

Agri chief assures Albay farmers of P100 Million credit assistance

by Emily B. Bordado

GUINOBATAN, ALBAY – To boost the morale and help Albay farmers who were affected by the Mayon eruption, Agriculture secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol assured that the DA has enough money for them. After speaking and interacting with about 900 farmers and local officials at the full packed Sports Complex here on January 29, 2018. Piñol committed an additional P100 M to be loaned out to farmers under the Production Loan Easy Access (PLEA) and Survival and Recovery (SURE) Programs.

These loan windows are being implemented by the DA in partnership with the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC). PLEA will extend credit to farmers without interest and collateral payable in 3 years. Farmers can avail of production loan from ₱5,000 to ₱25,000 without the usual documentary requirements but only an ID to be issued by the DA. The money will be coursed through conduit banks or cooperatives which shall get a 6% interest per annum. This credit window was originally extended only to the province of Masbate and some provinces in Mindanao but will now be extended in Albay.

Under the SURE Program farmers affected by typhoons and other calamities who are included in the LGUs master list of affected farmers shall be entitled to a loan assistance worth ₱25,000. The initial

(Please turn to page 6)



Agriculture secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol (above) assures the more than 900 farmers (photo below) affected by the eruption of Mayon Volcano that the DA has enough fund for them.



DA Bicol organizes Bantay Presyo Monitoring Team in Albay

by Jayson M. Gonzales

LEGAZPI City---Albay Provincial Agriculturist Che Rebeta and her assistant Hilda Lopez both noted the abrupt increase in prices of vegetables like pechay, okra, and tomatoes days after the eruption of Mayon Volcano in January.

Three days after, the Provincial Government of Albay declared Albay under state of calamity when PhiVolcs raised the Alert Level to 4. The ash and small volcanic pebbles from the volcano damaged farms and affected the livelihood of the farmers and even the fisherfolks of Buhi.

The prices of agricultural commodities like vegetables, (Please turn to page 7)

INSIDE:



An agri tourism site with a heart and a mission

Story on page 12

Farm Tourism the emerging sunshine industry

Aside from beaches, mountains, volcanoes, springs, other bodies of water and historical landmarks, farm lands are Bicol's most prominent natural features. With the enactment of Republic Act 10816 otherwise known as the Farm and Tourism Development Act many farm owners are encouraged to develop their farms into an agri-tourism site. Thus, many farms today have metamorphosed from being simple plantations to distinct tourist destination showcasing the locality's unique biodiversity, natural ambiance, beautiful landscape and rich soil where food crops, ornamentals, agroforest trees and animals thrive abundantly and harmoniously.

According to Dr. Mina Gabor, president of the International School of Sustainable Tourism, farm tourism attracts visitors and travellers generally for educational and recreational purposes and could spur economic activities and that could generate income for the farm and the community.

Because of the agricultural nature of our economy and the rich natural endowments of our region farm tourism has great potential

to thrive and flourish. In fact farm tourism is now considered a sunshine industry. Senator Cynthia Villar who is the chairperson of the Agriculture and Fishery Committee recognizes this and she noted that farmers and fishers need to diversify and supplement their incomes and farm tourism is a creative way of achieving this goal.

Indeed, farm tourism could be a driver for inclusive economic growth. It allows more efficient resource utilization which can generate jobs in the rural areas; open business opportunities or agri-enterprises for the rural families, and reduce urban migration. Subsequently farm tourism will spur increase in demand for local products, provide additional income for farmers, farmworkers and rural women and will thus serve as catalyst for the upliftment and empowerment of agriculture and fisheries communities. It can also generate additional revenue to the local government units.

Most importantly farm tourism can rekindle appreciation of the value of agriculture especially among our youths. As most agri-tourism sites or centers also serve as learning sites they can be the

venue for promoting knowledge on good, sustainable agricultural, efficient and environment-friendly farm practices and technologies.

Although agri-tourism is largely private sector driven, the government is strongly committed to support this emerging industry. The Department of Tourism, Department of Agriculture, TESDA, Agricultural Training Institute, Department of Public Works and Highways, the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone (TIEZA), Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Transportation and Communications are among the national agencies mandated to provide support to the industry. They compose the Farm Tourism Development Board which shall formulate and implement the Farm Tourism Strategic Action Plan. But the LGUs also play a vital role in the development promotion and ensuring sustainability of farm tourism camps and activities in their respective locality.

Given the necessary support farm-tourism in Bicol will be the new bright spot for our economy and the next big thing in our region.



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Published quarterly by the Regional
Agriculture and Fisheries Information Division
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
Lita V. Estrella
Emil Pasumbal
Salvacion Gonowon
Records Unit

Over P700 million worth of PRDP-Bicol subprojects approved by DA's advisory board

LEGAZPI CITY – The Department of Agriculture's (DA) advisory board approved a total of P727.78 million-worth subprojects proposed under the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) during a meeting held on March 13, 2018, this city.

The Regional Project Advisory Board (RPAB), an interagency multidisciplinary team constituted and mandated to review and approve plans, feasibility studies, detailed engineering designs and program of works for PRDP funding, approved two enterprise development (I-REAP) subprojects and one infrastructure development (I-BUILD) subproject with increase in cost. These are: the P3.84 million-worth Coco Geonet Production and Coco Peat Processing Project in Sta. Elena, Camarines Norte, the Camarines Norte Pineapple Trading and Processing Project in Labo, Camarines Norte which costs P7.73 million, and the 7.37-kilometer

Concreting of Junction Sabangan-Datag East Farm-to-Market Road (FMR) in Caramoran, Catanduanes amounting to P126.99 million.

The RPAB also approved four subprojects with changes in technical data namely the 3.44-kilometer Concreting of Poblacion to Pulongguit-guit FMR which costs P70.57 million, the 4.33-kilometer Concreting of Cumadcad-Canjela FMR in Castilla, Sorsogon worth P73.62 million, the 8.3-kilometer Rehabilitation/Improvement of Hacienda-Rawis FMR in Tabaco City, Albay amounting to P198.69 million and the 15-kilometer Concreting of San Agustin to Sawang FMR in Aroroy, Masbate worth P246.30 million.

Per PRDP guidelines, repackaging and cancelation of subprojects and re-obligation of budget source require the RPAB's approval. In addition, the Board is mandated to recommend appropriate actions to resolve operational and

administrative issues as well as ensure that policy directions are followed in PRDP planning and implementation. The RPAB is chaired by the DA Regional Executive Director and is composed of regional directors of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and the Regional Agricultural and Fishery Council (RAFC).

The RPAB-approved subprojects will be subjected to the unified re-run of the PRDP's prioritization scheme on March 31, 2018 which covers the P8.2 billion I-BUILD budget from CY 2018 to 2020. Priority subprojects will still undergo the regular PRDP review process. **(Annielyn L. Baleza)**

Letters

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Albay
MUNICIPALITY OF POLANGUI
Municipal Agricultural Services Office

HON. EMMANUEL F. PIÑOL
Secretary
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mahal Naming Kalihim MANNY PIÑOL:

ISANG MALUGOD NA PAGBATI!

Ang amin pong pamunuan ng LGU- MUNICIPAL AGRICULTURAL SERVICES OFFICE - POLANGUI, ALBAY, sa aking pamamahala bilang Municipal Agriculturist, katuwang ang aming masipag na Alkalde ng Bayang Polangui, Hon. Cherilie M. Sampal, mga Pangulo ng RBOs at Pederasyon ng Farmers Irrigators Association dito sa aming bayan, ay nagpapaabot po ng lubos at taimtim na pasasalamat sa lahat ng mga iginawad na tulong sa sector ng Agrikultura kasama na po dito ang walang sawa ninyo pong pagbigay sa amin mga makinarya, post-harvest facilities at mga karampatang programa na kung saan po ay nagbunga po ito ng maganda, maayos, kapaki-pakinabang na mga programa na kung saan po hindi lamang indibidwal na magsasaka ang natulungan nito kundi ang buong mga magsasaka na sakop ng ibat-ibang Farmers at Asosasyon ng mga patubig dito sa aming bayan.

