

DA office transforms

by Emily B. Bordado

The Department of Agriculture regional office sports a new look with its newly constructed modern, impressive, imposing and climate-resilient administration building that replaces the old and tumbledown building it has occupied for over ____ years.

Thanks to Regional Executive Director Abelardo R. Bragas, an agricultural engineer who had the hindsight and foresight in addition to his expertise in determining a building's structural integrity. It turned out that the old DA building had no strong foundation and support. It could not withstand strong typhoons and earthquake and it was already being eroded by termites and infested by rodents. This was confirmed by the Department of Public Works and Highways which issued a certification that the structure was no longer structurally sound and worthy.

Dir. Bragas in consultation with the DA regional officials and officers of the employee's union decided to give priority attention to repairing the old building or constructing a new one. The management found ways and means to

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DA honors top rice producers in annual tilt

by Emily B. Bordado



The City Government of Naga joined the ranks of top 16 rice producing cities/municipalities in the country as it was conferred an award of recognition with a trophy and cash prize of P1M by the Department of Agriculture during the awarding ceremonies for Agri-Pinoy Rice Achievers Awards (APRAA) for 2015 held at Resort World in Pasay City, Manila. City Agriculturist, Edna Bongalonta received the trophy and check from DA secretary Proceso J. Alcala and Assistant Secretary,

Edilberto M. De Luna.

Also awarded were the top 5 rice producing provinces which received P4M cash prizes and a trophy. These were Ilocos Norte, Nueva Vizcaya, Occidental Mindoro, Davao del Norte and Davao Oriental. Five exceptional Irrigator's Associations received P1M worth of project grants each, while 3 outstanding Small Water Impounding Systems (SWISAs) each got P500,000 in project grants. Likewise, 398 selected Agricultural Extension

Workers (AEWs) and Local Farmer Technicians (LFTs) from all over the country were also recognized for their hard work and efforts in assisting farmers and facilitating transfer of improved technologies. Each took home a cash incentive of P20,000. There were 27 AEWs and 5 LFTs awardees from Bicol. They were joined by DA-Bicol Regional Technical Director for Operations and concurrent Officer-in-charge Dr. Elena B. De los Santos when they received

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Old building.

On-going renovation of DA administrative building

New DA admin grounds and driveway.

Cascading down PRDP to municipal LGUs makes it more inclusive

Municipal government units (MLGUs) may now partner with the Department of Agriculture in implementing sub-projects under the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP). This means project proposals from the municipal levels will now be accepted by the PRDP management thus, expanding the project's reach and making it more inclusive.

Originally, PRDP's entry points were the provincial LGUs which identify priority commodities considered with great potential to contribute to the economic development of the province and recommend appropriate interventions based on Value chain analysis. The province then recommend a Provincial Commodity Investment Plan (PCIP) that rationalizes the interventions

within the various segments of the value chain of identified commodities for the province.

With PRDP now made accessible to the MLGUs, they can now submit proposals which are resource, location and need-based. The MLGUs will stand to benefit from the PRDP's unique and proven effective and science-based development approaches and tools such as the use of geo-tagging devices/technology; value chain analysis, vulnerability and suitability assessment, environmental safeguards, focus on local commodities; commitment to transparency and accountability and community participation.

Duplication and gaps in the implementation of projects will also be avoided. Moreover, accusations of

political discrimination will also be avoided as local chief executives who are not in the good graces of the provincial chief executives will not be excluded in the project.

Including the MLGUs into the PRDP will give them opportunity to upgrade the skills and knowledge of their personnel in the preparation of various project requirements such as feasibility study, business plan, detailed engineering design in addition to the VCA and PCIP.

With only 10 percent counterpart fund requirement for infrastructure development (I-BUILD) component even small or low income municipalities need not loan from funding or lending institutions to implement infrastructure and livelihood projects.



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PRDP Bicol mainstreams VCA, PCIP to DA programs

The Department of Agriculture Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP) Planning (I-PLAN) team has started to mainstream value chain analysis (VCA) into DA regular plans and programs.

Planners from the Provincial and Municipal local government units (LGUs) as well as staff from DA banner programs including High Value Crops Development, Rice Program, Organic Agriculture and Livestock Program took part in the training on VCA preparation, to orient and train them on commodity and product prioritization, data collection and analysis, and value chain mapping on June 1-3 in Naga City.

According to PRDP South Luzon Director Shandy M. Hubilla, PRDP is DA's "crowning achievement." He lauded the I-PLAN Bicol for being

proactive in trying to rally stakeholders to support PRDP undertakings.

"This is really our objective aside from increasing farmers' income, it's really about mainstreaming PRDP into the regular budget. The PRDP is the way to go for the DA. Eventually the tools, the framework that we are using and we are utilizing will be adopted by all of DA," Hubilla said.

Hubilla recognized the I-PLAN's efforts to involve not just the regular DA programs but also major stakeholders such as the LGUs. He mentioned that bilaterally, DA and the LGU are committing to fund the resources indicated in the PCIP in the next three or six years to develop the particular commodity value chains.

"It's not just on paper that we are trying to mainstream but we are actually doing it. The goal is to align

our budget with our plans and vice versa. Therefore, DA, not just the PRDP, should be able to support that particular commodity and the good thing is we are already going beyond DA and LGU. We are already enlisting the full participation and commitment of other agencies relevant to rural development," he added.

VCA, a planning tool being used by the DA-PRDP, is the study of commodities from "seed to shelf" including all stages and logistics to attract markets. VCAs are being done on agricultural commodities which were prioritized according to suitability, market potential, impact on the poor and involvement of farmer-stakeholders. The Project uses VCA as a tool in outlining investments in areas critical to the value chain.

PRDP South Luzon I-PLAN Component Head Rey B. Lara stated that VCA shows the current state of the industry and where to locate projects. It also provides recommendations as basis for policy-making and programming. Under PRDP, Provincial Commodity investment Plans (PCIP) and proposed infrastructure and business enterprise sub-projects should be anchored on an approved VCA.

"Through the result of the VCA analysis, titingnan natin what are the missing links or gaps in every segment. VCA comprises five functions--input provision, production, marketing, trading hanggang final sale. Bawat segment nito, may mga emerging gap, may mga critical factors na dun naka-focus ang investment ng government at investment ng private sector, Lara underscored.

Currently, the PRDP I-PLAN is working on regional VCAs for organic rice, dairy cattle, tinapa or smoked fish, cut flower and laing or taro leaves. As of May 31, 2016, Bicol has completed 10 VCAs for its six provinces' first and second priority commodities including coco geonets, coco sap sugar, abaca, coconut shell charcoal, pineapple, mangrove crab, sweet potato, cassava, live goat, and seaweeds. The region has also participated in the clusterwide VCA preparation for coco water and virgin coconut oil initiated by PRDP South Luzon. **(Annielyn L. Baleza)**

MASICAP MULTI PURPOSE COOPERATIVE
Brgy. Cobangbang, Daet, Camarines Norte
Reg. No.9520-05000976-509

Letters

Excerpts from the minutes of the 25th Annual General Assembly of MASICAP Multi-Purpose Cooperative held on March 19, 2016 at Delos Santos Farm, P-4, Calasgasan, Daet, Camarines Norte

RESOLUTION NO. 08 Series of 2016

A RESOLUTION EXTENDING OUR GRATEFUL APRECIATION TO ENGR. ABELARDO BRAGAS, REGIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STAFF, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REGIONAL OFFICE NO. 5 FOR THE HEART-FELT SUPPORT TO MASICAP MULTI-PURPOSE COOPERATIVE IN ACHIEVING ITS ULTIMATE GOAL IN HELPING IMPROVE/UPLIFT THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF ITS MEMBERS.

WHEREAS, the members of MASICAP MULTI-PURPOSE COOPERATIVE are mostly rice producing farmers;

WHEREAS, the cooperative is beneficiary of different programs/ projects from Department of Agriculture, like provision of Post Harvest Facilities and Farm Mechanization Project;

WHEREAS, with the introduction of Combine Harvester and other of Post Harvest Facilities from the Department of Agriculture, losses during and after harvesting operation have been greatly reduced;

WHEREAS, the farm machineries availed of by the cooperative help our members and other farmers reduced labor cost, shortened time consumed in farm operation and reduce the effect of climate change to farm labourers;

WHEREAS, the cooperative officers and members wholeheartedly felt the objective of the government to help the farmers uplift its standard of living by increasing their income thru the different projects/programs of the Department of Agriculture;

NOW THEREFORE, on motion by BOD Rodolfo Salamero duly seconded by BOD Gil Del Barrio; BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVE, to extend our grateful thanks and appreciation to Engr. Abelardo Bragas, Regional Executive Director and staff of Department of Agriculture RFU V for the heart-felt support to the MASICAP Multi-Purpose Cooperative to achieve its goal in helping uplift the standard of living of its members;

RESOLVED FINALLY, that copy of this resolution be given to Proceso Alcala, Secretary of Department of Agriculture and Abelardo Bragas, DA Regional Executive Director RFU V.

UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED by the GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.

(Signed) **BESSIE B. DELOS SANTOS**
Secretary

Foreign assisted rabies eradication project in Bicol extended until Dec.



Meeting of STANDZ technical working group. (from left) Dr. Rubina Cresencio, BAI director; Dr. Evangeline dela Trinidad, DA 5 Integrated Laboratory chief, and Dr. Ronello Abila, OIE Sub Regional Representative for Southeast Asia.

SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAM.SUR - Members of the technical working group, provincial veterinarians and other support staff involved in the implementation of the Stop Transboundary Animal Diseases and Zoonoses (STANDZ) Project which aims to make Bicol Rabies Free by 2016 convened here in June to assess the progress, identify

announced that project which was supposed to end June this year has been extended to 6 months more or till December. She said that this project is being looked upon as a model not only in the Asian region but globally. She stressed the need to sustain the partnership and commitment between the DA, the LGUs, BAI and other partners even

laboratory testing of dog blood/head samples.

The provincial veterinarians from Masbate, Albay and Cam. Norte took turns in reporting their respective accomplishments, good practices, issues and concerns. The province of Cam. Sur which up to this time has no appointed or designated provincial veterinarian not even a Provincial Agriculturist was represented by a livestock coordinator. The technical committee members deplore this long-standing problem of absence of a provincial veterinarian in the biggest province of the region which has recorded the highest incidence of dog and human rabies over the past years.

Based on the reports recorded by the DOH from January to 1st week of June 2016, rabies has claimed the lives of 11 persons: 7 in Cam. Sur; 3 in Cam. Norte and 1 in Sorsogon. In 2015, Bicol placed second to Region 3 for having 24 cases of human fatalities due to rabies.

Meanwhile laboratory results of the head samples taken from suspected dogs between January to June this year 9 tested positive – 3 of these came from Camarines Norte, 3 from Camarines Sur and and 3 from Albay. Last year 11 dogs tested positive. According to Dr.

Rona Bernales, Rabies Regional Coordinator for Bicol last year the region achieved 70% dog vaccination coverage. The vaccines were provided by the funding institution for the STANDZ project and LGUS assumed the expenses for the vaccinators and some even provided additional vaccines.

Dr. Mary Joy Gordoncillo of the OIE also discussed the four pillars of rabies control and eradication based on the mnemonic of the word STOP. S stands for Socio-cultural factors, T for Technical, O for Organizational and P for Political. On same meeting Dr. Ilene Basitan of CBSUA presented the initial result of the KAP survey commissioned by the project.

Also present during the meeting were Dr. Emelinda Lopez, National Rabies focal person and Dr. Evangeline de la Trinidad, Division chief of the DA Integrated Laboratories who represented RTD Elena B. De los Santos and other DA and STANDZ project staff.

The following day the participants to the meeting transferred to a hotel in Naga City for the follow-up workshop on Practical Linking of Animal and Human Rabies Investigation. Other invited veterinarians from selected LGUs with reported rabies cases and representatives from the academe and other partners participated in said workshop. Dr. Aurora Daluro, Medical Specialist and regional coordinator of the DOH for human rabies provided updates on the human rabies situation in the region. She also explained and differentiated case definitions for suspected case, probable case and confirmed case from the perspective of medical doctors. **(Emily B. Bordado)**



milestones and share good practices and experiences worth duplicating. This STANDZ project launched in Bicol in 2014 is being implemented by the DA through the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) in partnership with the Animal Health Organization (OIE) with funding support from the Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID).

Dr. Rubina Cresencio, BAI director who is also overseeing the project attended said meeting and

after the funding support from the donor agency has been terminated.

For his part, Dr. Ronello Abila, OIE Sub Regional Representative for Southeast Asia explained that the 6-month extension will be devoted to wrapping up activities focusing on documentation of lessons learned, best practices, identifying strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of various rabies eradication and control strategies aside from the massive vaccination and

Pesebre's farm in Polangui showcases hybrid rice and farm machineries

POLANGUI, ALBAY--Twenty-nine-year-old rice farmer from Barangay Lanigay, Raymond Noriega arrived early at Pesebre's Farm in Balangibang, Polangui, Albay to participate in the Field Day and Harvest Festival on May 10, 2016 and to listen to the lecture on hybrid production and to check on the new farm machineries.

A member of the Lanigay Integrated Clusters Farmers Association, Noriega learned rice farming through an older friend Jose Remando who was into rice farming for 15 years. Remando credited his knowledge to attending trainings conducted by the Department of Agriculture-5, PhilRice, Agricultural Training Institute, and the Municipal Agriculture Office. Noriega and Remando attested that, through these trainings, "nagdakula an samuyang ani asin nakatabang sa samuyang pamilya" (our harvest increased and was able to help our families).

Edgar A. Pesebre who owns the farm and one of the resource persons, is also a Local Farmer Technician designated by the Department of Agriculture-Bicol.

During the Harvest Festival, more than 100 farmers from the barangays of Balangibang, Sugcad, Apad, Lanigay and Santican in Polangui participated and witnessed the on-field demonstration of Kubota DC-60 and DC-70---a combine harvester for Rice.

A total of 470 cavans were harvested in Pesebre's 3.08-hectare rice



DA Bicol OIC Regional Executive Director Elena B. delos Santos (left) graced the harvest festival at the farm of Edgar A. Pesebre (right photo, holding the microphone).

field from 11:00 in the morning until 5:30 in the afternoon using the two harvesters. The hybrid rice varieties planted were PHB 77; NK 5017; PHB 73; and NSIC Rc360.

"These combine harvesters are suitable to dry and wet paddy harvesting; can harvest, thresh, clean and bag in one operation and even at night; lightweight and compact; and easy to operate, maneuver and maintain" said Engr. Jonathan P. Nantiza. He added that a Corn Kit can be attached to the harvesters and about four to five hectares of rice fields can be harvested in a day using the harvester.

DA-Bicol OIC-Regional Executive Director Dr. Elena B. De Los Santos expressed her gratitude to Pesebre for letting his farm be used as demo-site for hybrid production and other agricultural activities. Activities such as these contributed to the 115% rice self-sufficiency last 2015, aside from

the fact that not all areas in the Bicol region were affected by El Niño last year.

"Mga biyayang dapat ipagpasalamat", de los Santos said.

She also quoted Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala saying—"kayang kaya ng magsasakang bumili ng binhi, kaya, dapat ang ibigay natin sa kanila ay farm equipment dahil hindi nila ito madaling mabibili."

Pesebre assured the guests from DA and PhilRice of his continued support to their programs. In fact, the Php 20,000 cash prize he received as Local Farmer Technician award was used in constructing this "maliit na kubo" as venue for knowledge sharing and learning. He added that "100% na magtatanim kami ng hybrid rice and susundin namin ang mga itinurong teknolohiya".

He encouraged his fellow farmers to always attend trainings of the DA and PhilRice---"DA an maisip ng programa, kita na mga parauma an matrabaho asin mapahiling nin higos asin tiyaga."

He cited that in his .44 hectare-rice field, he was able to harvest 76 cavans at 57 kgs of hybrid rice seed.

The rice fields of Pesebre are techno-demo sites for the following researches of the DA---"Yield and Growth Performance Evaluation of Irrigated Lowland Rice in a known type of Soil and Climate in Bicol Region" and Selection and Evaluation of Best Farming Practices for Flood-Prone Environment."

To make the one-day event more fun and exciting, the farmers win sprayers, garden tools, laminated sacks from the raffle draw, guessing and threshing games. (Jayson M.

Gonzales)



Hybrid rice harvest festival in Polangui, Albay.



DA Bicol OIC RED Ellen delos Santos and Tirso Perlas, Field Operations Chief award some farm tools to farmers of Polangui, Albay.

