalve of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); Atty. Arra S. Rotugal of the Social Security System (SSS) Naga Branch; Shirley Vibares of TESDA Camarines Sur; and Estrelia Victoria Macaraig of PCSO Camarines Sur discussed the medical assistance being given by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office;

Tetchie Lizazo, Rural Based Organization (RBO) focal person of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) Regional Training Center (ATI RTC) 5 presented the ATI's program for women. She related that ATI is offering 10 years Social Security System (SSS) remittance subsidy for 13 award winning women leader, youth or members of RBOs who are 55 years old and younger. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**



Marian T. Monsalve of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.



Estrelia Victoria Macaraig of Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office.



Atty. Arra S. Rotugal of Social Security System.



Shirley V. Vibares of TESDA.



In the Philippines, the Women's month celebration is backed by Presidential Proclamation No. 224 series of 1988 declaring March 8 as women's rights and international peace day, and the first week of March each year as women's week. Presidential Proclamation No. 227 series of 1988 also mandated the observance of month of March as "Women's Role in History Month." Republic Act 6499 series of 1990 declared March 8 of every year as National Women's Day.

Department of Agriculture Gender and Development (GAD) focal system for its clientele. The celebration was held at Villa Del Rey inside the Camarines Sur Provincial Capitol Complex in Pili, Camarines Sur.

This year's theme "We make change work for women" aims to inform and engage women as stakeholders of government programs and services to promote citizen centric governance and make change a conscious effort to know, understand and provide what all citizens need.

DA Bicol Gender and Development (GAD) awards GAD Champion implementers

CADLAN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR – In celebration of the Women's Month, the DA Bicol also recognized the efforts of the banner programs, divisions and sections in integrating gender perspective in program implementation. The awarding was held during the Women's Month Celebration for DA employees held at the Villa Del Rey in Provincial Capitol Complex this town.

Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria, DA-5 GAD focal person said the High Value Crops Development Program was chosen as Best Banner Program in recognition of its successful conduct of GAD focused value adding trainings, provision of quality vegetable seeds, planting materials of economically important crops, starter kits, postharvest facilities and processing facilities for pili, pineapple and vegetable resulting to additional livelihood, job generation and increased income for the women beneficiaries. Rosita Imperial, HVCDP banner program coordinator received the P20,000 cash award and certificate of commendation.

The Best Division award went to the Field Operations Division which allocated more than 15% of its total budget for GAD and provided technical support, irrigation network facilities, and agricultural equipment and facilities, support services, marketing assistance, livelihood trainings and seminars, starter kits and livestock to about 21,402 rural women. Dr. Josefina Bañadera, assistant division chief received the P15,000 cash award, and certificate of commendation in behalf of the division.

Three special citations were likewise awarded to the Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Information Section, the Food Laboratory and Mushroom Project of the Research Division and the Corn Program. They received P5,000 cash awards and certificates.

The Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Information Section was recognized for its efforts in highlighting the role of women in agriculture through the publication and airing of women-led success stories in quad media and production of women friendly IEC materials which contributed to awareness raising

and women empowerment. The RAFIS has also been the GAD focal system's consistent partner in producing national awardees in Outstanding Rural Women and Gawad Saka Searches. Emilia B. Bordado, chief of RAFIS received the award.

The Food Laboratory of the Research Division was cited for empowering more women through innovation and product development, coming up with original recipes using mushroom, indigenous fruits and vegetables and imparting these technologies to more rural women through conducts of cooking demonstrations and seminars inspiring the women beneficiaries to start their own business enterprises and earn additional income for their families. Arlene De Asis received the award for the Food Lab.

Meanwhile, the Corn Program was cited for the successful conduct of numerous Climate Farmers Field School for corn production where most of the participants were women farmers and GAD focused value adding training reinforced by provision of starter kits.

More than 80 women employees of DA and Provincial Rural Improvement Club presidents attended the celebration.

Dr. Patrocinio Felizmenio, provincial Science and Technology Coordinator of DOST discussed Basic Food Safety. She emphasized the importance of washing hands as food safety is in our hands. "The factors that favor the growth of bacteria are acidity, temperature, presence of oxygen and moisture. Four hours is enough to spoil foods with mayonnaise and tomato sauce which can cause illness, while high moisture content makes food susceptible to bacterial growth," she added.

Emilia B. Bordado, Chief Information Officer and Resident Ombudsman discussed on the Role of Women as Catalyst of Change Towards Moral Recovery and Value Restoration. She said that for a true change to take place in our nation, there must first be a change within ourselves. She challenged the women to achieve change with a heart or true compassion. As the word CHANGE means C-ompassionate H-armonized A-ction N-etworks for G-ender E-quity.

As a tribute to women employees, TESDA brought its Health and Wellness Program and give free massage, hair cut, manicure and pedicure to the participants. *(Lovella P. Guarin)*



**Field Operations Division -
2016 Best Division**



**High Value Crops Dev't Program -
2016 Best Banner Program**



**Corn Program -
Citation**



**RAFIS -
Citation**



**Food Laboratory -
Citation**



Lorenzo Alvina, DA Corn Program Coordinator



Jerry Mercado, President of Maymatan Multi-purpose Coop.

Corn, cassava summit tackles industry prospects, market and issues

NABUA, CAMARINES SUR—“Sell dried cassava than fresh cassava, and sell it to us!”

This was the appeal of Maymatan Multipurpose Cooperative (MMC) President Jerry M. Mercado to the more than 90 farmers, corn and cassava agricultural extension workers, Corn Board members, and feed milling companies who participated in the Corn and Cassava Stakeholders Summit here.

Mercado encouraged the farmers to sell dried cassava which is currently priced at P9.50/kg compared to fresh, granulated or ripe which is bought at P3.00/kg.

Cassava is considered as an attractive crop for agribusiness and industry. San Miguel Corporation-South Luzon Area Coordinator Ben S. Brasales encouraged the cassava farmers to organize themselves into an assembler group with a minimum of 20 hectares of cassava plantation. As an accredited assembler, the members are guaranteed with market, floor price, technical assistance in production, postharvest and logistics.