Sa loob po ng limang taon ng aking pamamahala bilang Municipal Agriculturist, ako po ay personal at lubos na nagpapasalamat sapagkat hindi ko magagawa ang lahat ng ito kung wala po ang inyong suporta at tulong na kung saan ay angkop at kapaki-pakinabang ang lahat pong mga proyekto at programa na inyo pong naibigay sa amin. Malaking tulong at suporta din po ang pagiging tagapangasiwa sa amin Department of Agriculture - Regional Field Office V sa pangunguna po ng napakasipag at verysupportive na Regional Executive Director - Dr. Elena B. Delos Santos at pinuno ng ibat-ibang commodities na laging handa sa pagbibigay ng serbisyo sa lahat ng nangangailangan.

Maraming Salamat Po at Makakaasa po kayo sa amin pong buong suporta bilang mga magsasaka dito po sa amin bayan ay patuloy na mangangalaga upang maging maayos, mapabuti at maging kapaki-pakinabang para po para sa lahat.

Lubos na Nagpapasalamat:

(Signed) ALFREDO A. MARISCOTES, JR.
Municipal Agriculturist
LGU - MAS Polangui, Albay



DA, PhilRice, BPI engage seed growers, LGUs for a more robust rice seed system in Bicol

NAGA CITY – To improve farmers' access to high quality seeds which is one of the formula for a higher productivity and profitability in rice production, the Department of Agriculture region 5 Rice Program, the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) Bicol and the National Seed Quality Control Services joined forces to harmonize and strengthen the rice seed production system in the region.

In a consultation meeting with over 80 rice seed growers, Seed Net members, provincial rice program coordinators, seed coordinators and seed inspectors, the three government offices laid down the rice seed production and distribution workplan for the region for 2018. The 2-day consultation and project briefing was held in one of the

hotels in this city on February 27-28, 2018.

Director Victoria S. Lapitan of PhilRice Bicol bared that for the first semester 2018, the national Rice Program targeted a total 1,955,360 hectares rice area of which 360,752 for hybrid and 1,594,608 certified seeds (high quality seeds/inbred). Director Lapitan thus, appealed to the rice seed growers and seednet members of every province to intensify the production of PhilRice recommended varieties and those preferred by the seed growers and farmers. The national rice program recommends NSIC Rc 302 for Bicol which can yield from 5.7 to 10.4 tons/hectare. The PhilRice Bicol recommends NSIC Rc 222, 216, 238, 160, 300, 354,352, 302 and PSB Rc 18 and 82.



*PhilRice Bicol Director
Victoria Lapitan*

The Seed Industry Act or RA 7308 mandated the PhilRice to “develop appropriate rice varieties suited under Philippine conditions, propagate these into breeder, foundation, and registered seeds, and extend all necessary technical assistance to ensure the proper utilization of such seeds on the farm level.”

Rona T. Dollentas, project leader of the Rice Seed System Program of PhilRice Bicol presented the objectives of the project which are: Enlist the support and commitment

of the seed growers, seednet members and LGUs to the program; Identify constraints on the rice seed availability and distribution; and, come up with the consolidated workplan for effective seed production and distribution. To achieve the seed requirement for the region, the PhilRice will strengthen the existing seednet which include the Provincial Agricultural Center in Tula-Tula, Legazpi City; Central Bicol Experiment Station in DA RFO 5 compound; Catanduanes State University; DEBESMSCAT in Masbate; and Sorsogon State College.

Anacleto Esplana, Regional Seed Coordinator of the DABicol reported that under the seed exchange program, a total of 90,267 hectares are targeted to be planted to certified rice seeds, while 1,984 hectares are targeted to be planted to registered rice seeds in the Bicol region. Under the project establishment of hybrid model farms 6,000 hectares are targeted while under the inbred rice model farm project, 2,500 hectares are targeted for this year.

Esplana also added that the regional target for seed buffer stocking is 35,000 bags of certified seeds at 40 kg/bag; 1,000 bags of hybrid rice at 15kg/bag; and 600 bags registered seed at 20kg/bag.

Meanwhile, Corazon Orbon, superintendent of the Central Bicol Experiment Station and focal person for the Next Generation Project in Bicol, presented the results of three years of participatory varietal selection of climate resilient rice varieties for various ecosystem such as saline, flood prone and drought areas in Camarines Sur under the Next Gen project. Orbon urged the seed growers to also put a little investment on producing stress tolerant seed varieties for the marginal farmers. Through the Next Gen project, the DA was able to sustain the productivity levels in the adverse rice areas.

(Lovella P. Guarin)



CSur and Albay farmers received over 6,000 kilos ginger

Realizing the need to intensify the production of ginger due to high demand nationally and internationally, the Department of Agriculture Bicol through the High Value Crops Development Program, headed by Rosita Imperial, Regional HVCDP coordinator distributed a total of 3,300 kilos of ginger to various vegetable growers in Camarines Sur on March 1, 2018 at this municipality.

At least 66 beneficiaries from different Vegetable Growers Association in Camarines Sur mostly in Libmanan, Lupi, Tigaon and Ocampo received 50 kilos of ginger for each member to be planted in their 1,000 square meters individual plot.

Before the distribution, the members were briefed by Marilyn Dimaculangan, HVCDP staff regarding the latest technology on Ginger



Farmers from Camarines Sur who will venture on ginger production.

Production and the its health benefits. Ginger is an excellent spice crop commonly called as “luya.” Because of its many healing properties like anti-oxidant, pain reliever and anti-inflammatory, this medicinal crop is now being added by vegetable growers in their commercial crops production. The activity was conducted to help the growers cope with the overflowing demand for this spicy and medicinal crop.

“Maski dakul ang supply kan luya, mayong hadit na dai ni mabakal sa merkado” (There is no worry if there is an oversupply of ginger because it is always needed in the

market) said Edwin Castaneda, Chairman, Libmanan Vegetable Growers Association. He said that this is the second time they will plant ginger in addition to their other vegetable crops like eggplant, ampalaya, string beans, etc. His association was organized in 2006 with 120 members and has been receiving interventions from DA like technical assistance, vegetable seeds, garden tools and other equipment. He narrated that sometimes he buys the produce of his co-members and sell it to Divisoria and Pasig City. He transported the vegetable twice a week during peak season. “Dakulang tabang

na maray samuya an asistensya kan DA ta naeenganyo man kami maghigos para makataong kuntribusyon sa pagkakan kan satong kababayan. (The assistance extended by DA is a big help for us and inspire us to strive more so that we can contribute for the supply of food in the country). Ask about ginger as an additional produce, “There is always a place for ginger in the market because health conscious people always crave for it”. he added.

A week after, another batch of farmers from albay received the same intervention. **(Blesilda A. Nuñez)**

DA strengthens partnership with local feedmillers

IRIGA CITY. The DA Regulatory Division conducted the first Feed-millers meeting in 2018 in this city.

Twenty participants mostly feed manufacturers attended the meeting and participated in the discussions regarding Feed manufacturing, Good Manufacturing Practices Good Manufacturing Practices Parameters and recent development in the industry.

Rosita Imperial, OIC chief, Regulatory Division appealed for cooperation between the DA and the members to strengthen partnership and

deliver better services not only for the livestock raisers but also for the consumers as a whole.

She encouraged the audience to be innovative and willing to share some inputs as the first step to good manufacturing services and other inspection protocols. “We will be working closely as a team to level up our services and eventually come up with an operating manual to be approved by the higher authorities” she said.

“Let your voice be heard” said Dr. Edgar Madrid, Regional Technical Director

for Research & Regulations to the attendees. He urged everyone to be compliant to the Food Safety Act. He said that the meeting was called for to provide opportunity to draft protocols to be adopted and address the requirement of the law (sanitation, food safety, etc.) “At the end of the day, we have to agree and work as a team. We have to establish a good working relationship and find ways to come up with a functional and effective manufacturing industry in Bicol” he said. He also appealed to the feed millers to regularly renew their license and always comply with simple

requirements. “We can be proud to say that our product is compliant with the requirement of the Law” he added.