PAMANA 2015 projects connect people to market centers

Completed Farm-to-Market Road (FMR) projects under the DA -Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan or PAMANA project (Peaceful and Resilient Communities) are now helping residents gain access to social services and reduce transport cost and travel time from farms to the market centers.

For 2015, a total of 15 FMR projects were given P147.5 M budget allocation under the PAMANA being spearheaded by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) in cooperation with line agencies and LGUs. This is 13% higher than the 2014 allocation of P128.5M. The FMR projects were constructed in the provinces of Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, Masbate and Sorsogon under Pillar 3 of PAMANA referring to meso-level interventions that address regional and sub-regional development challenges which will contribute to peace building.

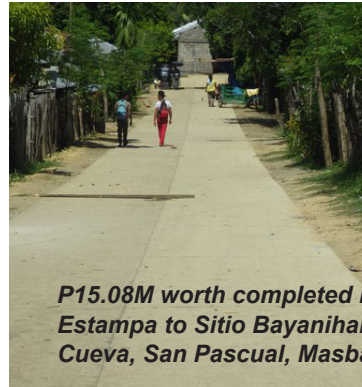
These were reported by Florentino Ubalde, PAMANA focal person of DA Bicol during the PAMANA general conference held in Macagang, Nabua, Camarines Sur on April 1, 2016.

Ubalde added that on-going projects funded in 2015 in Camarines Sur include the LGU Bula project concreting of Inoyonan-San Roque Heights FMR worth P10M, LGU Lagonoy's concreting of Gubat-Pinamihagan FMR worth P12,000, and LGU Tinambac concreting of Zone 5 to Sitio Maynaga FMR worth P7.5M.

The project implemented by the PLGU of Camarines Norte which was worth P70M included the concreting of Mangisoc-Gaboc road, Mambungalon and Cayucuyan road in Mercedes, Cam. Norte; Poblacion-Mampili road and Mocong - San Jose road in Basud, Camarines Norte; and Bagong Silang II and III roads in Labo, Camarines Norte.

Meanwhile, P28M was allocated to the province of Masbate for the concreting of Lomocloc FMR in Mobo, Maglambong MacArthur-Sto. Niño road in Monreal and Sitio Estampa to Sito Bayanihan FMR.

For Sorsogon, P20M was allocated for the concrete paving of Guruyan-Mangog-Catanusan FMR (Phase II) in Juban and Gogon-San Rafael Road (Phase V) in Prieto Diaz.



P15.08M worth completed FMR of Sitio Estampa to Sitio Bayanihan Road in Bgy. Cueva, San Pascual, Masbate.

07/21/2016

For 2016, the LGU Lagonoy's P2M Tiger grass production and soft broom making project is underway.

Christopher Asucena from the OPAPP who represented Paul Escobar, PAMANA area manager, said the project proposals from LGUs for the PAMANA 2017 were already endorsed by the OPAPP to the NEDA. He added that the OPAPP has partnered with the De La Salle – Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance to review the legacies of the PAMANA. The Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance based at the De La Salle University is a research and training institution on new

knowledge, tools, and strategies promoting transparent, accountable, participatory, and effective governance.

Hernan Elano, Accountant II of DA Bicol discussed the documentary requirements to be submitted by the proponent LGUs.

Rosario Sales, Chief of DA Bicol Administrative and Finance Division informed the participants that the DA will not release funds for PAMANA during the period of election ban on March 25 to May 10, 2016 except for projects with request for exemption from election ban duly approved by the COMELEC. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**

DA summer youth internship program

“Maogmahon!” “Worth it ang internship ko!” “Dae ko ini malilingawan.”

These are some of the parting words of the summer youth interns 2016 during their Closing Ceremony last May 25, 2016 held at RIARS Training Center, San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur.

From the 220 aspirants, 35 students from different schools had successfully qualified the Summer Youth Internship Program (SYIP). The internship program had started last April 25, 2016; the students were assigned in different offices wherein they are imbued and

honed with additional skills in their field of discipline.

In the span of 22 days, the interns were able to gain friends and experience the life of working in government offices. They also learned many substantial things which can help them grow as mature and responsible beings.

As their internship program ended, the interns had organized a Closing Ceremony program with the guidance of Ms. Ma. Pureza San Buenaventura from the HR Department. Coachella Music Festival is the theme of their event, they had also enjoyably



showcased their talents during the program, which made it more fun and exciting. The said event was also attended by the chiefs and staffs of the different divisions and sections

to show their support to the interns assigned at their office.

The closing ceremony had also become the avenue of the interns to say thank you

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DA needs P500M to rejuvenate Phil. soils - Dar

"The Department of Agriculture in the country needs 500M pesos to rejuvenate the soil resources" said Dr. William D. Dar of the InangLupa Movement, Inc and keynote speaker during the 19th Philippine Society of Soil Science and Technology, Inc. Convention held on May 18-20, 2016, The Oriental Hotel, Legazpi City.

Dar clarified that such budget allotment will be spent to modernize the existing facilities; upgrade outdated laboratory equipment; re-tool technicians and field personnel; craft a functional road map for the agriculture sector; and conduct a nationwide soil analysis to guarantee soil productivity. This budget is needed by "our thirsty and hungry soils."

DA-5 Chief of the Field Operations Division (FOD) Tirso O. Perlas read the message of OIC-Regional Executive Director Dr. Elena B. De Los Santos which stated that soil use and management are taken for granted and has reached a critical point worldwide. Moreover, more than 2B hectares of land in the Philippines are considered land degradation hot spots.

Dar added that this conference is timely and significant because "our soils are facing global mega

challenges like fossil fuel shortage, food shortage and malnutrition, land degradation, climate change, and poverty and population explosion."

Plenary lectures were conducted during the conference. Lectures on Development and Future Direction of Soil Science in the Philippines was discussed by Dr. Ian A. Navarette of the Ateneo de Manila University; Site-specific Nutrient Management and Best Practices on Soil Fertility Management in Field Crops Production System by Dr. Mirasol F. Pampolino of the International Plant Nutrition Institute; Soil Data Base in the Philippines by Rodel B. Carating and Dr. Silvino Q. Tejada of the Bureau of Soils and Water Management; National Organic Agriculture Program by Tejada; the Success Story of Costales Nature Farm by Ronald Costales; and the Updates on the Implementation of the National Greening Program by Elnora Taleon of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Research papers for Junior (three papers) and Senior Categories were also presented. For the Senior Paper Category---four papers were presented on Soil Fertility and Nutrient

Management, five researches on Land Use, Suitability and Soil Conservation; six studies on Organic Agriculture and Mitigation of Climate Change; and two researches on Soil Analysis and Application of Soil Science in Information and Communications Technology (ICT). More than 175 participants coming from the different regional offices of the Department of Agriculture, Philippine Senate office, PhilRice, BAPS, BAI, BSWM, FPA, the state colleges and universities in the Philippines and Iran, DENR, DOST, and private institutions like Del Monte Philippines, Atlas Fertilizer, DOLE-Philippines, and Sumico attended the three-day event.

Aside from lectures, plenary sessions and

research presentations, the participants visited and conducted soil observations in Albay Research Center of the Philippine Coconut Authority in Banao, Guinobatan, Albay; and the rice growing area in Libod, Camalig, Albay.

DAR ended his speech by engaging all participants "to contribute, reflect and use wherever possible, the insights we will learn from this conference to make our soils healthy. (Jayson M. Gonzales)



Dr. William Dar



DA Bicol Field Operations Chief Tirso Perlas.



6 rural-based organizations get assist from PCW

NAGA CITY - Six Rural Improvement Clubs (RIC) in Bicol are among the women's organization which will be assisted by the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) through its Gender Responsive Economic Action for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) Project Part 2. According to

where various government agencies and partners will be engaged to assist to women's organizations through trainings or capacity building and link them to markets so they can develop better products, learn about food safety and good practices and establish formal market linkages and agreements.

and shared their views during the planning workshop by the PCW in Naga City. They were: Luzviminda T. Oropesa of Catanduanes, Adel Magsino and Bernadette de los Santos of Cam. Sur and Ana Barbuena, Vice president of Nasipit RIC in Sorsogon who represented its president Carena V. Arellano.

cloth weaving.

According to Villanueva under the GREAT Women project they are trying to link up the RIC's to private business sector partners where the former can be a supplier. Some of these business establishments are the Biggs' Inc., a Bicol well known food chain, the ECHOStore, Tesoro's, the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO), and the Legend Villas, a well-known hotel chain.

