



DA Bicol garnered 3 national awards in Gawad Saka search

by Lovella. P. Guarin

MALACAÑAN PALACE, MANILA – President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol conferred the 2017 national Gawad Saka awards to 23 Gawad Saka outstanding farmers/fisherfolk in a glamorous awarding ceremony

held at the Rizal Hall here on April 5.

Over 350 delegates elegantly attired in Barong and Filipiniana witnessed the ceremony together with DA top management committee composed of undersecretaries, assistant secretaries, heads of

bureau and attached agencies, regional directors of regional field units.

The Bicol Region bagged three national awards for group categories and each received P300,000 project grant and P50,000 cash award, trophy
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DA honors national achievers in rice

by Lovella. P. Guarin

PICC, PASAY CITY – Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol and Senator Cynthia Villar led the awarding ceremonies of the 2017 Rice Achievers Awards held on May 31, 2018 at the Philippine International Convention Center this city.

Secretary Piñol in his message, acknowledged the

important contributions of “the brown skinned heroes of our country,” whom he said were contributory to the 19.28 million metric tons national rice production in 2017 which brought 96% sufficiency in rice. He added that the average yield in the country is 4.01

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The Municipal Local Government Unit of San Jose in Camarines Sur bagged the award as Outstanding Municipality in the 2017 Rice Achievers Awards. San Jose Mayor Antonio B. Chavez received from Secretary Piñol the facsimile check amounting to P1 million in a form of project grant and trophy. He was accompanied by Municipal Agriculturist Grace Santelices, and Agricultural Technicians Aira Rivero, Jonnie Parada and Kristine Morata.

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol conferred the 2017 national Gawad Saka awards to (L-R) MAFC of Canaman, Camarines Sur (Outstanding MAFC) represented by its Chair Hubert Baynas together with Canaman Mayor Henry Ragodon and RAFC Bicol Vice Chair Jose Cordero; Gubat St. Anthony Cooperative of Gubat, Sorsogon (outstanding Small Farmer/Fisherfolk organization) represented by Engr. Rene Hermo; Tigbao 4H Club of Aroroy, Masbate (Outstanding Young Farmer/Fisherfolk award) represented by Arlene Toledo, club president and Mayor Arturo Virtucio. DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Elena B. delos Santos accompanied the awardees in the stage.

DA to shift from subsidies to provision of easy-access loan

Providing access to financial resources and services in the rural areas is one of the key elements in countryside development. Over the years the national government under different administrations have implemented programs to provide financial assistance and support to farmers and fishermen in the form of low-interest loans and subsidies for production inputs, machineries, equipment, facilities and various support services.

However, these intervention have proven to be very costly, risky and unsustainable for the government according to studies. The government has to spend P30 to P40 billion annually for these interventions but there is no chance to recover from these huge investment. These subsidized assistance to farmers and other agricultural stakeholders have even been vulnerable to corruption and prone to political interventions.

Aware of such reality, Agriculture secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol announced the shift in assistance of the Department of Agriculture to farmers from subsidy to credit. His decision was prompted by the 100% repayment of vegetable farmers from Cordillera who availed of the

credit package under the Production Loan Easy Access (PLEA). Launched by the DA and the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) last year.

Sec. Piñol has good and valid reasons for this policy shift. He says that subsidies bleed the government dry with the billion of pesos allocated by the national government every year which could not be recovered. But by providing easy access loan to farmers the government will be able to recover whatever funds it allocated for the program every year, thus, saving billions of pesos which could be pumped back into the program.

Piñol also said that low-interest easy access financing program could eliminate corruption as the farmers will be the one to choose the production inputs or agricultural supplies and goods they want and need not go through the long and tedious procurement process. Consequently this will fast track the delivery of services and ensure the improvement of the agricultural sector.

Sec. Piñol added that subsidies are vulnerable to interference by

local leaders who often give the subsidized goods only to their political supporters or allies, thus depriving others who should be the legitimate and truly deserving beneficiaries or recipients.

Another plus point cited by Sec. Piñol for scrapping the subsidy is that availment of the easy access loans by farmers, fishermen and loan beneficiaries will instill in them a sense of ownership of these goods as they are not being given as dole outs, and will thus dissuade them from selling these. Moreover, as the loans will be given through the ACPC and via the conduit rural banks or cooperatives "would give the beneficiaries the sense of pride because they will no longer have to line up and beg for support from the government," Piñol enthused.