The Bicol Feed millers present were: Bernard Magpayo, Unaho Inc. San Jose Pili Cam Sur; Jennie Casis, Vast Agro Solutions Inc.; Babylyn Villamer Collusal Yield System Inc.; Severino Tomagos Jr, Southern Luzon Feedmill, Inc.; Re Orcine, Apollo Feedmill Corporation, Iriga City; Geraldine Madrona, Cuppra Feeds; John Andre Flor, Suppra Feeds and Amalia Penay, Arrow Feeds Corporation. **(Blesilda Nuñez)**



Cam. Norte pineapple farmers get over P3M processing facility

DAET, CAM. NORTE – The Department of Agriculture Bicol through the High Value Crops Development Program turned over P3M worth Pineapple Processing Facility to Camarines Norte Primary Multi-Purpose Cooperative (CNPMPCC) during the Pineapple Congress cum Harvest Festival held at the DA operated Camarines Norte Lowland Rainfed Research Station (CNLRRS), in barangay Calasgasan here on March 22, 2018.

Rosita Imperial, regional HVCDP coordinator said that the pineapple facility which was established in Calasgasan is equipped with fruit dehydrator and vacuum sealer. A Multi-Commodity Solar Dryer (MCSTD) will also be installed in the station.

The HVCDP also turned over of three decorticating machines to Labo Progressive Multi-Purpose Cooperative, San Lorenzo Farmers Agricultural Cooperative and CNLRRS (right photo).



Agri Chief assures... *(from page 1)*

amount of ₱5,000 shall immediately be released for food subsistence and the balance of ₱20,000 will be released later for purchase of production inputs. This is also interest and collateral free.

On same occasion Sec. Piñol turned over a total of ₱20,371,672.00 worth of interventions. Under the Rice Program, ₱13,250,000 worth of hybrid rice seeds, fertilizers and laminated sacks were turned over to LGUs and farmer organizations. Under the Corn Program, ₱4,974,500 worth interventions consisting of 707 bags hybrid yellow corn seeds were turned over to 5 LGUs and 1 unit 4WD tractor worth ₱2.5 million was awarded to the Provincial Agriculture Office. Meanwhile, the Livestock and Poultry Program turned over

2,450 heads mallard ducks and supplements for livestock worth ₱577,212.00 to 7 LGUs. The High Value Crops Development Program on the other hand, distributed ₱559,960.00 worth of vegetable seeds, organic fertilizers, knapsack sprayers and garden tools. The Organic Agriculture Program likewise provided ₱740,000.00.

BFAR likewise turned over 900,000 pcs tilapia fingerlings amounting to ₱270,000 to 18 LGUs.

As of this writing there are 9,791 farmers in 10 municipalities of Albay affected by the eruption covering a total area of 8,137.36 hectares valued at P185 million.

The secretary was accompanied by BFAR Undersecretary Eduardo Gonggona (Ret. Commodore);

DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Elena B. delos Santos; RTD Edgar R. Madrid; RTD Rodel P. Tornilla; and heads of regional management council: PCIC Regional Manager Corazon Realubit; PhilFIDA OIC Director Mary Anne Molina; Phil. Coconut Authority (PCA) representative Alvin Trespeces; Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Regional Director Dennis Del Socorro; Phil. Fisheries Development Authority (PDFA) Port Manager Carlos Hagosojos; National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) Director Dr. Fernando Lontoc; and Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) OIC Regional Director Vivien Carable.

Albay 3rd district Congressman Fernando

V. Gonzales; Guinobatan mayor Ann Yap Ongjoco; Mayor Maria Arhdail Baldo of Camalig; Mayor Cenon Volante of Malilipot, Albay; representatives of the mayors of other affected municipalities and some media were also present.

Earlier Sec. Piñol first had a breakfast meeting with Governor Al Francis Bichara and AKB Cong. Rodel Batocabe. Also present were Dr. Cedric Daep head of Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management (APSEMO); Dr. Florencio Adonay of Albay Provincial Veterinary Services; Office of Civil Defense Regional Director Claudio Yucot; Albay Provincial Administrator Vida Ma. Corazon Frollante and Prov'l. Agriculturist Cheryl Rebeta.

DA Bicol turns over P50M for abaca rehab in Catanduanes

V I R A C , CATANDUANES – The Department of Agriculture-Bicol awarded a P50 million-worth cheque to the Provincial Local Government Unit of Catanduanes for the rehabilitation of its typhoon-damaged abaca areas. DA-Bicol Regional Executive Director Dr. Elena B. de los Santos personally turned over the cheque to Catanduanes Governor Joseph C. Cua during the Project Briefing and Launching of the Rehabilitation of Typhoon-Damaged Abaca Areas in Catanduanes held in this province on February 8, 2018.

Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA) Executive Director Kennedy Costales, PhilFIDA Region V OIC-Regional Director Mary Anne R. Molina, Congressional Representative Cesar V. Sarmiento, represented by Rudy M. Rojas Jr. and Virac Mayor Sammy V. Laynes, represented by Sangguniang Bayan Member Amador V. Abichuela attended the activity. Local chief executives of the municipalities covered by the Project including Caramoran Mayor Agnes B. Popa, San Miguel Mayor Francisco

Camano, Pandan Mayor Raul Tabirara, Pangasinan Mayor Robert Fernandez, Baras Mayor Chito S. Chi were present during the Project launch and briefing. PhilFIDA-supported abaca farmers also attended the event.

The P50 million-worth Cash for Work program aims to rebuild the source of livelihood of 13,529 abaca farmers affected by Typhoon Nina and to plant or rehabilitate 15,034.06 hectares of abaca damaged by Typhoon Nina. Among the priority areas for validation are the abaca farmers who participated in the PhilFIDA-monitored, farmer-initiated Abaca Rehabilitation/Replanting Activity in 2017, disease-free abaca farms, canton areas and disease-infected abaca areas. The Project Briefing and Launching of the Rehabilitation of Typhoon-Damaged Abaca Areas in Catanduanes was

capped with the Ceremonial Signing of the Memorandum of Agreement of the project stakeholders.

The P50 million-worth Rehabilitation of Typhoon-Damaged Abaca Areas in Catanduanes was the support pledged by President Rodrigo R. Duterte and DA Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol when they visited the island province three days after typhoon Nina to help abaca farmers recoup their losses.

As one of the top producers of abaca worldwide, Catanduanes Governor Cua thanked the Department of Agriculture for its support to the long-anticipated rehabilitation project.

Meanwhile, de los Santos said that for Catanduanes in 2017, DA-Bicol has funded a total of P85.16 million-worth of projects under the DA regular programs and rehabilitation

efforts after Typhoon Nina.

In addition, she announced that Catanduanes is one of the priority provinces included in the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) in Bicol. Moreover, she relayed the Agriculture Secretary's message to focus on three things in order to provide available and affordable food for Filipinos while increasing the productivity and income of the agri-fishery sector. These are: 1. Improve technology adoption such as use of good quality seeds, agricultural machineries, post-harvest facilities and mechanization to reduce production cost; 2. Credit financing such as the Production Loan Easy Access Program (PLEA) and Survival and Recovery Loan Program (SURE); and Marketing such as the TienDA, DA's marketing initiative which adopts the farmers' market concept.

Catanduanes, known as the Abaca Capital in the Philippines, accounts for 90 percent of the regional average abaca production with 22,755 metric tons. The National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) reported that Catanduanes lost P1.4 billion-worth of fiber and P42 billion is required for its rehabilitation after typhoon Nina devastated the province's abaca plantations in December 2016. **(Annielyn L. Baleza)**



DA Bicol organizes Bantay Presyo..

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meat and fish surge to more than 10% of the previous month's prevailing market price.

This incidence prompted the Department of Agriculture-Bicol to convene the Albay Provincial Veterinary Service (PVS), Provincial Agriculture Service (PAS), regional offices of the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS), Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA), Philippine Statistics Authority, National Food Authority (NFA), Sugar

Regulatory Administration (SRA), Regional Agriculture and Fishery Council (RAFC), Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Consumers Group, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and its Agribusiness and Marketing-Assistance Division (AMAD), Regulatory Division, and Field Operations Division to form the Regional Bantay Presyo Monitoring Team.

As stipulated in Republic

Act No. 7581 or The Price Act, the DA has jurisdiction over the agricultural commodities which are classified as basic necessities and prime commodities. Basic necessities include rice, corn, root crops, fresh milk, fresh vegetables and fruits, fresh pork, beef, poultry meat, sugar and cooking oil. Prime commodities include dried pork; dried beef and poultry meat; fresh dairy products; onions and garlic; fertilizers and pesticides,

herbicides; poultry, livestock and fishery feeds and veterinary products.