As an output of the workshop the participants came up with a workplan of activities for the year. These include: profiling of RICs in Region 5, product assessments by business service developers; market matching forum in Metro Manila including MOA signing; GGRVCA and follow through product development; business plan preparation; food safety learning session; seminar on good manufacturing practices; orientation on credit windows/financial literacy; training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP); training on business leadership for women leaders and enablers; and Trainers training on ICT/e-commerce.

Also present during said workshop was Lorna Villegas of DA Central Office, Rosita M. Imperial, regional coordinator of the High Value Crops Development Program, Emily B. Bordado, DA regional information officer, Mary Grace Rodriguez, asst. planning officer, Nancy Salvino who represented Adelina Losa, chief of the Agribusiness and Marketing Division and other DA regional staff. **(Emily B. Bordado)**



Round table discussion. Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria (center, right photo), chief of the DA Bicol Planning Division and focal person for Rural Based Organizations presided the meeting with PCW representatives.

Luzviminda Villanueva, PCW's project manager, this women project intends to contribute to job generation and inclusive growth by assisting and empowering women. She said that Bicol is among the 4 regions of the country which will engage the rural based women's organization in particular the RIC in their medium enterprises. The other regions she said are Region 2, 6 and 12.

Kathleen Aquino also of the PCW explains that the project will adopt the convergence approach

The six rural women's organizations in Bicol chosen for this project are: Calatagan Tibang RIC and the Happy Farmers Food Products, Inc. (HFFPI) both in Catanduanes province; the Nasipit RIC of Irosin, Sorsogon; Napawon RIC in Goa and the Baao Burda Initiatives Inc. both in Camarines Sur and the Labo Progressive Multipurpose Coop (LPMPC) in Camarines Norte. The respective presidents of said RICs who were outstanding and "great" women by their own rights participated

Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria, DA Bicol GAD focal person and Chief, Planning and Monitoring Division presided over the meeting. She explained that the six women's organizations are already engaged in micro enterprises. The Calatagan Tibang RIC is currently engaged in meat processing, pili peanut butter and women accessories using pili shells. The HFFPI is into organic farming, production of honey bee, banana vinegar and herbal capsule supplements. Napawon RIC is into value adding, production of fermented cacao, mushrooms, fruits and vegetables. Baao Burda Initiatives on the other hand, is into hand embroidered bags, shoes and shawls. Nasipit RIC is engaged in organic vermiculture, lowland vegetable production, handicrafts, accessories, and processing of cacao, peanut butter, coco jam and pili confectioneries. The LPMCI is into piña



DA honors top rice... *(from page 1)*

their awards from Secretary Alcala.

The National Rice Awardees were selected based on their incremental increase in rice harvest and average yield per hectare over the previous year's levels; amount of budget allocated and disbursed to rice projects and initiatives; number of farmers benefited; degree of farmers' technology adoption and utilization of quality seeds.

Naga City bested other cities and municipalities in Bicol which vied for the top rank as it posted the highest production growth of 50.12% from 6,298.94 metric ton in 2014 to 9,456.06 metric ton in 2015 with a yield growth of 28% from 4.05 MT per hectare to 5.20MT/ha. It also increased

its rice area by 16%.84 from 1,555.7 hectares to 1,817.65 hectares. It also recorded over 64% increase in high quality seeds utilization.

In terms of budget allocation, the Naga city government allocated to its Rice program 25.39% of its IRA equivalent to almost P3M and implemented 13 other related projects in support to rice and agriculture programs.

The LGUs of Polangui, Albay and Castilla, Sorsogon were the two other municipalities of Bicol which have previously won in this prestigious nationwide annual contest which is now on its 5th year.

In his message Alcala acknowledged the efforts of the hardworking farmers and farm workers

whom he considers "mga bayani sa lahat ng panahon". He also thanked the contribution of the LGU's to the attainment of the 97% rice self-sufficiency level of the country despite the onslaught of natural calamities. He said that our country's rice production for the past five years under the Aquino administration has consistently surpassed 18 million metric tons, which earned our country the recognition by the US Department of Agriculture Grains Authority of having posted the highest increment of harvest and fastest gains of 2.8% in rice production among rice producing countries in the world for the past five years.

Alcala expressed his appreciation to the farmers

who gave their testimonies on the benefits and good things they derive from the government's agricultural programs. "Ako ay labis natutuwa na marinig ang mga bagong tinig ng ating mga magsasaka at mga komunidad sa mga kanayunan na hindi puro galit at pagsusumbat kung hindi tinig ng pagpapasalamat at pakikiisa at pagiging bukas sa mga teknolohiya." He underscored that the government has slowly changed the usual image of Filipino farmers: wallowing in drudgery of pulling his stubborn carabao in the field. "This time, the image of Filipino farmers is one that uses modern technology and mechanization", he asserted. **(Emily B. Bordado)**

DA office transforms... *(from page 1)*

earmark a budget for the construction of the new building and concreting of the roads inside the DA compound.

The administrative staff and personnel along with the staff of the Office of the Regional Technical

Director for Operations and the Special Projects were temporarily transferred to the newly constructed Operations Building.

Other structures within the regional office that were dilapidated or damaged were also repaired or

rehabilitated. All structures were given a distinct new look as they were painted with uniform color combination of archer green and gray. Even the road network within the DA compound were concreted following the new prescribed

standard.

Dir. Bragas said that as an engineer he wants to leave behind a legacy that is weather proof and will outlast his stay (as director) in Bicol and even his remaining years in the government service.



DA summer sportsfest 2016



Tech-on-wheels program launched in Albay

Aimed at making technology work for agriculture, fisheries, and industry by ensuring that these are transferred to the community, the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR), in partnership with the University of the Philippines Los Baños Foundation, Inc (UPLBFI) and College of Development Communication (UPLB-CDC) launched the project "Technology Commercialization on Wheels (TCOW)" on April 28, 2016 at the AVP Hall, Legazpi City.

Albay Board Member and Committee on Agriculture Chair Ramon S. Alsua expressed his gratitude to the sponsoring agencies for choosing Albay together with the Quezon Province as the pilot provinces. The towns of Guinobatan, Malilipot, Manito, Tiwi and Legazpi City, the pilot municipalities and city, will receive package of technologies and will be constantly visited by a mobile exhibit truck, scientists and experts on production, processing, packaging, financing and marketing of their farm

produce.

DA-BAR Technology Commercialization Division Assistant Head Ellen Garces assured the beneficiaries of a regular supply of information materials to address the alignment of efforts to make research and development work for the people, industry and community.

"The DA-BAR is always at the forefront of bringing relevant research for the Filipinos, and this TCOW is one proof of delivering such to the community" says DA-BAR Technical Adviser Virgie Agcopra.

The TCOW Truck will bring technologies and knowledge products to the remote areas of the two pilot site-provinces.

DA Bicol Research Division Chief Luz R. Marcelino discussed the Adlai initiatives which is now being considered as an alternative to rice and corn. In 2011, the research "The adaptability trial on Adlai" was conducted by Dr. Elena B. De Los Santos, Romulo C. Cambaya, and Ailyn R. Adante.

DA-Albay Research and Development Center Senior Science Research Specialist Nympha B. Autos lectured



Luz R. Marcelino, chief of the DA Research Division



on the production techniques of the Japanese Sweet Potato (JSP). JSP is an introduced variety from Singapore in 2011 and presently being cultivated and studied at the research center in Buang, Tabaco City. At present, food products are being developed using the flour derived from the root crop.

Arlene Almada of

AMAD discussed the Marketing Mechanism of the DA. She said that the office will continue to assist the farmers in marketing to sustain local enterprise.

The TCOW targets farmers, fisherfolk, agricultural graduates, retirees, and OFWs as beneficiaries. They will be given options to choose from the POTs and start an agricultural enterprise through technical assistance, possible capital from financing institutions, and consumer-linkaging. **(Jayson M. Gonzales)**

May 15 St. Isidore Feast Day

St. Isidore is the patron saint of the DA, the farmers and rural communities.

When he was barely old enough to wield a hoe, Isidore entered the service of John de Vergas, a wealthy landowner from Madrid, and worked faithfully on his estate outside the city for the rest of his life. He married a young woman as simple and upright as himself who also became a saint—Maria de la Cabeza. They had one



son, who died as a child.

Isidore had deep religious instincts. He rose early in the morning to go to church and spent many a holiday devoutly visiting the churches of Madrid and surrounding areas. All day long, as he walked behind the plow, he communed with God. His devotion, one might say, became a problem, for his fellow workers sometimes complained that he often showed up late because of lingering in church too long.