It really takes a real farmer and former local chief executive like Secretary Piñol to know and understand the dynamics providing or accessing government support.



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PRDP-GEF leads seaweeds techno-demo farm establishment in Sorsogon's coastal community

MAGALLANES, SORSOGON – The Magallanes Fish Sanctuary and Marine Reserve is one of the five marine protected areas (MPA) in Bicol endowed with diverse but globally threatened species. The fish sanctuary, located in Sitio Taliunod to Barugbadugan in Brgy. Biga, has 57.6-hectare fish sanctuary and marine reserve.

However, fish visual assessment conducted by the Resources, Environment and Economics Center for Studies Inc. (REECS) in April 2016 showed that fish density, biomass and fish diversity inside and outside the Magallanes Fish Sanctuary are in poor condition. According to Nilda Llorera, 55, a fisherman's wife from Brgy. Biga, fish catch dwindled over the last two decades.

"Noon, madaming huli, ngayon konti na lang. Dati nakakahuli ang asawa ko ng sampung kilo, ngayon, minsan, wala na kahit pang-ulam (We used to catch large



PRDP GEF-Bicol Natural Resource Management (NRM) Officer Rosechel Cambal Labilles and OPAG-Sorsogon Aquaculturist II Ronilo Conde assist the BFFA members in preparing the ropes and seaweed propagules for the seaweeds technology demonstration farm.

volume of fish before. My husband could even catch up to 10 kilos of fish, but now, there are instances that he catches nothing at all even for our own consumption)," she said.

As part of the Philippine Rural Development Project Global Environment Facility (GEF) unit's intervention, a P1.71 million-worth Seaweeds Production and Marketing Project is now under procurement process. The enterprise development (I-REAP) subproject is designed to reduce fishing pressures in and around the Magallanes Fish Sanctuary and Marine Reserve while MPA rehabilitation is ongoing from 2017 to 2021.

To build the targeted beneficiaries' capability in implementing the I-REAP subproject, the PRDP-GEF conducted a hands-on training on diversified seaweeds farming methodologies and culturing systems in Brgy. Biga Magallanes, Sorsogon on April 20, 2018. PRDP GEF provided 726 kilograms of seaweed propagules, polyethylene ropes, straw ball, crates, knives, sinkers, floaters and weighing scale for the Biga Farmers and Fishermen Association's (BFFA) seaweeds technology demonstration farm.

About 20 members of the BFFA participated in the techno-demo designed to establish a 25 x 10 meter seaweeds technology demonstration farm using the floating rope method. In said method, seaweeds will be attached in ropes to keep them floating at about 50 centimeters below the water surface, anchored on floaters. In a 25 meter square frame made of polyethylene (PE) rope, the fishermen stretched up to 50 lines of PE ropes, one-half-meter apart. Each line will carry 40 pieces of seaweed tied to soft

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Letters

June 28, 2018

DR. ELENA B. DELOS SANTOS
Regional Executive Director
DA RFO 5

Dear Director delos Santos

I am Maida Pineda, an international food and travel writer. It was a trip almost 20 years ago to Naga that opened my eyes to Pili nuts. I was the guest of honor for a food festival for Naga Food Festival, and wrote an article on The Philippine Star. But I could not forget the boiled pili served by my hosts, Libbeth Guysayko, in their home.

I recently pitched a story on Pili nuts to my editor for Morning Calm, an Inflight Magazine of Korean Airlines. He loved the story and am now writing this article. The article is a feature on World Food section for October issue, where we follow an ingredient of the country from farm to table. This includes harvesting the pili nuts, to processing it, products, and serving it in restaurants.

I would like to ask your assistance as I head to Bicol on August 10-11 to do the research. They will send a foreign photographer as well to shoot the story.

Thank you very much.

Maida Pineda

Bicol hosts 1st South Luzon AFC summit

NAGA CITY - Some 150 volunteer leaders from the agriculture and fishery sector coming from CALABARZON, MIMAROPA and Bicol region convened in one of the hotels here for the 1st ever South Luzon Agriculture and Fishery Council (AFC) Summit under the auspices of Department of Agriculture Bicol.