The Regional Bantay Presyo Monitoring Team will recommend to the Regional Executive Director (RED) of DA-Bicol such measures as may be necessary and reasonable, under the conditions prescribed in the Price Act, to stabilize the prices and supply of agricultural commodities (AC), such as, but not limited to, the imposition

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DA Bicol gives hope for Mayon-affected farmers thru vegie training and farm inputs

The Department of Agriculture-Bicol provided quick-response assistance to 500 farmers affected by the eruption of Mayon Volcano in response to the marching order of Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Manny F. Piñol on his Byaheng Bukid last January 29, 2018 in Guinobatan, Albay through a series of trainings on vegetable production and distribution of farm inputs.

Pedro Orpiana felt helpless when volcanic ash rained over his corn, sili, radish and pechay farm in Barangay Amtic, Ligao City. However, upon learning the farming technology in protective culture, he said, “matindog kami sa laog nin tulong bulan (We will recover in three months).

According to DA-Bicol Regional Executive Director Dr. Elena B. De Los Santos, this activity and the free farm inputs were initial response of the DA to the affected farmers.

The DA is not mandated to give free cash and food to the affected farmers compared to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Indeed, DA is tasked to train farmers to plant crops and raise animals in order for them to have a sustainable livelihood, and food for the country. After the calamity such as Mayon eruption, DA will take the responsibility of helping our farmers recover the soonest possible time.

Hence, DA-Bicol distributed polyethylene UV-



treated plastic; 100m of plastic mulch; two bags Durabloom; one unit of sprinkler and 100 pieces of bamboo stick to the farmer-participants.

More than 400 greenhouses or tunnels were established by the farmers in the municipalities of Polangui, Guinobatan, Oas, Sto. Domingo, Malilipot, Daraga, and Camalig and cities of Ligao, Legazpi and Tabaco. These were regularly visited and monitored by the municipal and provincial agriculture technical staffs.

DA-Bicol High-Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) Regional Focal Person Rose Imperial said that the affected farmers will be growing their crops in their tunnels.

Training speaker and Field Agriculturist Conrado C. Calderon of Harbest Agribusiness Corporation said that this new technology

Ligao farmer-participants (at the background) pose with (from left) Albay agriculturist Che Rebeta, Albay governor Al Francis Bichara, a farmer-participant representative, DA-Bicol Regional Executive Director Dr. Elena B. De Los Santos, Ligao City Mayor Patricia Alsua, DA-HVCDP Focal Person Rose Imperial, OIC-Regional Technical Director for Operations and Extension Rodel Tornilla, Albay Provincial Veterinarian Florencio Adonay, and City Agriculturist Dexter Mendoza.



Hands on training on Vegetable Production under Protective Culture.

is already being practised in Benguet, Mindoro and Pangasinan. Farmers can also produce off-season vegetables since this technology can protect the plants from heavy rains, strong winds, and in the case of Albay ash from Mayon Volcano.

“Pag umasa sa bigay, magugutom kayo. Kailangan magbanat ng buto. Kaya, sana, pakinabangan ninyo ang inyong matututunan sa training (If you rely on donations, you will go hungry. You need to work hard. I hoped that you will use your learnings in this training.) De los Santos said in her message. (**Jayson M. Gonzales**)

DA-Bicol High-Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) Regional Focal Person Rose Imperial assures the farmers that this technology will be a big help to their livelihood.



Enrollees on School-on-the-Air on vegetable production complete course

SORSOGON CITY - After five-months of listening to the lectures shared by experts via radio a total of 460 farmers, and students completed the course on Vegetable Production and were confirmed graduates of the School on the Air (SOA) by the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) held in one of the garden resorts here.

The graduates came from the 10 municipalities which include Bulan, Barcelona, Casiguran, Gubat, Irosin, Juban, Prieto Diaz and Sorsogon City. The students came from the Bicol University, Gubat Campus and Technical Vocational School in Casiguran.

Rosita M. Imperial, regional coordinator of the High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) of the Department of Agriculture Bicol represented DA regional executive director Elena B. de los Santos. She said that the SOA is one of the extension methodologies being supported by the DA to disseminate and promote new technologies and good practices to farmers and other agriculture stakeholders. She explained that vegetable production which is one of the areas covered by the HVCDP program and one of the components of which is the provision of production support services and inputs such as

seeds; small farm production equipment; small irrigation system, trainings, information services and marketing assistance.

As the DA's training arm ATI provides trainings and other extension support and modalities like the SOA and Farmer's Field schools. Imperial announces that the thrust of the DA now is to make school as learning sites; establish crop museums; expand and strengthen community seed banking and continue to provide post-harvest and processing facilities. She also announced that the graduates of the SOA will be given starter kits so they can start their own vegetable gardens. The kit includes vegetable seeds, garden tools and seedling trays.

Meanwhile provincial agriculturist Dr. Maria Teresa V. Destura traced the history of farm radio program in other countries which proved to be a very useful medium for disseminating information about agriculture and related fields. Having been a radio announcer herself before joining the provincial agriculture office she narrated the sacrifices and challenges that a rural radiobroadcaster has to go through especially during her time when the internet and



web were not yet available. She underscored the importance of having the right information, knowledge and skills in agricultural undertakings and reiterated the slogan of the province "Padabaan ta ang Sorsogon" (Let us love Sorsogon).

Dr. Antonio Fuentes, provincial executive officer who represented governor Robert Lee -Rodriguez said that the vegetable production program is not only about increasing production but uplifting the socio-economic status of the people and addressing the problem on malnutrition. He enjoined the SOA graduates to apply what they learn and "Do good turn for the province and earn additional income in an honest manner".

Cirilo P. Nuyles, Chief of the Careers Development and Management Section/ Information Services Section

of the ATI who supervised the conduct of the SOA thanked the participants and their institutional partners. He announced that the next SOA in Sorsogon will be on free range chicken.

Also present during the graduation ceremonies were: Darius T. Bernardino, professor at the Bicol University who served as resource person for the SOA; Emily B. Bordado, Chief of the Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Information Section of the DA, Narciso Cayetano, provincial HVCDP coordinator and Michael D. Vilezar Information Officer of the ATI who coordinated the SOA.

During the graduation ceremonies garden tools including seedling trays were raffled off to lucky graduates.

The SOA was aired over two local radio stations: the Padaba 99.9 FM and Wow Smile FM 107.3 FM. (**Emily B. Bordado**)

DA Bicol organizes Bantay... (from page 7)

of a "Suggested Retail Prices" and/or "Price Ceilings" of AC on a per kilo and such other measures that would assure consumers access to the said commodities; recommend the inclusion in the definition/list of basic necessities or prime commodities, types or brands of AC or the exclusions from the coverage of the Price Act, types or brands of the goods included in the definition of basic necessities and prime commodities, which may

be deemed as nonessential goods or luxury goods; set the criteria and mechanism for the determination of Suggested Retail Prices (SRP) for AC; coordinate with concerned agencies of government including Local Government Units (LGUs) in the performance of its functions; and perform such other functions relative to the implementation of the Price Act.

As the lead convenor

of the team, AMAD Chief Adelina Losa assigned the following agencies in the monitoring of the prices of the Basic Necessities like Rice and Corn care of NFA; Root Crops and Fresh Milk - DA; Fresh Vegetables, and Fresh Fruits - PAS; Fresh Pork, Beef and Poultry Meat - PVS; Sugar - SRA; and Cooking Oil - DA

OIC RTD Rodel P. Tornilla (left) answers queries during the meeting. Adelina A. Losa (right) AMAD Chief and lead convenor of the Bantay Presyo Team also clarifies some issue.

and PAS.



DA Bicol men, women employees unite to uphold gender equality at 1st Inter-agency Women's Day celebration

LEGAZPI CITY – In observance of this year's Women's Month celebration, the Department of Agriculture in Bicol spearheaded the first joint Women's Day Celebration among the DA attached agencies on March 19, 2018, this city. The event aimed to create and facilitate platforms of various agencies to discuss good practices, bridge gaps, address challenges and draw commitments in pursuing Gender and Development (GAD).