He was known for his love of the poor, and there are accounts of Isidore's supplying them miraculously with food. He had a great concern for the proper treatment of animals.

He died May 15, 1130, and was declared a saint in 1622 with Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, Teresa of Avila and Philip Neri. Together, the group is known in Spain as "the five saints." (source: <http://www.americancatholic.org>)

Harvest festival showcases success of MD2 and Ulam techno demo

DAET, CAMARINES NORTE – "The success of any harvest festival is not on the number of people who attended it but in the number of farmers who are willing to adopt the new technology," said Dr. Vivencio Mamaril, Supervising Agriculturist of the Bureau of Plant Industry who graced the 2ND Pineapple Harvest Festival at the Camarines Norte Lowland Rainfed Research Station here. The station is on the second season of the techno demo on the adaptability and yield performance of new varieties of pineapple namely, MD2 and Ulam, which according to Dr. Mamaril has been a huge success.

The harvest festival was attended by farmers, officers and members of pineapple growers associations, municipal agriculturists, agricultural technicians, visitors from the PLGU and academe.

Dr. Mamaril said the BPI and the Department of Agriculture in Bicol will enter into a contract growing scheme with cooperatives interested to propagate the Ulam variety as mandated by RA 91268 or the Philippine Plant Variety Protection Act of 2002. Dr. Mamaril added that the introduction of new varieties such as MD2 and Ulam in Camarines Norte was not aimed to remove the Queen Formosa variety in the market, but rather to give more choices to the farmers.

Dr. Edgar R. Madrid, DA Bicol Regional Technical Director for Research and Regulations assured the farmers that along with the introduction of the new varieties, the DA Bicol will continue to conduct studies geared towards improving the Formosa variety which Camarines Norte is known for.



Dr. Neric Acosta (left photo) proudly shows the Ulam variety, Dr. Vivencio Mamaril (wearing sunglasses) shows the MD2 varieties, and DA SI Reg'l. Technical Director for Research Edgar Madrid shows the Queen Formosa variety.

Mario Espeso, Chairman of Labo Progressive Multipurpose Cooperative (LPMPC) likewise said that Ulam is not a threat to Formosa or Queen pineapple because the leaves of the latter is being utilized as fiber due to its high tinsel strength. As for Ulam, there has no study yet if the leaves can be a source of fiber. Aside from barongs woven from the Formosa fiber, the LPMPC is also exporting pineapple fiber to the United Kingdom for the manufacture of a known brand of shoes. Recently the Philippine Rural Development Project has approved the P26.6M Camarines Norte Queen Pineapple Trading and Processing Project to upgrade their existing Formosa pineapple juice processing project.

Also present during the event was Dr. Neric Acosta, Presidential Adviser for Environmental Protection and Concurrent General Manager of the Laguna Lake Development Authority who represented his father, Dr. Juan Acosta, the plant breeder who developed the Ulam variety of pineapple. Dr. Juan Acosta was awarded by the Philippine

JAYCEES as Outstanding Scientist in 2004 because of his researches on pineapple and other crops. He said the project has a sentimental value to him because his father considers the Ulam as his favorite "pet." Big companies from Singapore, Korea, and Indonesia are very willing to pay huge amount in exchange of this new plant variety but the older Acosta chose the Filipino farmers to benefit from his research, he added.

A taste test was conducted among the 200 participants to determine which variety has the best appearance and taste. The results showed that Queen pineapple or Formosa tastes best and has the best appearance.

Barangay Kagawad Oscar Vargas expressed his gratitude to the Department of Agriculture in behalf of their barangay. He said because of the research station headed by Engr. Bella Frias, the barangay of Calasgasan is now known all over the province because of the services it gives to the farmers in the 12 municipalities of Cam. Norte. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**



Enter the Dragon Fruit - into the Escobar's Integrated Farm

by Emily B. Bordado

At first glance no one would think that dragon plant- the vine-like cactus looking specie with odd- looking fruits is a prized high value crop not only because it is a big income earner but also because it is packed with lot of health benefits.



Escobar couple

Anative plant from Central and South America, dragon fruit also known as “pitaya” is now gaining ground and popularity in the Philippines. It is now considered the new “money crop “because its exotic fruits command a very high price in the local market fetching a price of P120-P150 per kilo at farm gate and P200 to P230 in the supermarkets. It is also being promoted as healthy and nutritious food because it is high in Vitamin C, fibers and anti-oxidants. It is also believed to strengthen the human immune system and is used in the treatment of diabetes and other illnesses. Its flowers and stems have also medicinal properties which can promote blood circulation.

Aware of the benefits and economic prospects of the dragon fruit, Ana Liza Arellano-Escobar and her husband Michael Francis of Quipayo, Calabanga, Camarines Sur ventured into dragon fruit production and integrated this into their 2.2 hectare farm in Barangay Bigaas. Some 1,431 dragon fruit vines have been planted and mounted

on concrete posts. They are now the main crop and major attraction in the farm especially now that they have started flowering and fruiting. The large, beautiful, delicate and white flowers with a golden center are indeed a beauty to behold although they only bloom at night and last only for some hours after sunrise. According to Liz they have four varieties: the red royal , morocco red, white Mexicana and Vietnam King White. They need not bring their dragon fruits to the market as buyers come to buy them.

Liz, a nurse by profession used to work in a government agency but her husband, a maritime engineer for an international ship urged her to quit her job. With the high pay that her husband is getting and with only one daughter 8 year-old Chelsea to care for she need not work as they are well provided and have a relatively comfortable and financially secure life.

But unlike some wives of overseas workers who are content living a luxurious but idle life and who had been

prone to squandering the hard earned income of their husband, Liz had the better sense of using judiciously and wisely their family income. She tried to venture in some small business undertaking. Then Liz and her husband purchased an agricultural land in Barangay Bigaas and invested in farming. Liz says she has inherited her father's passion for farming and relates she would have wanted to take up an agriculture course but took nursing instead because it was the most in demand career at the time.

Her venture into farming though was not easy. She has to “learn the ropes” through trial and error. She had incurred losses as a result of typhoons and vagaries of the weather and pests. But Liz is not the kind who would easily buckle under to any challenge. Initially in the 2.5 hectare portion of their

farm they planted yellow corn which has a big market demand in their municipality and was fetching a good price. They harvest an average of 6 tons of corn per hectare per cropping. Then they planted various fruit trees and vegetables.

Through constant reading and surfing in various websites in the internet she learned about the big demand for dragon fruit and its health benefits and she got interested. During a family trip to Ilocos region they bought some planting materials. They planted dragon fruit in their farm. Then they decided to plant more using the seeds but they found out that this propagation method takes too long so they started planting cuttings. Liz then turned again to the internet and she gained knowledge about the cultural practices not only about dragon fruit but also of other crops. She also got to know fellow enthusiasts and practitioners via the social media who shared information



and experiences with her. And she grabs every opportunity to attend trainings that could provide additional knowledge and skills. The agriculture municipal office provides technical assistance in her farm operations. She is also being helped by 4 laborers in the upkeep and maintenance and farm work.

Today, their farm teems with various crops. Dragon plants dominate the area occupying 1.5 hectares of the farm with a total of 1,431 vines mounted on concrete posts. According to Liz for every vine or post of dragon plant they could harvest 25 kilograms. Harvesting starts in May and lasts until November. A buyer from Albay province come to the farm and buy them at P100 per kilo. There are also other buyers who place orders even before harvest.

A portion of the farm is also planted with grapes: 50 pieces crimson and 50 pieces green varieties which came from Lomboy's farm in La Union. There are about 100 pieces of lowland strawberry plants. Papaya red lady varieties are planted in 200 square meters, sweet corn in 500 square meters and assorted vegetables which include ginger, turmeric, eggplant, cucumber, cauliflower, broccoli, lettuce, hot pepper, pechay, raddish, okra, ampalaya and stringed beans. There are also some root crops such as ube, camote. A number of mangosteen and mango trees are also planted in the farm.

They have also a number of farm animals which include 15 kabir and 3 native chickens; 4 geese, 4 ducks and 4 goats. But these fowls are not free ranged but are confined in a separate area so they could not destroy the plants.

A believer in and practitioner of natural farming Liz has established a vermicomposting structure in their farm which is now the source of their organic fertilizer for the plants. Two concrete worm bins have been constructed where the vermi (earthworm or wrigglers) are stocked along with farm wastes and garbage. The bins are protected with a shed made of



native materials. The worms feed on these garbage and turn these garbage into rich dark soil conditioner and along with the vermicasts that the worms excretes these become rich bio fertilizer.