Accredited assemblers in Bicol aside from MMC are retired Judge Montenegro-Tinangis Assembler in Pili, Camarines Sur and KSP-VAC Assembler in Cawayan, Masbate.

At present, SMC has a sustainable sourcing program of dried cassava in Mindanao for feeds.

DA-5 Regional Corn Coordinator Lorenzo L. Alvina

proposed the merging of cassava and corn board.

Mercado cited that government support or interventions on pre- and post-harvest facilities and equipment will boost cassava industry. He cited the Legazpi City government which helped in the land preparation and marketing of the cassava by engaging the scavengers to plant cassava.

For 2016, Bicol Region produced 108,629 MT cassava.

Bicol Corn Board (BCB) President Romualdo J. Elvira, Jr. said that the estimated annual corn production of Bicol Region for 2016 increased by 7.70% or an increment of 18,770 metric tons. One contributing factor is Bt Corn. He stressed the advantages of genetically-modified crops especially corn, eggplant and golden rice. Information and education about GM Crops should be prioritized.

Elvira also said that the BCB facilitated the opening up of new production areas in Mercedes and Labo, Camarines Norte and in Masbate. It provided market linkages such as: Labo Corn Grower Association to Arrow

Feeds; Mercedes Corn Cluster Organization to BMEG Feeds; Nonoy de la Cruz to Seeds Producers in Bukidnon; and Mayor Severo to Quezon Poultry and Livestock Corporation.

The BCB also facilitated the establishment of post-harvest facilities for Tigaon Grain Center; Pili, Village Type Grain Center; Daraga Village type Grain Center; and Ligao Village Type Grain Center.

Elvira added that the livestock industry is one of the big contributors in the economic development of the Philippines although the government support is not enough to sustain the industry. In the Bicol Region, the industry is being faced with issues on costly inputs, proximity to infected Avian Influenza infected country, limited access to credit, smuggling, unpredictable weather patterns, high cost of breeder and commercial stocks and declining pasture areas.

Science Research Assistant Marianito A. Tesorero said that the Bicol region has a large number of livestock animals. However, corn production in the Bicol region cannot

supply the needed volume to feed the livestock industry. He encouraged the farmers to include cassava in their produce since it is a good animal feed alternative.

Assistant Regional Corn Program Coordinator Dean L. Medrano presented the Status of the Cassava Marketing Operation and Trading in the Bicol Region. The second, third and fourth districts of Camarines Sur are potential cassava areas for development because of the presence of feed millers, input supply and bulk buyers, and as poultry center.

One of the major issues in cassava and corn production is the emerging pests and diseases that affect the production of farmers. Senior Science Research Specialist Giovanni F. Valenciano advised the farmers to practice fallow period, crop rotation, synchronous planting, and intercropping leguminous plants.

For his part Engr. Eduardo Villamor, President of the AIMS Agriventure, presented the new farm equipment and facilities for cassava like the Belt Conveyor Dryer; Dryer; Kubota M9540; and cassava uprooter. For corn, the equipment presented were corn planter, harvester; picker; self-propelled corn combine harvester; and corn dryer.

As assistance to the farmers and assemblers especially for their credit and crop insurance, the Banco Santiago de Libon is offering Agri-Loan to the farmers. Credit Management Division Chief Cristina Salvamente said that the bank has a P100 million loan investment for farmers

(Next page pls.)



DA Bicol bares 2018 programs...

(from page 6)

announced that in CY 2017 the DA Bicol will focus more on livelihood projects using Value Chain Analysis approach. She proudly announced that the DA Bicol has achieved an over all performance of 101% in the provision of interventions in 2016 despite the calamities. And because of the agency's financial absorptive capacity, the DA Bicol was given P1.742 billion budget which is 17% higher than its 2016 budget.

The rice program, on the other hand, as per instruction of Sec. Piñol, will focus more on postharvest machineries and facilities than production machineries, director de los Santos added. For irrigation, the priority will be Small Farm Reservoir and solar powered irrigation the first of which was launched by President Duterte in M'lang North Cotabato. Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol instructed each region to put up 10 units solar powered irrigation. "This is one way to prepare for the lifting of Quantitative Restrictions on rice this July as solar powered irrigation will lower cost of rice production particularly in irrigation and will help the Filipino farmers compete with the farmers of other countries. According to National Irrigation Administration computation, it costs about P250,000 to P300,000 to irrigate a hectare of rice field, but the solar powered irrigation will only cost P25,000 to P30,000 per hectare and it can be serviceable within one month," de los Santos related.

De los Santos also reported that the SURE Loan has already been approved by Secretary Piñol. Under the program, farmers affected by typhoon Nina as certified by their barangay captains, can avail of maximum of P25,000 interest-free loan through conduit



RTD Edgar R. Madrid



OIC-RTD Rodel P. Tornilla



Corn farmer Raul Carerras



Pili processor Lydia Lomibao



DA 5 Planning Chief Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria.

cooperatives such as Rice Processing Center Beneficiaries of DA.

Aloha Gigi Bañaria, Chief of the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division presented the proposed budget for 2018 which amounted to P2.01 billion under Tier 1 and P7 billion under Tier 2. She explained that a very big budget is proposed under Tier 2 for 2018 because it included the retirement incentive of some DA employees who will opt to retire and avail of the package under Senate Bill 1162 or the Act Rightsizing the National Government to Improve Public Service Delivery.

The DA RFO 5 banner program coordinators presented their respective FY 2018 proposed plans and budget. Rodel Tornilla, OIC Chief of the Field Operations Division and Rice Program Focal Person presented the Rice Program 2018 plans and budget. Lorenzo Alvina,



BCARRD Consotrium Director and representative from the academe Dr. Marissa Estrella.

Corn Program Regional Coordinator for the Corn Program; Rosita M. Imperial, Regional Coordinator of High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) for the HVCDP; Dr. Josefina Bañadera, Livestock program coordinator for the Livestock and Poultry Program; and Adelina A. Losa, Organic Agriculture focal person presented the 2018 plans and budget for Organic Agriculture. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**

Corn, cassava ...