Anchored on the theme "We Make Change Work for Women," over 200 purple-clad employees from the DA as well as its bureaus and attached agencies namely Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA), Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC), Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA), National Meat Inspection Services (NMIS) and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) attended the activity. PCA Regional Director Mateo Zipagan, NMIS GAD Focal Person Socorro Ballelos, PCIC Claims Processor Melody Montero, PhilFIDA Administrative Officer Mary Ann Laparan, PFDA GAD Focal Person Melba San Esteban and DA-Bicol Integrated Laboratories Division Chief Dr. Evangeline dela Trinidad graced the occasion.

Aloha Gigi Bañaria, DA-Bicol Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (PMED) Chief and Regional Gender and Development Focal Person underscored that rural women play a major role in ensuring the country's food security and rural economy.

"According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the



United Nations, rural women are the backbone of rural development. They comprise 43 percent of the world's agricultural labor force and in the Philippines, 19 percent of the labor force or about 2.91 million Filipino women are employed in agriculture in the various segment of the value chain. They are engaged in production, postharvest, processing, marketing and trading of goods and services," she said.

She added that the Inter-agency Women's Day celebration was an opportunity to salute the hardworking women of DA-Bicol and

attached agencies and line bureaus for their commitment and dedication in advancing women empowerment and gender equality especially for rural women and girls including the indigenous peoples (IPs).

The Inter-agency Women's Day celebration kicked off with a hataw/zumba. Meanwhile, lectures on Financial Literacy by Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP)-Legazpi Bank Officer II Sharon Moyano and Empowering Communities Through Responsible Sharing of Information by Philippine Information Agency (PIA) Regional Director Aida Alcazar-Naz highlighted the

event. The activity also featured breakout sessions on Social and Professional Etiquette as well as the Art of Looking Smart by freelance consultant Michelle Marie Huab and Stress and Anger Management by Department of Health-Bicol Regional Mental Health Program Manager Windalyn Baluis.

An audio-visual presentation of DA-Bicol's activities to help empower rural women was also presented. The video showed rural women's participation in Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT) Women Project 2 and other DA-led activities to equip their knowledge and hone their entrepreneurial skills. The DA-Bicol and BFAR V also provided free packs of vegetable seeds, gardening tools and canned sardines to the participants.

Bañaria noted that over the past years, DA-Bicol consistently expanded its support to gender and development by increasing its budget utilization for 2017 GAD initiatives. She expressed her confidence that DA's attached and partner agencies as well as line bureaus are also doing their part to initiate GAD project activities within the context of their mandate to help

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DA pays tribute to women clientele

NAGA CITY – To pay tribute to the agency's women partners in the countryside, a one day event dubbed as Women Partners' Day was held in this city on March 21 as one of the activities for Women's Month Celebration this March with the theme "We make change work for women."

A total of 100 Rural Improvement Club leaders, women entrepreneurs, outstanding rural women regional and national awardees and GREAT Women project 2 beneficiaries participated in the event and brought their products for the Product Assessment.

For the Food Products Category, Adelia Q. Magsino and Carina Arellano, both National Outstanding Rural Woman runners up served as

ng Pilipinas Naga City branch. Know Your Money: Gain or Loss was discussed by Annie Panerio, General Manager of Cam. Sur Multit-purpose Coop; Social Media and You by Bernadette delos Santos, owner of La Huerta farm in Baao, Cam. Sur; Women as Agents of Change was discussed by Rebecca Purisima, Chieftain of Tinawagan Tribal community in Tigaon, Cam. Sur and 2017 National Outstanding Rural Woman; Health is Wealth was given by Luzviminda Oropesa of Baras, Catanduanes, National Outstanding Rural Woman 2015.

Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria expressed her appreciation to the rural women leaders present who are the DA's partners in gender and development, especially in providing livelihood opportunities to the rural women to ensure that women will not be left behind in the pursuit of change.

She also imparted the essence of the theme which emphasizes that women should be the drivers in bringing about positive change, but at the same time should also reap from the fruits of development efforts. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**

DA Bicol men, women ... (from page 10)

resolve gender issues.

In 2017, a total of P150 million or 8.57 percent of the 2017 DA budget of P1.78 billion for the banner, locally-funded and regular programs were utilized for different GAD and other related activities, designed to contribute to the economic empowerment of thousands of Bicolanas who are directly involved in agriculture. For 2018, the GAD office is targeting about 9 to 10 percent of the DA-Bicol's P2.39 billion budget.

Under President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's administration, the National Women's Month Celebration will focus on partnership for change and full implementation of the Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act 9710), thus the theme: "WE Make Change Work for Women' Empowerment; Make Change Work = MCW = Magna Carta of Women; CHANGE or Compassionate and Harmonized Actions and Networks for Gender Equality; and We/us or 'kami/tayo' in Filipino)." The theme will be used from 2017 to 2022 to emphasize that women should be active drivers of positive change and that they should not be left behind in development efforts.

"Gender equality is

not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world." This is the heart of the United Nations' (UN) 5th Sustainable Development Goal: Gender Equality by 2030. An initial step towards the achievement of this goal is the annual celebration of Women's Month every March pursuant to Presidential Proclamation No. 227 s. 1988.

"Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world." This is the heart of the United Nations' (UN) 5th Sustainable Development Goal: Gender Equality by 2030. An initial step towards the achievement of this goal is the annual celebration of Women's Month every March pursuant to Presidential Proclamation No. 227 s. 1988.

To cap the activity, Bañaria challenged the inter-agency men and women employees, "Let us continue to be a catalyst of gender equality and women empowerment. Let us continue to promote an environment where people enjoy the same opportunities without the fear of being discriminated for who and what they are." **(Annielyn L. Baleza)**

evaluators. For the Non-Food Products Category, Bernadette delos Santos, also a National Outstanding Rural Woman runner up and GREAT Women Project 2 beneficiary served as evaluator.

Honorable Cecilia V. De Asis, Naga City councilor and President of Bicol and National Rural Improvement Club Council welcomed the participants.

The women partners were also briefed on financial literacy, savings, budgeting, investments by Flor Joson of Bankgo Sentral





Sonrisa Farm: *An agri tourism haven with a heart and a mission*

By Emily B. Bordado

An agri-tourism farm cum learning center at the outskirts of Naga City is now a buzzword among organic and natural farming enthusiasts and is now a popular destination not only for well-known personalities, students and members of the academe but practically people from all walks of life. Named SONRISA – derived from the Spanish term which means SMILE, this farm is no ordinary farm as it is mission driven. It hopes to bring smile and happiness to families of this and future generation by reinvigorating the earth through sustainable agricultural practices, spreading awareness on the importance of natural farming, teaching children and families the value of creating healthier homes and nourishing today by planting seeds of knowledge so that the future may inherit a renewed earth.

The farm was established in 2014 after its owner, Mrs. Cherry T. Lo has recovered from almost nine years bout with breast cancer which necessitated a change in lifestyle and diet. While driving through an upland barangay she had this sense of longing for the fresh air and relaxing rural ambiance. She

then started looking for a lot which could be her family's retreat from the city. Their family was able to acquire a 3.5 hectare grass land which they transformed into a fruit and vegetable farm - the produce of which will be for their family's consumption to ensure that they are not chemical laden. A family rest house was then established inside the farm where the family gather on weekends and on special occasions.

Not long after the family started sharing the harvest from their farm with relatives, and friends and also invited them over to visit the farm. It gave them a sense of satisfaction to share the simple joy of growing and harvesting their own produce and the sense of fulfillment of nurturing the earth. This simple act of sharing blossomed into a greater desire for active espousal and promotion of the benefits of natural farming.

Thus, in 2016, SONRISA farm opened its gates to everyone. The overflowing support from the community, the local government, national government agencies and other entities and the accreditation granted to the farm by the concerned offices inspired the



Sonrisa management to pursue its mission more vigorously. This gave rise to the Sonrisa Learning Development Center.

It has contracted the services of Lani Botor as Business Development Manager. It has also about 10 regular workers and from time to time hire additional manpower within the

neighborhood including the women for various works in the farm.

Today, the farm produces and nurtures diverse crops, herbs and animals grown naturally – free from synthetic fertilizers, harmful pesticides and other chemicals. It upholds sustainable farming, adopts

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best agricultural practices, and promotes healthy living and healing - not only physical healing but also healing of the soul, the soil and the society.

For those who find themselves weary and too stressed out doing their daily grind and bored with the mundane routine of their life, Sonrisa offers respite, tranquility and mental repose. It is an ideal place for communing with nature and appreciating the wonders of God's creation.