Liz is an eager and fast learner. She readily practices what she has read and learned from seminars one of which is mulching. She covers the roots of the plants especially the dragon plants with weeds, dried leaves and rice straw to preserve the moisture especially during dry season. She also adopts a farm lay-out and design. She planted various flowering and ornamental plants around the farm not only to give the farm a cheerful and bright ambience but the presence of flowers attracts bees and other insects which help in plant pollination. Moreover, some flowering plants like marigold are botanical pesticides – they can repel insects because of their pungent odor.

The farm is currently being developed and enhanced to make it an agri-tourist farm and has applied already for Certification as a farm with Good Agricultural Practices or GAP. The Department of Agriculture regional office is helping Liz comply with the requirements for certification. Liz has already completed the prescribed training to obtain GAP certification. The required farm plan, lay-out and other structures and good practices are now being complied with and put in place.

The first level of a two-storey structure is now constructed in a portion of the farm which will serve as the family vacation house or guest house. Also, a concrete bridge is currently being constructed across the irrigation canal that

separates the farm from the road so that vehicles could enter the farm. The irrigation canal serves as water source but the water are siphoned from the canal to the farm through rubber hoses as the farm is on an elevated area. Landscaping is also being improved to make it more appealing and give a more aesthetic sense. Liz also said that they are contemplating to convert into a fishpond the low lying portion of their farm where water are usually stacked up during rainy season. They also plan to establish a butterfly sanctuary or garden as butterflies are great help in natural pollination. The mother-in law of Liz, Lita Escobar who also helps out in overseeing the farm when the former is out of town, also contemplates on developing products and by products of the dragon fruit such as its peels and flowers to be made into tea and other food stuff or medicine as she said these are good anti-oxidants. This writer also suggests that they establish a training hall so that the farm could also serve as a training or learning center.

While many improvements and developments are underway, this farm is already

a paradise of sort. It's a place far from the maddening crowd where one could commune with nature and find rest and respite. It not only provides income but also gives a sense of fulfillment to Liz who has abandoned her nursing profession to follow her passion for farming. Instead of nursing sick people she now tends to and nurtures plants and food crops that are healthy and nutritious. And most importantly she has given more reason for her seafarer husband Michael to look forward to his homecoming every four months not only to be with his family but to see the fruits of their labors and experience the serenity and contentment that their farm offers.

The integrated farm that the Escobar couple has developed is no ordinary farm. It is an agri-tourist farm where one can relax, feel the breeze, slow down, enjoy the view, savor nature's wonder, be amazed and be grateful of God's wonders. The welcome signage at the entrance of the Escobar farm aptly says it all: "Life is Better on The Farm."





Jose Amador: A sturdy trunk of the Pili industry

by Lovella P. Guarin

The province of Sorsogon remains the major producer of pili in the region and even in the country because of farmers like Tiyo Nono. Our 2016 Gawad Saka Regional Winner for Outstanding High Value Crops Farmer of Bicol.

Jose E. Amador, 74, is a pioneer in pili production and the first farmer to develop a pili orchard in Sorsogon. His almost three decade orchard which now contains 500 organically grown pili trees, mainly Lanuza and Magnaye varieties in their fruit bearing stage has been a source of income and numerous prestigious awards for the family.

Tiyo Nono started

grafting pili in 1987 with the aid of the agricultural technicians of DA and pioneered the grafting of pili in the Bicol region. In the same year, he started intercropping pili with coconut. Meanwhile, his first pili trees were already in their fruit bearing stage.

At that time pili nut products from Bicol was beginning to attract attention of the tourists paving the way for the rise of the pili processing industry. Tiyo Nono saw the limitless potential of pili as a climate-smart crop whose processed food products have carved its niche in the world market. With over 70% of this crop grown only in Bicol, it is the

flagship commodity of the region.

From this income, he was able to develop his farm and establish a small fish pond, produced other crops such as calamansi, coffee, cacao, vegetables. He has also ventured into dairy cattle raising and fresh milk production.

For pili, Tiyo Nono sells his produce in value added form such as pili nut, pili nut with shell or lagting, pili kernel, and pili shells sans the nut, and pili oil extracted from the pulp. Pili oil is used as raw material in the manufacture of soaps, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, sardines and salad dressings. Some of his buyers are

pili processors, hotels and supermarkets in Bicol, Laguna and Metro Manila. Tiya Jojie also processes the kernels into confectioneries for ordering buyers. His pili orchard is also a scion grove where he is producing scions for sale to pili propagators such as the Sorsogon Dairy Farm and the DA Bicol.

Tiyo Nono also practices organic agriculture. He maintains three vermi beds and prepares his own concoction of organic compost. He produces vermi tea which he sprays on plants to make them pest resistant.

A natural innovator, he fabricated his own depulping machine which uses water for easy depulping. His originally invented cracking machine surpasses other commercially produced machine in terms of minimal rejects of quality kernel.

He employs six permanent men and women farm workers who do the clearing, weeding and pruning. He hires additional labor to help in harvesting of pili nuts. His grandsons are also helping in the farm and he teaches them all that

(Next page pls.)





In January 2015, Tiyo Nono received the highest award from the JAYCEES as TOFARM 2014 Farmer of the Year citing Tio Nono's farm as the best and most prolific producer of export-quality pili in the country.

knows because he hopes that someday they would take over the management of the farm.

Several media outfits and have featured Mang Nono's achievements such as the Living Asia Channel, and national TV networks. He was also featured in PCARRD's farm news and some online news feed. His farm is also a favorite on-the-job training site for students of Sorsogon State College. His farm is also a site of researches for pili and its by-products being conducted by Sorsogon State College, Bicol University and UPLB and lakbay aral of other farmers.

He is often invited as a resource person on pili propagation and orchard management by the Department of Agriculture and the LGU Sorsogon. He also conducts techno-clinic and demonstrations on pili grafting in the farm for the benefit of visitors. Through his lectures, more people got interested in pili production which has boost up the pili industry in Sorsogon.

In 2006, Tiyo Nono was chosen as Magsasaka

Siyentista of the Farmers Information and Technology (FITS) Services of the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist. Thus he was grated with the Science and Technology Based Farm on Pili Nursery project by DOST-PCARRD in 2007 which gave him additional 400 pili trees. Other coordinating agencies that supported his projects were the Sorsogon State College and the Bicol Consortium for Agriculture Resources Research and Development (BCARRD). As an active Magsasaka Siyentista, he provided information and technology on pili not only to farm visitors but also in trainings, conferences and symposia.

Tiyo Nono's pili plantation did not only enable him to send his children to college - his son is a doctor who now works in the United States while his daughter is a registered nurse. He contributed immensely to the development of the pili industry in Bicol and at the same time brought honor to the region with his prestigious awards.

DA conducts series of training on sustainable cacao production

A total of 40 cacao farmers from Minalabac, Goa, Tigaon, Lupi, Sipocot and Libmanan with five participants per municipality attended the Training on Sustainable Cacao Production conducted by the Department of Agriculture - High Value Crops Development Program (DA-HVCDP) last April 19, 2016 at Llamas farm, this municipality.

As one of the priority commodities of the region, cacao is a potential crop like corn and palay, due to the global consumption and strong consumer interest on its health benefits. The worldwide demand for cacao increases by 3% every year.

A total of 17 trainings on cacao production will be conducted in different parts of the region, to attain its goal of reviving the cacao industry into an export winner.

Ronald Coprada of HVCDP discussed the programs and interventions that cacao farmers can expect from the DA. These are trainings and production support like planting materials, market development, infrastructure and post harvest and extension support and education and training

services. Other Institutions that also distribute cacao planting materials are the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Meanwhile, the participants were also able to witness the actual demonstration of tablea production, from roasting to molding using the equipment that the farm had already received from DA. They also toured around the Llamas cacao farm.

On the other hand, Mr. Reuben Sta. Catalina discussed Cacao Production Protocol/Farm Planning, Farm Management and Crop Production Establishment.

Engr. Menandro Calingacion, shared his knowledge in Crop Tree Management and Cacao Rehabilitation.