(from page 10)

"kasi magaling magbayad ang mga magsasaka."

According to Philippine Statistics Authority Focal Person for Cereals Naser Tuazon, 42,000 families in Bicol are dependent on corn and cassava for livelihood.

OIC-RTD for Operations and Extension Rodel P. Tornilla stressed the importance of the summit saying that the "inputs of the participants are valuable for future plans for cassava and corn development." **(Jayson Gonzales)**

5,000 hectares Rice model farm ...

(from page 1)

Rice Model Farms will showcase the yield advantage of using hybrid rice seeds as compared to inbred certified or good seeds and farmer's home saved. One component of the project is the provision of high quality hybrid rice seeds, and technical assistance on the recommended management practices. One bag of hybrid seeds (15 kilograms) best adopted and preferred by the farmer shall be given to the qualified farmer recipients.

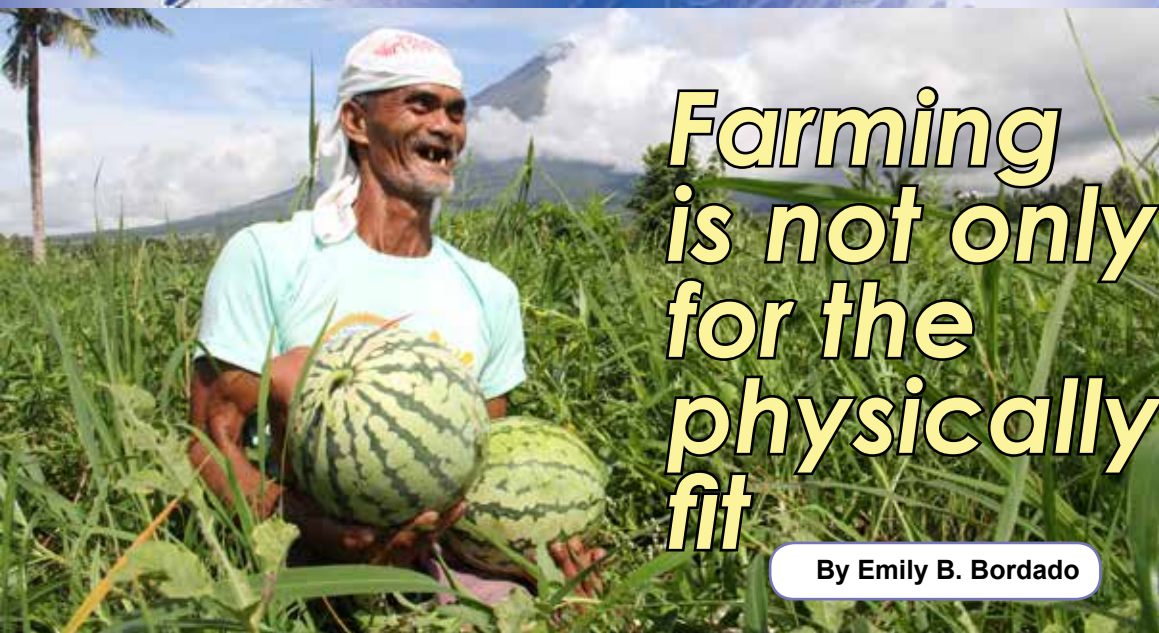
With proper management of hybrid rice, farmers can attain 6 – 10 metric tons per hectare compared to inbred varieties which only yield 3.5 mt/hectare. Hybrid rice varieties recommended by DA Rice Program are PHB 77 (Pioneer), TH82 (Seedworks), Bigante (Bayer), Mestizo 18 and 20 (Public Hybrid), S6003 (Syngenta), SL 18 (SL Agritech).

A maximum of 8 bags fertilizer depending on the

result of the Rice Ccrop Manager recommendation will be given to the farmer.

Farmer recipients are required to attend briefings on hybrid rice production to qualify.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the project, after the harvest for the season, farmer recipients will be required to deposit the corresponding amount of the inputs received to their chosen bank. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**



By Emily B. Bordado

Physical impairment could have debilitating effects not only physically but also emotionally and psychologically. And some persons with physical disability may feel handicapped and use this as an excuse for not fulfilling a normal role at home or in the community. But not Samuel Baluso, 54-year old farmer afflicted with paralytic polio from Barangay Sto. Niño in Sto. Domingo, Albay. He proves that farming is not only for the physically fit but also for those who have physical disability but are determined to rise above their condition.

The first time I saw him as he entered the Municipal Agriculture office, I was moved with pity as he was using his two palms and knees as if they were his feet. His legs were thin, twisted, floppy and swinging as he moved forward. The first thing that came to my mind is that he was there to beg for alms and instinctively I reached for my wallet to get some money. But somebody restrained me from handing it over to him.

"Hindi po siya nakikilimos. Farmer po siya at nandito siya para kunin ang fertilizer nya para sa kanyang palayan."

I felt embarrassed that I had the wrong impression of who he is and why he came over. But my embarrassment

easily melted as he greeted me cheerfully and began conversing with me.

He was introduced to me as a very active farmer cooperador from one of the barangays in the municipality. I could hardly believe that with his condition he could be tending a farm. Vicente Balunso, the municipal agriculturist told me: "Dapat mabisita mo siya sa uma niya. Mahigugon saka garu daing kapagalan iyan" (You should see how he works in his farm.' He is very industrious, hard working and tireless.

Curious and amazed I requested for a schedule for a visit to his farm which he readily accepted.

We arrived at about 2 pm at his farm more or less 2 kms away from the town proper and located along the slopes of Mt. Mayon. The farm was about 500 meters away from

his house. Luckily it was not a very hot day and the sky was overcast for he was out there tending to the pepper (sili) plants which were just recovering after Typhoon Nina passed through the province.

According to Samuel, he was just leasing the half hectare farm from its owner. A big portion of the farm he planted with hybrid rice and another portion he plants to various vegetables. Before, he has planted ampalaya, pechay and sitao. But this time he planted sili plants as they fetch higher price.