The 3.5 hectare farm which the family bought used to be a ricefield tilled by farmers adopting the conventional farming system. Of the total land area though only 9,000 square meters was utilized for rice production. As Mrs. Lo wanted to convert the area into an organic farm, the Lo family made efforts to gradually convert it by first introducing vermi compost, using natural and bio fertilizers.

Slowly the farm transformed into an all natural fruit and vegetable farm that produces an array of vegetables, fruits, herbs, colored rice and ornamental plants.

A farm rest house and some farm structures made of light materials were originally constructed inside the farm but when Typhoon Nina struck in December of 2016 these structures along with the crops were heavily damaged. Ma'am Chery's heart broke as she watched how the typhoon laid to waste not only the plants but all their efforts and investments in the farm. She thought of quitting but upon seeing the families of their laborers who depend on the farm for their subsistence she regained her determination to rehabilitate and restore the farm. This time she decided to construct more typhoon-resistant structures instead of using light materials. She also decided to try diversification and integrated farming. She added native pigs, native

chicken, and mushroom production.

Today, Sonrisa farm has undergone "healing" and recovery after the devastation wrought by a natural calamity and it has transitioned from conventional farming back to natural farming. It is back on its feet, more resilient, more stable and strongly committed to its mission of reinvigorating the earth by practicing farming systems that preserve the environment and all living; spreading awareness by imparting the importance of using natural resources responsibly; teaching children, families and growers the value of creating healthier homes and nourishing our today by planting seeds of knowledge so that the future may inherit a renewed earth.

It is now equipped with facilities and amenities as it opens its door as a duly accredited Diversified-Integrated Farm by the Agricultural Training Institute of the Department of Agriculture; as an Agri-Tourism Site (2nd in the region) by the Department of Tourism and as a farm School for Organic Agriculture (the 1st in Camarines Sur) as accredited by the TESDA. It is awaiting the issuance of a certification by the DA for its Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) having submitted all the necessary documents and having been validated by the technical evaluation team.

The latest addition to the farm are structures or houses for mushroom culture, concoction for organic or bio fertilizers, vermicomposting, butterfly enclosed garden, livestock and native pig pens, stingless bee colonies, green houses for high value crops and raspberries, plant nurseries various garden or vegetable plots, edible landscaped-gardens, colored rice fields, dragon fruit orchard, and mini agro-forest garden.

They have also added



and upgraded their facilities to accommodate events and functions. The Tierra hall serves as the receiving area, the Lumbre Hall for big events and functions; the Briza Hall, a smaller function hall; the Residencia, as the farm rest house; the cocina as the farm kitchen and the Capilla de San Isidro Labrador as prayer area or chapel. The farm is also equipped with farm warehouse,

comfort rooms, and staff house.

The Sonrisa farm is now gaining popularity as the venue for trainings and seminars, family picnic or excursions, guided farm tour for students and other groups, spiritual retreat and recollections, weddings, photo shoot for debut, birth days, anniversaries and for various occasions.

The farm also

(Turn to page 15)



Communal vegetable gardens tended by women help feed Mayon evacuees

by **Lovella P. Guarin**

GUINOBATAN, ALBAY - The old saying “Pag May Itinanim, May Aanihin” proved to be literally true in this municipality and in the other municipalities of the 3rd district of Albay which were mostly affected after the sleeping Mayon volcano has rumbled back to life.

Since January 13, 2018 when Mayon volcano began spewing ash columns prompting authorities to evacuate thousands of villagers, a group of women from the Women for Progress Movement has been the first to donate their bountiful harvests of camote, pechay and other crops grown from their communal gardens to feed the evacuees.

This group of women, mostly housewives from Oas, Polangui and Ligao City were organized way back in 2016 by Albay 3rd district representative Fernando Vallejo Gonzales. The congressman observed that these women used to be doing unproductive activities such as gambling, gossiping or simply doing nothing while their husbands who are either farmers or fisherfolks are busy working.

Thus, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture in Bicol, Cong. Gonzales’ office and the City Agriculture Office of Ligao City organized the women, made them participate in crops production training and food processing and provided them with vegetable seeds and farm tools.

Evelyn Ragos, president of the Women for Progress Movement confirmed that their group now has 80 chapters in all the barangays of the 3rd district municipalities, namely Polangui, Libon, Oas, Ligao City, Pio Duran and Guinobatan.

After organization, DA 5 HVCDP provided 300,000 cutting of sweet potato, 30 kilograms vegetable seeds and 25 kilograms garlic bulbs to the association.

Also during the first provincial sortie or Byaheng Bukid of Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol in Ligao City in March 2017, the DA Bicol through its High Value Crops Development Program turned over 60 kilograms vegetable seeds, 100 sets garden tools, 100 bags organic fertilizers, 500 pieces assorted fruit trees

seedlings, and 100 kilograms mungbean seeds.

Through their collaborative efforts, the Women for Progress Movement has established a total of 80 communal gardens with a minimum area of 500 square meters in the barangays of the third district of Albay.

Cong. Gonzales in his facebook account shared his appreciation to the women whom he described as “good hearted and caring women.” They selflessly shared

their harvests consisting of vegetables such as pechay, gabi, upo and rootcrops such as camote and cassava to the evacuees in Guinobatan. Cong. Gonzales and the women personally distributed the goods to the evacuees at evacuation sites in Villa Mercedes, Mauraro Elementary and High School, Libas, Itago, BUCAF, Guinobatan East High School, Lower Binogsacan Elementary and High School, Inascan, San

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Jose and Bubulusan.

The women are now eagerly preparing their communal gardens for a new planting season after sharing their harvests to the evacuation centers. They planted eggplant seedlings this time. Cong. Gonzales' provided them with eggplant seedlings grown in plastic trays to lessen mortality. The DA HVCDP also provided vegetable seeds, garden tools and sprayer during the recent visit of Sec. Piñol in the town of Guinobatan.

Guinobatan along with the towns of Camalig and the city of Ligao are located at the foot of Mayon and have barangays within the 8-kilometer danger zone. These areas are affected by the ash fall because of the westward director of the wind.

The continued seismic activity of the volcano has covered the municipalities of Camalig, Guinobatan, Ligao City and other areas in Albay 3rd district in ash while nearby towns including the 5th district of Camarines Sur are being choked with ash, which has been thick enough at times

rendering zero visibility for the motorists travelling particularly the main highways connecting Camarines Sur to Legazpi City.

In her partial report submitted to DA Central office, DA Bicol regional executive Director Elena B. delos Santos reported that 9,791 farmers have been affected with a total production loss valued at P185,278,079. (Photos courtesy of Cong. Fernando Vallejo Gonzales' Facebook Account)



Sonrisa Farm... (from page 13)

accommodates On-the job training (OJT) for tertiary schools; immersions/exposures for senior high schools and educational tours.

Aside from the fresh harvests of naturally grown vegetables, fruits, herbs, colored rice, mushroom, the farm also has processed some of its produce into innovative and healthy food such as vegetable cookies, natural juices and other healthy food stuff and concoctions. It also sells open pollinated vegetable and other high value seeds ; planting materials, seedlings or cuttings of herbs, medicinal and ornamental plants.

As part of its social responsibility Sonrisa farm has also a clear plan for social development as it envisions to incorporate in its mission the following



Mushroom culture

projects: Farmers' Community Organizing (Hunglunan); Capacity Building and Transfer of Technology on Organic farming (Puron nin Dunong); Establishment of Social/Agricultural Enterprises (Haboldawani); Culture and Arts in Agriculture (Gira asin Anira); Community Resiliency or DRR for the Farmers (Balalong); Linkage and



Network Building (Habolon ni Pangiturugan); and Children and Youth in Agriculture and Culture (Pamana).

Sonrisa not only opens its doors to guests and customers but also establishes linkage and networks not only with government agencies but also with local governments, private sector, non-government organizations, academic

institutions.

Sonrisa lives by its motto: Nourishing our today by providing natural, safe and healthy food to families and offers opportunity to those who visit and stay to commune with the beauty of nature and experience the healing of the soil, soul and society and appreciate the richness of our culture.