DA-HVCDP aims to expand the cacao plantation to 850 hectares regionwide by year 2020. The Bicol cacao industry envisions to have at least 12 million cacao trees producing dried beans. This will benefit 2,400 farmers getting additional income ranging from P 60,000 to P80,000 per hectare. **(Michelle Angela G. Alfiguara)**



Retrofitting for mushroom growers held

CALABANGA, CAMARINES SUR – Forty-five mushroom growers attended the 4-day Retrofitting and Planning Workshop on Mushroom Production Project in Bicol held April 5-8, 2016 at San Bernardino in this town.

One established mushroom commercial grower in Bicol who attended the event is Ariel Pagsuyuin. On the average, she is harvesting 100 kilos of mushroom every week. These edible mushrooms are being delivered fresh to restaurants in Naga City and Legazpi City, and some are being sold in her three stores located at Pili and Pamplona in Camarines Sur. Fresh mushroom is sold at P190 per kilo and 50 grams dried mushroom is sold at P100 in her stores. While the spent substrate is sold as organic compost fertilizer at P200 per bag.

She said there is a big

demand for mushroom and that is why she is looking for cooperatives that are willing to produce mushroom in large scale.

Another successful mushroom grower is Eladio Senosin of Bula, Camarines Sur. He started cultivating oyster mushroom in May 2015 and in January 2016, he was able to buy a motorcycle out of the income from selling fresh mushroom.

Meanwhile, Joel Chua, president of Catanduanes Association of Mushroom Producers and Entrepreneurs said all their 32 members have finished hands on training and are interested to put up their own mushroom farms.

Oliver reported that mushroom production in the Bicol region started in 2014 through the funding support from DA Agri Pinoy Rice Program with the goal of

increasing food, utilizing farm wastes like rice straws as substrates in the preparation of fruiting bags, and to provide additional livelihood for farmers and housewives. Since then, more than 1,000 farmers, housewives and students were trained on mushroom production. Out of these, 35 were able to start an enterprise.

The active mushroom growers organized themselves into Bicol Entrepreneur Association for Mushroom (BEAM), Inc. which was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission on March 29, 2016. The association President is Mariano B. Racelis, of San Roque, Iriga City. He is also a member of the National Organic Agriculture Board.

During the 4-day retrofitting and planning workshop, the members as well as prospective members of BEAM have laid out their future plans.

Mushroom project national coordinator Mary Ann Guerrero discussed the national updates on the project as well as good agricultural practices. Lectures and hands on training on mushroom tissue culture, spawn and fruiting bags production and inoculation technique were also conducted. There was also a demonstration on mushroom products processing.

DA Bicol RTD for Research and Regulations Edgar R. Madrid encouraged the participants to engage in large scale mushroom production to attain economies of scale and to link mushroom growers to processors and restaurants.

A P5M worth mushroom research and development laboratory is set to be established at the DA Bicol compound to intensify mushroom production and institutionalize provincial and municipal LGUs in mushroom spawn and fruit bags production. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**

Training on nursery establishment and propagation of fruit crops

A two day training course entitled "Training on Nursery Establishment, Management and Propagation Techniques of Selected Fruit Crops" was conducted recently by the Department of Agriculture Bicol on May 11 and 12, 2016 at the Macagang Business Center, Nabua Camarines Sur.

Attended by some 58 Extension workers, Farmers and Nursery Growers region wide, said training was geared to enhance the participant's knowledge and skills in nursery establishment and management. They were taught Rootstock technology and had actual demonstration particularly on budding, grafting and other plant propagation techniques.

Participants were able to familiarize propagation tools and techniques of selected fruit crops in different regions and enhance skills and knowledge on the best practices of asexual plant propagation.

Speakers from the Training Management Group was composed of : Engr. Joey Belarmino, Project Officer, Dr. Efrén Sabulase, Center Director, ATI-RTC 5. Manuel Dimalaluan, Agriculturist II, ATI-CO, Romeo Ayos, Supervising Agriculturist, Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), Editha Pelin SRS II, Regional Nursery In-charge, Rosita

Imperial, Supervising Science Research Specialist and Regional HVCDP focal Person.

According to Imperial, among the different high value crops being promoted and developed in the region, coffee and cacao have the biggest export potential. In line with this, a series of trainings on Cacao Production are simultaneously being conducted by the DA to target municipalities. Moreover, Imperial mentioned the Vegetable Enhancement Project which aims to stabilize the supply of vegetable in the

local and Metro Manila market.

Laarni Asis, a cacao grower from barangay Caraycayan Tigaon Camarines Sur said that she has been into cacao production for almost six years. Being a member of the Cocoa Foundation of the Philippines and Tigaon Cacao Planters Association, she added that she has been attending related trainings to enhance her skills especially on tablea making and is now preparing to apply for Good Agriculture Practice(GAP) certification at the Bureau of Plant Industry. **(Blesilda Nunez)**



Back to Bicol thru mushroom production

"Mapagal an buhay sa Manila sabi kan aki ko kaya ako interesado na makanuod tungkol sa mushroom para may dagdag na kita kami asin paulion ko na an aki ko." (Life in Manila is difficult according to my kid. That is why I am attending this mushroom training so that I can have additional income. And I can let my kid return to Bicol.)

This was the reason cited by 63-year-old farmer Leopoldo Labangco from Barayong, Cagmanaba, Oas, Albay for attending the Stakeholders' Hands-On Training and Entrepreneurial-Planning Workshop on Mushroom Production and Value Adding Products held on May 23-27, 2016 at Aplaya de Condes, Cagmanaba, Oas, Albay. Said training was part of the Balik-Probinsiya Program jointly undertaken by the DA, DENR, DILG and the PLGU-Albay under the National Convergence Initiative (NCI).

According to Albay Provincial Agriculturist Cheryll O. Rebeta, this training will provide additional income because "sa mushroom, habang ka nagluluto, nagpapantsa, natutulog, naglalaba, ito ay tumutubo".

Attended by more than 100 participants from the barangays of Badian, Sabang, Cagmanaba, Maramba, Tapel and Nagas, the five-day event taught them to produce, process and market different mushroom varieties such as Oyster, Ganoderma/Shiitake and Milky Mushrooms.

"Livelihood is the heart of BPP" said Dr. Oscar O. Parawan, DA-National



Mushroom production training

Convergence Initiative (NCI) Focal Person. The BPP hoped that those informal settlers with unstable livelihood and living in disaster-prone areas in Manila, return to their home province and be provided with livelihood. Barangay Cagmanaba has a vast rice area that is why, mushroom production was introduced as an alternative livelihood program.

Albay Board Member and Committee on Agriculture Chair Ramon Alsua commended this program. He also disclosed his personal plan of using old piggens as stock room for mushrooms. He reiterated his suggestion to the Provincial Agriculture Services of Albay to consider "Kurakding" culture and production in their program and eventually be introduced to barangays.

DA Regional Technical Director for Research and Regulations and Regional NCI focal person Dr. Edgar R. Madrid said the training is the second program of DA-NCI. The first activity was on Soil Preservation. BPP was conceptualized after a study was conducted that majority

BALIK PROBINSYA PROGRAM.

Regional Convergence Initiative (RCI) focal person for DA and Regional Technical Director for Research and Regulations Dr. Edgar R. Madrid orients the participants on the project.



of those affected by Typhoon Ondoy were those people from provinces who live and work in Manila in hazardous and unstable conditions. The BPP identified Oas, Albay; Tagkawayan, Quezon; and Bulacan as recipients of this program.

Each government agency has its own mandate and program. The DA focuses on agriculture development and livelihood. DPWH is focused on infrastructure and development.

According to the DENR, the government has no alienable and disposable lands so, they instead donated timberlands to BPP. The BPP will be allotting 2000 hectares in Oas of which 3.5 hectares will be for resettlement area with 200 housing units from the National Housing Authority.

According to the NCI

Technical Working Group, they only have identified 60 families as recipients. Presently, the DSWD and DPWH are having difficulty in looking for beneficiaries.

Rona Dollentas of PhilRice Bicol said that Cagmanaba is a recipient of Palayamanayon Program which will maximize the community's potential as a farming community since almost all government interventions on agriculture are available in Cagmanaba.

The DA Bicol Regional Focal Person on Mushroom Pedro F. Oliver said the local supply for mushroom is limited despite its great demand and profitability. Through the training, the participants will be given an opportunity to increase the supply of mushrooms.

DA Bicol Food Lab also demonstrated mushroom-based food preparations like atchara, fried and dried mushroom, prunes, pickles, soup, chips, ice cream, yema, tart, catsup, marmalade, cookies and pastillas from mushroom.