He was looking forward to a big harvest and income from his sili but typhoon Nina struck, so a lot of his plants were destroyed. Good thing the rice plants were just in their early vegetative stage so they were able to recover. And Samuel did not waste time.

He immediately prepared

a new seed bed where he plants new sili seeds to replace the destroyed ones. He did not wait for help to come. He immediately went to the Municipal Agricultural Office to request for seeds and



other inputs.

According to the agricultural technicians assisting him he is a very active participant to Farmers Field School and has completed the season long training on Palay Check. PalayCheck is a dynamic rice crop management system introduced by the PhilRice which presents the best key technology and management practices as Key Checks; compares farmer practices with the best practices; and facilitates learning through farmers' discussion group to sustain improvement in productivity, profitability, and environment safety.

While most farmers are still tied to their traditional farming practices and are not receptive to modern technologies, Samuel is already using hybrid rice seeds which is planted adjacent to the sili plants. He now practices what he has learned from the farmer field school and other trainings he has attended.

He also reaches out to other farmers. He is an active member of the irrigators association in their area. He is quite well known in the town's public market for he is regularly selling his vegetables and other produce there every market day. Despite his physical disability he is regarded with respect and admiration by his town mates.

Samuel rely on his farm for the family subsistence. They used to be five in the family – his wife and 3 children. But a few years ago his wife left him and brought along their eldest son. But their two other teenaged children now aged 21 and 18 chose to stay with him. They are now helping him in the farm. Also a constant companion is his pet dog "Dodoy" – who also accompanies him not only in house but also in the farm.

His only diversion in life after a weeklong toil and

(Turn to page 14)



Ying's Integrated Natural Garden located at barangay Travesia in the town of Guinobatan in Albay is barely a hectare. It is a small lot of only about 898 square meters but has a myriad of plant collections which are edible, nutritious, culinary, ornamental, therapeutic, medicinal and with high economic value. Owned and managed by Mrs. Lazara Opeña – Nibungco fondly called “Ying” by friends and acquaintances, this garden is now well known in their municipality and gaining popularity in the neighboring towns and even in the province. “One need not have a big area to be productive,” says maam Ying. “Gardening in a small space can be challenging but can also be fun”, she adds. It just needs some imagination, resourcefulness and a lot of passion.” And that is what Maam Ying has plenty of.

Her garden which is within the compound of her residential lot teems with different culinary herbs and medicinal plants such as Italian oregano, tarragon, Vietnamese coriander, saw tooth coriander,

mint, rosemary, blue ternate, sweet basil, Thai basil, citronella, gotu cola, lavender, oregano, ashitaba (Angelica keiski), serpentina, peppermint, spearmint, java mint, lemon balm, stevia, aloe vera, sorosoro, kadlum (patchouli) celery, parsley, pandan, ginger, turmeric and many others. Her fruit trees include dragon fruit, atis, cacao, kalamansi, guava, seedless pomelo, American lemon, avocado, rambutan, grapes, bananas, strawberries, lanzones, papaya and Noni (aputot).

The vegetables she grows are cucumbers (2 varieties), squash, singkamas, eggplant, cabbage, lettuce, garlic chives, green onions, malunggay, sesame, saluyot, peppers, and bay leaf. The lettuce, green onions, sesame and dragon fruits she planted on the concrete rooftop of her bungalow. She has 15 beds on her rooftop planted with four varieties of lettuce namely: carlo rossa, tyrol romaine, curly green and red frillice. Each bed has about 100 heads of lettuce. Cabbage and brocolliare just newly transplanted in plots at the rooftop.

Moreover legumes and forage for animals are planted in her garden which are: madre de agua, indigofera, flemingia and malunggay.

She also has a rice farm located in a different site.

A chemical engineer by profession, Ying did not

have the chance to practice the profession as she got married early and became a full time housewife while her husband provided for the family by engaging in livestock trading (buy and sell of animals). She taught briefly at a Catholic school in Guinobatan but later has to give up her work as she became preoccupied with the rearing of their six children. But she kept herself busy tending to their garden. She started with ornamentals and some vegetables and fruits for family consumption. It started as a hobby but soon she developed a passion for gardening. Whenever she travels she brings home with her seeds, seedlings or planting materials.

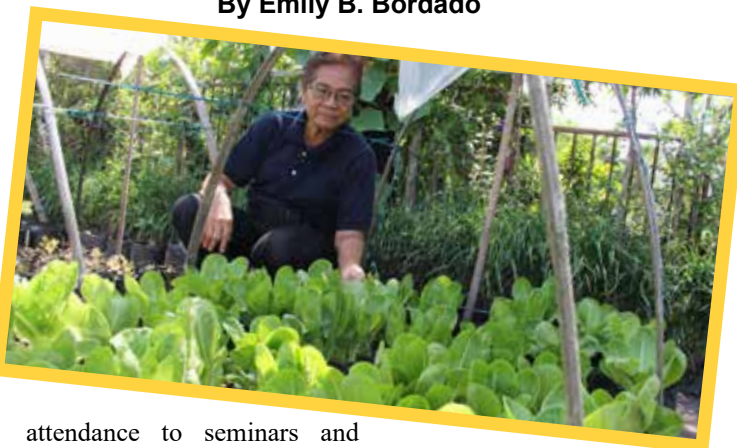
Through readings and

and Fishery Council where she had the chance to attend more agriculture related - trainings and events. After knowing the benefits of organic agriculture she also espoused the principles of natural farming and organic agriculture and practiced them in her farm. She learned that crop, animals and aquaculture can be integrated. She then transformed her garden into an integrated natural farm.

Currently she has 6 ducks, 10 hens and 1 rooster, 1 sow, 5 native fatterer pigs. She also constructed a small pond at the center of her garden where some fishes are stocked. The pond is covered with floating trays where duck weeds are confined. These weeds serve as feed for the livestock and fishes

Ying's Integrated Natural Garden – a miniature garden of Eden

By Emily B. Bordado



attendance to seminars and trainings she acquired more information and knowledge about gardening which she tried and adopted in her garden. She also linked up with other plant enthusiasts and agriculture stakeholders. She became a member of their Municipal Agricultural

as they are rich in protein.