Special Area for Agricultural Development

SAAD Bicol outlines series of trainings for beneficiaries in Sorsogon, Cat'nes and Masbate

VIRAC, CATANDUANES – They have crossed some rivers and climbed rugged mountains in search for the qualified beneficiaries of the SAAD. Poverty warrior as they call themselves, these 17 Area Coordinators and 4 IT staff of the Bicol's Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) did not rest their laurels since the beginning of the first quarter 2018.

Barely three months since the full implementation of SAAD in the three provinces of Sorsogon, Masbate and Catanduanes, a total of 8,532 individuals and 11 groups of prospective beneficiaries were already validated through interviews to assess their needs and identify the potential areas where the project can have a great impact.

Having identified the needs and available resources of the beneficiaries, series of

trainings were immediately outlined for the coming months by the SAAD regional project management team in coordination with the five banner programs of the DA RFO 5 to prepare the mindset of the beneficiaries and equip them with the necessary skills to sustain the project.

Nine batches of training on Upland Rice Production are scheduled this month of April in the municipalities of Monreal, San Pascual, Balud and Mandaon in the province of Masbate; Donsol, Pilar and Juban in Sorsogon province; and Virac in Catanduanes province.

Two batches of training on Vegetable Production and two batches of training on White Corn Processing are scheduled in Masbate this month. Meanwhile, three batches of training on Small Ruminant, Swine Raising and Poultry

Management are targeted for Sorsogon. More training are scheduled in May this year. This was bared by Mary Grace Rodriguez, Agricultural Center Chief II and the presiding officer during the SAAD 1st quarter assessment held in Catanduanes on March 26-27, 2018.

Rodel Tornilla, DA Bicol OIC Regional Technical Director for Operations and Extension and focal person for SAAD Bicol, hopes that with the 2018 budget amounting to P91.8 Million, all trainings will be completed in the second quarter before the delivery of the interventions to the beneficiaries in the second and third quarter this year.

Earlier in January, an action planning workshop was held in Naga City under the guidance of SAAD national program director Bernadette San Juan. It was followed

by a capability enhancement cum geotagging training for the SAAD implementers in Legazpi City and advanced QGIS training and introduction to free and open source mobile data gathering system held in Tagbilaran City, Bohol.

The Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) is a locally-funded program of the Department of Agriculture intended to help alleviate poverty among the marginalized sectors in agriculture and fishery. Coined after Bisaya word which means "promise," the SAAD is a brainchild of Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol as part of the thrust of President Rodrigo Duterte's thrust on food security and poverty alleviation.

The program has two major components: Social Preparation and Intensified production and livelihood interventions based on the assessed needs of the beneficiaries. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**



Bicol farmers join ... (from page 20)

on the second day.

Renerio Guevarra, a 63 year old farmer from Digos City, Davao Del Sur shared his experience using mestizo 28 NSIC RC 236H which gave him 199 cavans yield per hectare. The participants had

a refresher course on Hybrid Rice technology. New updates were also presented for them to practice in their own fields. **(Blesilda A. Nuñez)**

The Bicol delegation posed with Secretary Piñol.



DA Bicol promotes white corn grits production

NABUA CAMARINES SUR. Touted as “poor man’s rice” for decades, white corn grits is now being considered as an important substitute for rice. In line with this, an orientation/training on white corn grits production was conducted by the Department of Agriculture Bicol through the Corn Program on February 8 at this municipality.

The activity aimed to promote the many uses of white corn grits blended with rice as an alternative food for every Filipino and to discuss the latest technology on corn production. Aside from its low glycemic index, white corn grits have a wide array of health benefits. It is rich in minerals, fiber, folate, iron, zinc, magnesium and has a moderate content of fat, protein and carbohydrates.

With the recent declaration of rice shortage in some regions, Lorenzo Alvina, Agricultural



*Lorenzo Alvina,
Regional
Corn
Coordinator*

Center Chief II and Regional Corn Coordinator challenged at least 27 Agricultural Extension Workers, Corn Farmers & Local Government Coordinators to work closely on the expansion and development of corn areas and the massive campaign for quality white corn production. He said that the Corn program is targeting 30,000 hectares for white & yellow Corn in Bicol this 2018. He added that support and interventions will be extended by the DA to the

key players and corn farmers.

Topics discussed were: Corn health Benefits; Corn Production; Marketing Scheme & Linkages. Resource speakers were: Edgardo Nacario, Corn Focal Person, ATI R-5; Nemesio Escobinas, NTE Feedmill; Bert Puncia of Arrow Feeds; Marly Corporal, AT of Iriga City and Ailene Babelonia, Corn & Cassava Program technical staff.

Bert Puncia from Arrow feeds shared that he owns

a canteen in one of the Universities in Bicol. For years, they served rice mixed with white corn grits to students. “hindi nahalata ng mga costumers na mayroong halong corn grits ang kanin, kahit paano may dagdag sustansya ang kinakain nila” (their costumers never noticed the mixture and unconsciously, had a share of its healthful benefits) he said. The ratio is 30% corn grits and 70% rice. **(Blesilda A. Nuñez)**

Agri-techs retooled on survey, early warning of cassava pests

NABUA, CAMARINES SUR ---Twenty-five

agricultural technicians and data collectors from Albay, Camarines Sur and Masbate participated in the Retooling on Survey and Early Warning of Cassava Arthropod Pest and Diseases in Region V conducted by the Department of Agriculture-5 held recently at Macagang Hotel here.

DA Bicol Regional Cassava Focal Person Engr. Danilo L. Aman said that this retooling is an offshoot of his cross-country study mission in Vietnam and Thailand sponsored by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT).

In Southeast Asia, cassava crop health and marketing-utilization are considered a collective concern.

OIC-Regional Technical Director for Operations and Extension Rodel P. Tornilla underscored the potentials of Cassava for food, feed, fertilizer and fuel. The learnings from this training once shared to the farmers will greatly benefit them considering the big potential of cassava in the market.

Aman disclosed that there is no updated profile of pests and diseases of Cassava, thus, this survey will provide the necessary information needed to identify new pests and diseases.

Topics discussed include Diseases of Cassava, Insect Pest of Cassava, and Protocol on the nationwide survey on cassava arthropod pest and disease.

Meanwhile, DA Bicol Science Research Specialist II

Norman Concepcion discussed the different insect pests of cassava. Mealy bugs and scale insects were observed in the Partido area.

DA Bicol Senior Science Research Specialist Lolita B. Pama said that the most common cassava disease is the Brown-Spot which was observed in Goa, Camarines Sur, Legazpi in Albay and Cawayan in Masbate.

The participants from Legazpi, Tiwi, Goa, Sipocot and Cawayan visited a cassava farm in Baao, Camarines Sur and found out that some plants were infected with Witch’s Broom, Brown Spot, Anthracnose, and Bacterial Leaf Blight Diseases.

In a memorandum issued by Undersecretary for Operations Ariel T. Cayan, the use of TapioGard as a

treatment and antibiotic from PhytoPlasma Disease and Witches’ Broom Disease is required. TapioGard is approved for use by the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority.

According to Cawayan data collector Emily Riviral, this is her first time to attend such training and recognized its importance in their 100-ha cassava farm in Masbate. Cassava farming is their main source of livelihood. Their granulated cassava is brought to San Miguel Corporation in Cebu. She also sells native kakanin made of cassava. If they will produce good quality and healthy cassava, they can increase their price, thus, improving their lives. **(Jayson M. Gonzales)**

Pineapple farmers join harvest festival

DAET, CAM. NORTE - About 200 pineapple stakeholders converged and actively participated in the Pineapple Congress cum Harvest Festival held at Camarines Norte Lowland Rainfed Research Station (CNLRRS), Calasgasan, Daet, Camarines Norte on March 22, 2018. Sponsored and funded by High Value Crops Program (HVCDP), Agribusiness and Marketing Division (AMAD) and Bicol Integrated Agricultural Research Center (BIARC), the event aimed to enhance production, marketing and research and development initiatives on queen pineapple as well as to strengthen collaboration with private partners and academes.

The opening program was graced by Dr. Domingo Angeles, Professor at the UPLB, Dr. Edna Anit, Asst. Director of Crop Research Division; Kristine Joy Panaligan, Queen Pineapple ISP Coordinator of DOST-PCAARRD, Dr. Cezar

Bermundo, Vice President for Research and Extension; Dr. Adrian Guinto, Research Director of Camarines Norte State College (CNSC). Also present were DA-RO5 officials, namely Luz Marcelino, BIARC Manager; Rosita Imperial, HVCDP Coordinator; Engr. Bella Frias, CNLRRS Superintendent; Arlene San Andres, AMAD Staff; Nena Adupe, APCO for Cam. Norte and Cam. Sur and DA resident auditor Nida Gomez.