Lectures on Beekeeping, and Vermi Composting were conducted by Henry Rafael and Eleanor O. Daep, respectively.

The five-day training was capped with a field tour at Racelees Mushroom Farm in Iriga City. (Jayson M. Gonzales)



Procurement issues tackled in meeting cum workshop

To identify bottlenecks that hamper or slow down the procurement process and find solution to overcome them in a participatory manner, the Administrative Division of the Department of Agriculture conducted an Operational meeting and workshop on June 8 to 9 in Naga City. The in-house activity was participated by about 70 participants which included program coordinators, division chiefs and heads of provincial outreach stations and other operating units, liaison officers, administrative staffs, end-users, members of technical working group, Bids and Awards Committee members and secretariat.

To set things in the proper perspective Atty. Francisco R. Velasco, a former government auditor discussed the legal references, updates and the Do's and Don'ts in Procurement. His discussions

and sharing were not only based on his broad knowledge on jurisprudence but also on his actual experiences as a government auditor.

The BAC secretariat then took turns in discussing the flow of procurement and it's timelines; and the Status of Procurement.

Dr. Edgar R. Madrid, Regional Technical Director for Research and Regulatory urged the participants to actively participate in the discussions especially of the issues and concerns as it was the proper time and venue for ventilating them.

One of the highlights of the activity was the open forum where the end users and other staffs were allowed to ventilate the problems and difficulties they experience in the procurement process. The BAC members and the secretariat sat as the panel to



listen and answer the issues raised by the end-users. Imelda P. Acompañado, Human Resource Officer facilitated the discussions and open forum.

As an output of the activity the participants which were grouped into four came up with their respective issues and concerns with the corresponding

recommendation which were presented after the workshop. According to Rosario Sales, chief of the Administrative Division and BAC chairperson, said outputs will be presented and discussed during the management Meeting for the appropriate actions. **(Emily B. Bordado)**



Sorsogon farmers finish FFS on organic rice and vegetable

SORSOGON CITY--- "Dakulaon na tabang sako an FFS ta dai na ako magastos nin dakula sa kemikal na pestisidyo asin fertilizers sa sakuyang mga tanom," Celso Espinola said during the Organic Vegetable and Organic Rice Production Farmers Field School (FFS) Graduation held on April 6, 2016 at the Regional Dairy Production and Technology Center (RDPTC), Cabid-an, Sorsogon City.

Espinola is one of the 30 farmers from Gubat, Sorsogon City (East, West, Bacon Districts), and Juban who participated in the FFS from October 28, 2015-March 30, 2016.

According to Supervising Agriculturist Nestor Nava, this FFS is considered as the longest FFS because the participants had to replant after Typhoon Nona destroyed their two-month crops in December 2015. According to Farmer-graduate Agripina Camara, "kaming mga parauma, sige sanang sige, dawa nagkabaragyo na!"

During the FFS, the farmer-graduates showcased their learnings by selling fermented fruit and plant juices; calcium; fish amino-acid; oriental herbal nutrients; garlic pepper spray; lactic acid bacteria; organic fertilizer serum using indigenous microorganisms

and Em Bokashi; and vermicast and vermicompost. They also sold their products like Black Rice, Garlic, Pili, Banana, Ampalaya, Lettuce, Tomato, Cucumber, Squash, Trigona Bee Pollen Cider Vinegar; Baligang Natural Red Wine; herbs like spearmint, basil, taragon, stevia, Italian oregano, parsley, oregano, and ashitaba; and rootcrops like sweet potato, cassava and radish.

The FFS was sponsored by the Department of

Agriculture-5, DA-Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR), DA-Bureau of Animal Industry (DA-BAI), and the National Organic Agricultural Program (NOAP).

The farmer-graduates received garden tool sets consisting of sprinklers, rake, shovel, and hoe; laminated sacks; information materials; and Soil Test Kits.

A ceremonial harvesting of Organic Black Rice culminated the one-day event. **(Jayson M. Gonzales)**



Farmers trained on GAP for fresh fruits and vegetables

NAGA CITY-- To help the farmers learn the procedures and requirements for GAP certification, Bicol Integrated Agricultural Research Center (BIARC) organized a training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.

Seventy-six (76) farmers, farm owners from different municipalities attended the training at Villa Caceres Hotel and joined the actual GAP Field Inspection at Carolina and Panicuason, Naga City April 28-29, 2016.

Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) are methods that address environmental, economic and social sustainability for on-farm process that results to a safe and quality food and non-food agricultural products.

For several years a number of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) codes, standards and regulations have been developed by various organizations and government offices, in order to have a standard agricultural practice in different commodities grown in diverse areas.

The two-day training was facilitated by Mr. Angel S. Tulabut, Agricultural Center Chief II and National Deputized Inspector. He explained the importance of GAP certification to the farm



owners and on how it would help improve our economy. He also extensively discussed the ASEAN integration, code of hygienic practices on production of fresh fruits and vegetables, Philippine National standards for fresh fruits and vegetables and finally the GAP certification guidelines and process.

“With GAP trainings and certification, our farmers will be prepared to compete with

other ASEAN countries, especially now that they had agreed not to import or export products without the GAP certificate.”

Mr. Angel S. Tulabut,
Agricultural Center Chief II
of DA Region 3.

The participants were able to visit three farms that are subjected for GAP Certification. Aninipot Farm owned by Beautilyn Albao applies for Gap Certification for Herbs while Casa Fidel owned by Mary Jade Paredes is applying for the GAP certification for Vegetables. Alfredo Gatongay, manager of the Naga View Adventist College (NVAC) had previously applied for the GAP certification for Vegetable and is now waiting for the certification. **(Michelle Angela G. Alfignra)**



DA summer youth internship program.. (from page 6)



Imelda Accompanado,
Chief of Human
Resource Office.

to the people who have helped and supported them during their stay at the Department of Agriculture.

The students' internship experience is not only a way

to comply with the school requirements; it's a way to experience life in the real world. As what Mrs. Emilia B. Bordado, Chief Information Officer said, “You should grow

with character and substance as a person, don't stop learning, madami pa kayong dapat malaman in actual life.”

The goal of the Summer Youth Internship Program

(SYIP) to involve and acquaint the youth to public service and understand the new programs and projects of the government, was successfully accomplished and was fully appreciated by the interns.

The journey doesn't start at the beginnings, it begins at the end. The Summer Youth Internship Program (SYIP), is only a glimpse of the real world, the working attitude that they had shown during their stay in DA will help develop their personality and growth in oneself. **(Michelle Angela G. Alfignra)**

Rice crop monitoring , geo-referencing training for RCM coordinators

PILI, CAM. SUR--The Research Division of the Department of Agriculture-Bicol conducted the Rice Crop Manager Farming Monitor/Geo-Referencing Training and Planning Workshop on April 22, 2016 at the DA Library.

According to the regional focal Person on Rice Crop Manager (RCM) Corazon A. Orbon, the RCM is a comprehensive decision support tool for increasing yields and income for rice farmers using gadgets and mobile phones.

More than 50 DA and LGU staff, extension workers, Local Farmer-Technicians (LFT) and farmers from the Bicol Region attended the one-day activity. They are now considered as rice crop manager-coordinators having trained to access, document and process actual field results that need immediate decision.

Aside from accessing



Corazon A. Orbon,
RCM focal person of
DA Bicol.

the Rice Crop Manager, the RCM coordinators can also receive advices through the RCM Messenger; RCM Farming Monitor; and RCM Geo-referencing.

Specifically, the RCM Messenger sends automatically generated Short Messaging System (SMS) to farmers like reminders and advices during the season, updates on the pre-season RCM recommendation for changes

in variety and sowing date; and confirms the contact number of farmers.

The RCM Farming Monitor will monitor farmers uptake of RCM recommendation; facilitate collection of information on actual practices of RCM farmers; interview farmers near harvest of the rice crop; determine whether farmers follow RCM recommendations; and identify farmers and analyze results in collaboration with the IPAD project.

The RCM Geo-referencing accurately measures field size and location; ensures information on field size for precise

RCM recommendation to farmers; incorporates the measurement of the field size to enhance extension services; and to measure the field area using the Global Positioning System (GPS).

As of this year, there are 12,851 RCM coordinators deployed to monitor the 154,455 hectares total land area planted to rice in the Bicol Region.

The participants were given a Samsung Galaxy Tab, a smartphone, and a laptop to generate and process the necessary data needed for the Rice Crop Manager Farming Monitoring and Geo-referencing. **(Jayson M. Gonzales)**



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