The duck weeds are confined in floating trays so that the tilapia /fishes in the pond will not consume them all at once. The floating duckweed trays serve as regulator of the temperature hot days. They

(Turn to page 14)



Farming is not only... (from page 14)

labor in the farm and peddling his products in the market is taking home a bottle of gin and sharing this with his drinking



buddies. But he knows his limit. He just need some alcohol booster to raise up his spirits and recharge. He has to remain sober as he has to rise again early the next day and work in the farm.

It is really inspiring that Samuel despite his physical infirmity, his lack of formal education and economic deprivation, he harbors no bitterness and rancor. He offers no excuses. He accepts things as they come: whether pleasant

or unpleasant. He faces life seriously but cheerfully.

"Habang may buhay sige lang nang sige," quips Samuel.

If Samuel can raise a family, tend a farm, produce crops from the land, provide food for the community and contribute to the community in his own small way we should be ashamed if we who have complete physical faculties, obtained a formal education and enjoying all the comforts in life but not giving our best



and not sharing enough of ourselves to others and the community.

Ying's Integrated Natural Garden... (from page 13)

also prevent the duck weeds to spread and cover all the water surface since they grow and spread very fast in a matter of days, Ying explained. The pond also serves as a source of water for the plants especially during hot and dry days.

Around the garden she has installed 20 colonies of stingless bees. Her main purpose for them is to serve as pollinators for her plants. The original 10 bee colonies are housed in wooden boxes and the 10 new ones are housed in coconut shells. The honey produced is harvested twice a year.

Flowering plants and ornamental also abound in her



vermiculture package/set from the Department of Agriculture consisting of a shredder machine, 15 kilos African night crawler or vermi worm and vermin tea brewer. This serves as a common service facility. And with this facility she now produces her own bio fertilizer and teaches others how to make their own.

She also attended the TESDA Organic Agriculture Production short course after which she obtained a National Certificate (NCII) for Organic Agriculture upon completion of the course and passing the Competency Assessment Certification.

Since then her garden has become a destination for visitors, culinary students, participants of organic agriculture trainings and seminars, groups which are advocates and engaged in natural farming, buyers of plants, vegetables and herbs and persons who are simply interested in natural gardening come to visit and interact with her. They are toured around by ma'am Ying herself. She also generously shares her

knowledge, experiences and good practices as resource person/lecturer in trainings and seminars on topics about organic agriculture.

But there were times when she also thought of abandoning her love and passion for gardening. When typhoon Nina damaged almost all her plants she thought of giving up. When her husband - her greatest love, constant companion and inspiration passed away she also felt devastated. But thanks to the comfort and solace given to her by her children, friends and colleagues especially from AFCs she regained her bearing and confidence and started to move on.

While she had two regular workers and two on call laborers on the farm she still help in the plant bed preparation and media preparation. She also makes organic concoction and bio fertilizers such as the fermented fruit juices (FFJs), fermented plant juices (FPJs) using the farm or kitchen wastes. She also gets technical assistance from the provincial and municipal agriculture office, the regional staff and personnel from the DA and the Agricultural Training Institute. She is also fully supported by the MAFC and the PAFC especially by Fred Oben, the Albay PAFC chair who has been aggressively promoting her garden and products.

She earns income from the sale of her vegetables, seedlings, seeds, piglets, and garden soil with vermicast. Knowing the benefits of value adding she processes excess farm produce like papaya into atsara, burong kamias, mango and other fruits into puree.

She also air dries herbs like oregano, basil, rosemary, lavender and blue ternate and pack them as tea brew.

With all her children now having their own family Ying is now living all by herself in their house with only a house help to keep her company and some laborers during the day. At 68 she is still very energetic and physically active and mentally alert and smart. She continues to nurture not only her children and her plants but also the lives of other people. She is active in the church and translates her spiritual beliefs and conviction into action by generously sharing God's gifts and blessings with others. She shares her time, talents and resources to other women and other people and to the community. She organized the Rural Improvement Club in their barangay and share her knowledge, experiences and good practices with them.

More than the financial rewards, Ying says she finds fulfillment in what she is doing. Gardening has a therapeutic effect on her especially in times when she feels depressed and when she was really in deep mourning after the death of her husband. Where before gardening was her passion - today she considers it as her mission and obligation to produce healthy, nutritious, pesticide-free and chemical-free food and to encourage others to do the same for the benefit of the family and community.

"Come visit my garden" she invites. "Let us talk about it and be inspired to follow and do more of it in your area be it big or small."



garden which add color and vibrance to her garden. These include torrenia, portulaca, impatiens, red ginger torch, gumamela, bougainvillea, oxalis triangularis, orchids, and marigold. She adopted the vertical gardening approach.

She now sits at the Albay Provincial Agriculture and Fisheries Council (PAFC) as Organic Agriculture sector representative. Through PAFC she was able to obtain



Sugarcane farmers harvesting matured canes which are 7-10 months old. They practice selective harvesting where the younger canes are retained in the field.



Maricel Base, President of POCAMPROFA

Muscovado farmers in Polangui vie for organic certification

by **Lovella P. Guarin**

POLANGUI, ALBAY- Ever heard of muscovado sugar? In the upland barangay of Balaba, this municipality, over 500 hectares of coconut areas are planted with sugarcane. Thus, two muscovado milling facilities are thriving here and helping the organic muscovado industry gain ground in the local market.

The Arim's Muscovado milling facility owned by couple Arnel and Maricel Base is one of the milling facilities being supported by the local government of Polangui and other government agencies. Arnel and Maricel started in the sugarcane business in 2010. They loaned P139,000 from the CARD Inc. for the establishment of the simple milling facility then. The CARD Inc. also provided Arnel some training on muscovado processing in Ilocos Norte. Eventually, they acquired a sugarcane crusher or juicer and pulverizer from the Department of Trade and Industry.

Maricel is the president of the Polangui Organic Calamay Muscovado Producers and Farmers Association (POCAMPROFA). It has 29 members and was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as a legit farmers' organization in January 2016.