A back-to-back Technology Forum and buyers and traders forum followed the awarding ceremony. Dr. Domingo Angeles, Professor of the Institute of Crop Science in University of the Philippines Los Baños, discussed the pineapple production technology to the participants. During the open forum, Dr. Angeles stressed the importance of double row planting distance (i.e. 100 x 50 x 30) to increase planting density (from 33,000 plants up



Rosita Imperial, DA HVCDP coordinator.

to 44,000 plants per hectare) and to provide alleyway for easier access during weeding and fertilizer application.

On the other hand, a Buyers and Traders Forum was facilitated by Arlene Gabriela San Andres wherein concerns such as contract buying by traders and shortage of capital were raised. Farmers, despite of their commitment to supply pineapple to cooperatives tend to turn to traders who do contract buying which resulted to lack of supply in sustaining by-products processing of queen pineapple. On the shortage of capital, San Andres invited the farmers to the upcoming Investment Forum

in April to be attended by OFWs from Singapore.

In the afternoon, guests and participants gathered at Brgy. Iberica, Labo, Camarines Norte for the Queen Pineapple Harvest Festival where DA showcased the result of the research project entitled Optimization of Planting Density Regulation in Intercropped System led by Maria Christina Campita, Senior Science Research Specialist in partnership with Visayas State University. Said project is funded by Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD). **(Aleli Abordo)**



BITERS app as rabies surveillance tool assessed in Albay

“Good surveillance is a step towards elimination of Rabies,” said University of Warwick Project staff Kristyna Rysava in her discussion on Enhanced Surveillance Project Activities Overview and Prospects during the recent meeting of provincial and municipal veterinarians, livestock inspectors, and health workers; the project team members of the Department of Agriculture-Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (DA-RADDL-Bicol), DA-Bureau of Animal Industry (DA-BAI), and the UW.

UW Principal Investigator Dr. Michael Tildesley, the mobile-based application (app) called Bite Incidence Tool for Enhanced Rabies Surveillance (BITERS) will enhance surveillance for rabies in the Philippines. This app is part of the project of DA-BAI in collaboration with DA-Bicol and LGU-Albay entitled “Technology Development to Improve Surveillance and Reduce the Human Health Impact of Rabies in the

Philippines”.

As a pilot area, this was implemented on November 2, 2017 in three Animal Bite Treatment Centers (ABTCs) in Bicol Regional Training and Teaching Hospital (BRTTH), Legazpi City; Josefina Belmonte Duran Memorial District Hospital (JBDMDH), Ligao City; and Ziga Memorial District Hospital (ZMDH), Tabaco City.

The project deployed three Animal and Medical Health Personnel (BITERS team) in the ABTCs who will interview the bite patient or relative of the patient regarding background, history of exposure, details of treatment, details of incident, details of animal, animal health information, details of the owner. After 14 days, the BITERS team will follow-up the patient, the condition of the animal, and the result of the laboratory samples.

According to ZMDH-BITERS in-charge Jason Espenida, the app is an effective tool in generating insights in disease dynamics through increased detection of rabies,



DA-BAI National Coordinator of the project Dr. Emelinda Lopez discusses the "Technology Development to Improve Surveillance and Reduce the Human Health Impact of Rabies in Dogs in the Philippines".

information on health-seeking behavior of bite victims and potential to diagnose rabid dogs clinically.

This app will also fast-track the practical linking of government to the community especially to the victim regarding rabies and its prevention.

Albay ProVet Florencio Adonay warned that one week before the onset of the symptoms, the rabid dog

can transfer virus to another animal or human. Thus, dog surveillance should be implemented in the LGUs.

Rysava said that the BITERS team plays a crucial role in screening possible rabies cases. Since there is no standard protocol for One Health Inter-sectoral collaboration to follow-up suspect bite incidents through the ABTCs and identification of potentially rabid animals, the BITERS app will facilitate the follow-ups of suspect bite incidents and prompt detection of rabid dogs.

According to Dr. Emelinda Lopez, National Coordinator of the Bureau of Animal Industry, there is a strong need for an efficient and effective recording and interpretation of surveillance data. Thus, a mobile-based application was used by Animal Health Personnel at Animal Bite Treatment Centers (ABTCs) to record follow-up investigations of dog-bite patients.

DA-Bicol RADDL Chief and Project Regional Coordinator Dr. Rona Bernales said the RADDL in Cabangan, Camalig, Albay offers free laboratory test until 2020 in support to the project. **(Jayson M. Gonzales)**




March is Rabies Awareness Month

Barangay KaAgapay,
Alis RABIES
Tagumpay.





MARCH is Rabies Awareness Month in accordance with Republic Act 9482 which was signed into law on May 25, 2007. The observance aims to strengthen awareness on the prevention, control, and management of rabies.

This year's theme “Barangay Kaagapay, Laban sa Rabies Tagumpay” urges Local Government Units (LGUs), especially the barangays, to do their part in fighting rabies which is responsible for the death of 300 to 400 Filipinos annually.



Phil. Army recognizes DA's participation in "Tsokolate at Pandesal" program

The Department of Agriculture Bicol was one of the agencies given recognition by the 9th Infantry (SPEAR) Division of the Philippine Army in Bicol in appreciation for the latter's support rendered and participation as member of the *Tsokolate at Pandesal* (TAP) team. The TAP was conceptualized by the 9th Civil-Military Operation (Kaagapay) Battalion, 9th Infantry Division (SPEAR) of the Philippine Army.

It serves as a venue for convergence breakfast meeting of government agencies every Friday morning which used to be held at Camp Simeon Ola in Legaspi City. Its main objective is to generate collaboration and strengthen stakeholder's engage among government agencies towards gaining support in the effective delivery of social services especially in conflict-affected areas and promote peace and development advocacy.

During the weekly meetings hosted by the different agencies, issues were raised and referred to the corresponding agencies for appropriate action.

The group also organized and conducted the serbisyo Caravan in Labo, Camarines Norte in 2017 attended by constituents from nine (9) barangays. DA provided fruit tree seedling and vegetable seeds. The TAP also conducted a gift-giving activity at Barangay Alobo in Daraga, Albay for some 400 constituents.

The plaque of Appreciation for the DA was received by Emilia B. Bordado, the Regional Information Officer for and in behalf of Regional Executive Director Elena B. de los Santos. Jesus A. Manangquil Jr., MGen and Commander of the AFP and LTC Patrick Cinco led the giving of awards.

Organic Agri Showroom opens up to public

Natural and organic products for sale! Visit us at DA RFO 5 San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur.



OIC RTD Rodel P. Tornilla delivers a message during the opening of the organic agriculture show room at the DA 5 compound.



Bicol farmers join National Rice Technology Forum in Dipolog City

Some 11 delegates composed of selected farmers and DA Rice Program staff from Bicol joined other delegates who trooped to Dipolog, Zamboanga Del Norte to attend the 6th National Rice Technology Forum held at the Convention Center of this City on March 21-23, 2017.

Joining more than a hundred participants from different regions, the Bicol delegates participated in the observation and selection of Hybrid rice varieties showcased through model farms in barangay Olingan Dipolog City. Various Seeds Companies

partnered with the Department of Agriculture Region IX in conducting the 3 days activities which included field visits and techno fora on modern rice production technology.

With the theme "Increase Production through Hybrid Rice Technology, Zamboanga: Mag Hybrid na Kita," the host region is now promoting Hybrid Rice to contribute to the DA's call for rice sufficiency.

"Kailangan ng magbago ang pananaw ng mga magsasaka dito". There must be a shift from old ways to new concept said Darrel Uy, mayor of Dipolog City. "It is

now time to adapt these high yielding varieties as a realistic approach to achieve sustainable agriculture" he added.

DA Seretary Manny Pinol had a short visit and had a brief interaction with the participants

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RE-ENTERED
AS SECOND CLASS
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at Pili, Post Office,
Pili, Cam. Sur
under Permit No. 2017-18
on March 17, 2017