Last year, the Organic Agriculture Program of the Department of Agriculture provided P1.5 million to the LGU of Polangui for the rehabilitation of the muscovado processing facilities. This

year, the DA Bicol Organic Agriculture program helped the POCAMPROFA apply for the 3rd party organic agriculture certification for their muscovado products from the OCCP to boost the market value of their muscovado and satisfy what the health conscious consumers are craving for – an organic label. This April, a team from the OCCP will visit their facilities and the POCAMPROFA farmers to validate their application. She is optimistic that the result will be on their favor because their products are first class muscovado sugar.

The name muscovado was derived from the Spanish word "mascabado" which means unrefined. Muscovado is also known as organic sugar. It is natural cane sugar and can be compared to honey in terms of health benefits.

To produce muscovado, sugarcane juice is extracted using a cane crusher and the juice is heated for two hours until it forms into unrefined sugar. Due to lack of refining, it retains much of the nutritional contents of the sugarcane juice. Unlike processing for white sugar, the molasses is not separated from the sugar stream when the cane is crushed.

Raw sugar contains organic properties such as glucose, which is easily absorbed by the body and provides it with more energy. It is also believed to

improve circulation, increase blood cell production, and enhance digestion. Thus, health conscious consumers who prefer organic sugar over cancer causing sweeteners look for muscovado in the market.

Polangui Municipal Agriculturist Alfredo Mariscotez attested that the sugarcane in all areas of



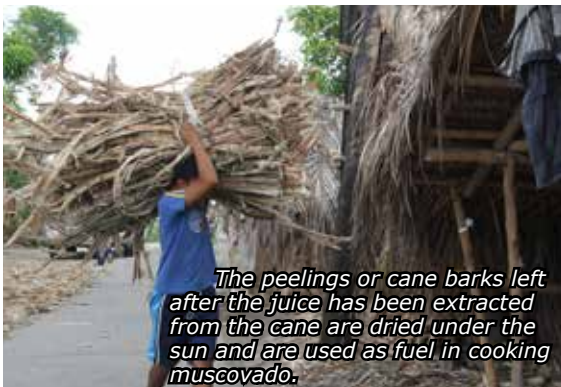
Polangui Mun. Agriculturist Alfredo Mariscotez.

Polangui are naturally grown and free from chemicals.

Eduardo Ronda, sugarcane farmer from neighboring barangay of Cipres said they don't apply any chemical fertilizer in their cane. "Mapula ang kalamay pag may fertilizer, he enthused."

The members of the POCAMPROFA believes that having an organic certification tucked in their products will mean more buyers and better price for their muscovado.

(Turn to page 16)



The peelings or cane barks left after the juice has been extracted from the cane are dried under the sun and are used as fuel in cooking muscovado.

Muscovado farmers.. (from page 14)

Training on Muscovado Production and Processing

On April 5 and 6, 2017, some 25 sugarcane farmers of Polangui attended a training on Muscovado Production and Processing sponsored by the Provincial Agriculture Service of Albay in cooperation with the Polangui Municipal Agriculture Office and the DA Regional Field Office No. 5.

Maricel was one of the speakers during the training. She expertly demonstrated the steps in processing muscovado starting from selection of matured sugarcane and crushing the cane to extract the juice using a crushing machine. Then the juice will be filtered through a strainer and poured into a huge pot where it will be cooked for more than two hours. This is the most laborious part of the process since constant stirring is required and the cook will bear the horrendous heat radiating from the huge furnace specially built three feet below the ground which is being fueled by dried sugarcane peelings or barks. When the sugarcane juice turned sticky, the mixture will be transferred to another pot to cool but the stirring will continue until the muscovado crystals are in powder form. Then it is air cooled and strained before packing it in the desired packaging.

Maricel has also invested in a clean storage area where she stores the sacks filled of muscovado. While she works in the milling facility, she wore a hairnet, apron and boots which were earlier provided by the DA regional office.

Maricel buys mature sugarcane from the farmers in Balaba and other nearby barangays. Processing is on a weekly basis and her products are brought to Batangas and Laguna. Their biggest order so far was

one ton of muscovado sugar which they processed in 4 weeks.

Other topics discussed during the two day training were cultural practices for sugarcane production discussed by Engr. Salvador B. Ocampo and Engr. Maria Teresa M. Caballero of the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA); Updates on the Packaging of the Processed Muscovado given by Roy Magdaraog.

Maricel expertly demonstrates the steps in muscovado processing during the training for muscovado farmers.



Crushing the cane to extract the juice.



Packing the crystalized muscovado.

DA Bicol employees join nationwide earthquake, fire drills

SAN AGUSTIN, Pili, Camarines Sur---“Every one of us has the capability to save lives including our own when prepared and equipped with skills.”

This was the message of Atty. Rodolfo Bismonte, the acting Pili Municipal Disaster Risk- Reduction Management Officer during the nationwide simultaneous Earthquake and Fire Drills of the Department of Agriculture in Bicol on March 31, 2017 at the DA grounds here.



According to Dr. Salvadora M. Gavino, the drill was aimed to prepare and gauge the efficiency of warning dissemination and level of preparedness of offices and surrounding communities when actual earthquake and fire occur.

This is the fourth time that the said drills were held.

According to SFO1 Dario L. Panerio, the earthquake drill is part of the mind-conditioning of the employees in case the “Big One” or the 7.2 magnitude earthquake hit the country.

Presently, the DA has an evacuation plan with identified Place of Running Points (PRPs) posted in conspicuous places of the office premises so that employees are guided where to assemble during earthquake.

Since there are no early warning devices for earthquakes,

the employees should be alert, have presence of mind and avoid panic.

Panerio also said that the alarm system should be centralized. Once the alarm system is set for a minute, the response--“duck, cover and hold” should be quick and in two-three minutes, should leave the building. During evacuation, the employees should immediately go to an open space and away from danger zones like trees and glass windows.

(Next page pls.)

Briefing for Bicol media

SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR – Some 30 practitioners of both print and broadcast media from Albay, Camarines Sur and Sorsogon attended the Media Conference on the Agricultural Performance for CY 2016 and DA Thrusts, Directions and Prospects for 2017.

The activity was held at the conference room of the new administration building on February 10, 2017.

DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Elena B. delos Santos personally thanked the media for being active partners of the agency in its information dissemination and advocacies. She also

underscored her principled stand against corruption parallel to Duterte administrations campaign to stem graft and corruption in the bureaucracy.

Meanwhile, DA Bicol regional information officer Emily B. Bordado, who organized the activity presented the DA's accomplishments for 2016 and the new programs under the Duterte's administration. Among the new programs of the department are: Alalay sa Magsasaka at Mangangisada (ALAMM) which will create a new unit in the DA regional offices and attached agencies, bureaus and corporation that will help farmers and fisherfolk in the



(Top photo) DA 5 RED Elena B. delos Santos thanked the members of the media in Bicol for being active partners of DA in info dissemination.



DA 5 Regional Information Officer Emily B. Bordado discusses the DA's programs under the Duterte's administration.



preparation and drafting of project proposals for funding. The SURE Loan (Survival and Recovery Assistance) which will give P10,000 assistance to indigent families affected by calamities and P25,000 loan for production inputs. The Masaganang Ani 6000 targets 1 million hectare additional irrigated rice areas to be planted

with hybrids with a target production of 6 metric tons per hectare. The current national average rice production is 4 metric tons per hectare while 3.75 metric tons in Bicol.

In the morning, the officers of the Philippine Agricultural Journalists (PAJ) Inc. Bicol chapter convened for their first quarter meeting. **(Lovella Guarin)**

DA Bicol employees join nationwide.. (from page 16)

DA 5 Rescue Team member John D. Laboratorio suggested that emergency teams should be properly trained, have the commitment to serve and the office should have the necessary equipment needed during fire and earthquake.

There is a difference in the conduct of earthquake drill and fire drill. In an earthquake drill, the sound of siren/bell indicates that a strong shaking is ongoing and the level of ground shaking prevents people to stand and move around. So, no one is supposed to get out of the building while the shaking is ongoing.

In a fire drill, the siren/bell means a fire is ongoing. All occupants of the building should evacuate the building immediately.

A firefighting

demonstration using a fire extinguisher was also conducted on the same day because there is a risk of fire during an earthquake caused by broken gas pipes, electrical wirings, and kitchen stoves.

Buildings were marked with directions as to where to exit during these disasters.

"If the fire is not manageable, call the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP)," said Panerio.

Assistant MDRRMO Edilberto Bongon suggested that the office should conduct Disaster Awareness, First Aid Training and Basic Life Support Seminar to all employees.

The earthquake and fire drill were conducted jointly by the Pili MDRRMO, BFP, Philippine National Police, and the Philippine Army 9th Infantry Division. The Pili MDRRMO ambulance and fire truck were actually used for demonstration during the drill---the first in four years of the conduct of drills!

The DA 5 got a satisfactory rating. **(Jayson M. Gonzales)**



DA-CBSUA conduct training on mushroom production

PASACAO CAMARINES SUR: As a response to the growing demand for mushroom production, the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture, through the Research Extension Production and Entrepreneurial Development Affairs in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture Bicol, conducted a two day training module on mushroom culture and production technology for women members mostly parents of students enrolled at the said university on March 9 -10,

2017 at barangay Balogo this municipality.

The project which is headed by Judith Jimena, GAD focal person, kicked off with the Mushroom Production Training for backyard planters and budding small scale entrepreneurs. Adopting the theme "Nanay ng Tahanan, Marunong sa Kabuhayan", the project aims to improve food sufficiency and to provide employment for women.

About 15 participants mostly women, listened to the lectures which focused on

Basic Mushroom Culture Technology and tried their hands on the actual demonstration particularly on the preparation of fruiting bags and planting spawn inoculation.

Pedro Oliver, DA technical staff and



focal person on mushroom, served as the resource speaker & trainer. According to Oliver, aside from the nutritious content and medicinal properties of mushroom, it can complement a family's dietary need. He said that the technology is simple and can be practiced within the household. He added that organic materials such as rice bran, rice hull and saw dust can be easily found in the field,

Facilitators were Maricar Mendoza and Grace Galang ,staff REPED, Central Bicol State University. According to Mendoza the project is a student-parent tandem. Since Pasacao is a tourist destination because of its long beach and

other attractions, Women entrepreneurs will be given opportunities to sell their produce and open avenues for possible market linkages. She said that other trainings like Urban Gardening, Duck & Native Chicken Raising are already set to be conducted this year.

As additional support to the project, the DA also provided materials for the preparation of fruiting bags such as clean cloth, cotton, alcohol lamp, fishnet, face masks and a steel drum to be used for pasteurization & sterilization. **(Blesilda A. Nuñez)**



Corn program conducts hands on training for Village Type Dryer Operators

CALABANGA CAMARINES SUR. The Department of Agriculture Bicol Corn Program in cooperation with the Local Government Unit of Calabanga conducted a one day Hands-on training on the Operations and Maintenance of Village Type Dryer (VTD) for corn on April 4, 2017 at barangay Manguring this municipality. The training aimed to familiarize the participants on the operation and maintenance of the VTD and to learn the principles of its operation. Some 32 operators representing municipalities of Polangui, Daraga, Ligao, Guinobatan in Albay and Baao, Buhi, Calabanga, Iriga,

Goa and Naga in Camarines Sur attended the said activity. These municipalities have existing corn processing centers.

Speakers were Dr. Manolito Bulaong, Vice President for Research, Agricom and Engr. Roderic Verena Science Research Specialist of Philmech. Bulaong pointed out that only DA Bicol conducted this kind of training to sustain the operation of VTDs in various areas in the region. There is indeed a need for trained technicians to operate the said drying equipment to lessen the cost of repairs and prevent further damage, he said.

According to Roderic

Verena Research Specialist from Philmech, It is important to know the principles on the operation of a village type dryer. Those who will operate are the ones who are trained to ensure safety of the equipment and a sound policy should be formulated for the benefit of the community he said. He added that based on analysis, the quality standard for food consumption (aflatoxin present in corn grain) is 20% parts per billion (ppb) and 50% ppb for

animal feeds.

A hands on training was conducted later in the afternoon at the VTD site. Participants were taught on how to operate the equipment particularly on trouble shooting and proper maintenance. It is expected that, with its maximum usage, the corn farmers of this municipality will be capacitated to produce good quality corn grains and become more productive. **(Blesilda Nuñez)**



DA Bicol reaches out to typhoon Nina victims in Pili, Cam. Sur with "Gift of Love"

"Charity begins at home." This was the principle that inspired Department of Agriculture-Bicol Regional Executive Director Elena B. de los Santos to reach out to families affected by typhoon Nina in Brgy. San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur, where the DA regional office is located.

After the flag ceremony on February 13, 2017, a day before Valentine's Day, the DA-Bicol conducted a gift-giving activity dubbed as "Gift of Love" to 38 families who sought shelter in the office's facilities during the

height of typhoon Nina which caused P5.1 billion production losses, damaged 86,619.80 hectares of agricultural area in the region and affected 86,735 farmers and fisherfolk.

While DA-Bicol continues its rehabilitation efforts for the region's agri-fishery sector, de los Santos guaranteed the barangay officials and constituents that as a frontline government agency, the DA has also to fulfill its social responsibilities, especially for those living within the community where the office is



based. De los Santos personally handed the relief packs containing assorted groceries, five kilograms of rice and toiletries to each family. Expressing her gratitude, Nenita Go, one of the beneficiaries of DA-Bicol's "Gift of Love" said

"Dakulang tabang na po ini sa samuya."

"Sana po kahit papaano ay maramdaman ninyo na nandito po kami na umaalalay sainyo kahit po sa kaunting paraan," de los Santos added. **(Annielyn L. Balez)**



RAFC 5 ...

(from page 20)

more than enough inspiration for the Catandunganons to move on.

The beneficiaries were all recipients of AKBAY Program coming from 11 barangays of the municipality of Bato. They have fully paid the AKBAY P10,000 financial assistance previously given to them. Catanduanes was severely devastated by typhoon Nina on December 25 last year which has left a total of P315,406,002 damage in rice, high value crops and livestock. While 100% of total 23,195 hectares planted to abaca was



totally damaged incurring temporary damage worth P601,000. Of these, 8,003 metric tons with a total value of P544,260,000 can still be recovered reducing the net loss to P57.11 million. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**



DA Bicol spearheads rehab efforts



SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR – The Department of Agriculture regional office here immediately conducted rehabilitation efforts by providing palay, corn, assorted vegetable seeds, seedling of various fruit trees and drugs and biologics for animals amounting to over P72 million to the three affected provinces.

This was reported by DA-Bicol Regional Executive Director Dr. Elena B. de los Santos during the management committee meeting. For Camarines Sur province DA has turned over to the provincial government over 5,000 bags certified seeds; 4,226 packs

(20 kg.) hybrid palay seeds; 19,770 packets of assorted vegetable seeds; 250 kilograms mungbean seeds, 1,500 bags yellow and white corn hybrid seeds; 1,085 cacao, lemon and pili seedlings and 13,942 doses of drugs and biologics for animals. For delivery are 10,000 bags of certified seeds.

For Albay province, DA has turned over to the provincial government 5,000 bags of certified palay seeds; 5,000 packs hybrid palay seeds; 1,000 bags yellow and white corn seeds; 10,600 grafted cacao and pili seedlings; 12,500 packets of assorted vegetable seeds; 2,500 assorted garden tools. For delivery are 435 bags of

open pollinated and hybrid corn seeds. For delivery next week are 435 bags open pollinated variety and hybrid seeds.

For Catanduanes DA, has distributed 3,000 bags certified palay seeds; 12,500 packs of assorted vegetable seeds; 17 bottles/boxes of various drugs and biologics for the treatment of affected animals. Dir. De los Santos has endorsed to Sec. Emmanuel Piñol the proposal of PhilFida for the Rehabilitation of typhoon-damaged abaca areas in Catanduanes. Said proposal is now being considered to be funded under the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) as abaca is among the identified priority of the PLGU Catanduanes in its Priority Commodity Investment Plan to be funded by the project.

According to Dir. De los Santos, the above mentioned production input assistance provided by DA Bicol is but the initial rehab assistance that the DA will provide. Funding for these items were taken from the savings generated by the regional office from previous

calamity funds which were released by DBM only recently. The provincial and municipal LGUS are the ones distributing directly to the farmers. Groups and individual farmers who request directly from the DA regional office are also provided as long as they are in the masterlist provided by the LGUS.

More assistance to the affected farmers and fisherfolk are coming with the expected release of the P500 million commitment of Presidente Duterte he himself announced when he came over to Catanduanes and Camarines Sur a few days after the typhoon.

DA Bicol has already submitted to Sec. Piñol its Rehabilitation Plan for the rice, corn high value commercial crops, livestock and abaca subsectors including various infrastructures and facilities totaling to over P1.4 billion. Final damage report on the said subsectors is placed at P5.1 billion with about 86,735 farmers affected. **(Emily B. Bordado)**

RAFC 5 renders community service to typhoon stricken island province

BATO, CATANDUANES – The Regional Agricultural and Fishery Council (RAFC) Bicol trooped to this island province over the week for a community service to some 25 selected families affected by Typhoon Nina. Each provincial AFC and some RAFC members brought vegetables, fruits, eggs, grocery products, used clothing, school supplies, laminated sacks and solar powered transistor radio.

Bato, Catanduanes Mayor Eulogio Rodriguez and Municipal Agriculturist Lito Barba helped the RAFC



officers in the distribution of the goodies.

Luz Oropeza, PAFC Chairperson of Catanduanes said that the three most affected municipalities during the onslaught of typhoon Nina were Bato, Baras and Virac and coconut plantations in these areas will take 6 years to recover. She said the simple gift giving rekindles the spirit of sharing and the presence of the RAFC officers and members is *(Please turn to page 19)*



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