According to Aloha Gigi Bañaria, Bicol's AFC regional executive officer who also represented DA Regional Executive Director, Dr. Elena B. de los Santos, the major objective of said gathering was to consolidate and strengthen the efforts, and plans of the AFCs in the south Luzon cluster and establish a stable bridge and sustainable linkage among the AFCs and broaden the engagement of other sectors. These objectives were embodied in the chosen theme for the event which is: "Bridges for South Luzon: Building on the Past and Accepting Fresh Challenges."

The participants consisted

of officers of the regional, provincial and city agriculture and fishery councils, regional executive officers and coordinators provincial/city agriculturists from the three regions of South Luzon and other agri-fishery sector stakeholders. Engineer Ariel T. Cayanan, DA under secretary for Operations was the invited guest of honor but was represented by his executive assistant Edgar Cornelio. The City of Naga was also represented by Atty. Nelson Legacion who underscored the need for the agriculture and fishery sector to advance in step with other sectors at "hindi dapat maiwan sa laylayan ng ating lipunan."

One of the highlights of the

event was the presentation of best practices of each region in the implementation of the AFC programs/projects through audio visual presentations (AVPs).

Information sharing and program/project updates were also part of the 2-day event such. This included relevant and timely topics such as: the Fishery Management and Policy Development of BFAR discussed by Nonie Enolva, information Officer; Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) Programs and Projects discussed by Celedonio P. Pereyra, Proj. Devet. Officer; Updates on Congressional Coco levy Bills and counterproposals presented by Romeo C. Royondoyan, Vice chair, PCAF Committee on Food Staples; Women

in Agriculture discussed by Maria Daryl L. Leyesa and CDA Programs and Projects in Agriculture by Grace P. Layosa, assistant Director of CDA Bicol.

But the major and most important outputs of the summit were the 44 resolutions prepared by the participants - 13 from region calabarzon (IV-A); 14 from MIMAROPA (IV-B) and; 17 from Bicol (V).

Also present during the summit were: Engineer Abelardo Bragas, RAFC Executive Officer of DA CALABARZON; Alfredo Rillo, RAFC chair Bicol; Melquiades Macalintal, RAFC chair of Calabarzon; Alfonso Esguerra, Jr., vice chair of RAFC MIMAROPA. **(Emily B. Bordado)**



Pili farmers to benefit from P2M cacao processing facility

BINANUAANAN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR – This is a dream come true! Said Edison Petallo, amidst the welling of his tears as he accepts, in behalf of the Binanuanaan Farmers Community Development Association Inc. (BFCDA), the P2 Million worth Cacao Processing Facility from the Department of Agriculture, during its blessing, inauguration and turn over on April 6, 2018. The DA Bicol through the High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) recently completed the construction of the processing facility and turned it over to BFCDA in this municipality. Edison Petallo, the president of the association

said the establishment of the processing center is the long awaited dream of the association as it can only apply for License to Operate and

product registration from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) if they have a processing center.

Rosita Imperial, regional



HVCDP coordinator said the facility is a first in Camarines Sur, and will be equipped with cacao roaster, grinder, pulverizer and vacuum sealer. Fermentation boxes will also be provided to produce quality fermented cacao bean to improve the quality of dark chocolate or tablea. The facility will create additional jobs and value adding activities. Fermenting dried cacao beans for only five days will increase its selling price to P150 from only P30 selling price of fresh

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PRDP-GEF leads ...

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plastic straws. According to Ronilo Conde, Aquaculturist II of the Sorsogon Provincial Agriculturist Office, the floating rope method is more climate-resilient and durable unlike the longline method which requires seaweed farmers to re-establish their farm during cultivation period.

Conde related that a seaweed farm using the floating rope method can last for a minimum of five years. He added that seaweeds are most likely to thrive using this method because they are less prone to "ice-ice" and epiphytes in areas with stable water temperature. Marine epiphytes are organisms that grow on organism and derive their moisture and nutrients from the water in marine environment.

BFFA will manage the seaweeds technology demonstration farm for 45 days. The cooperative projects to harvest five tons of fresh seaweeds which they can sell to prospective buyers.

He also encouraged the community to take their active roles in maintaining the seaweeds farm, telling them that seaweeds flourish with tender loving care (TLC).

"Sa PRDP tinawan kami capital para makapundar. Mahalaga ini ta kung kami lang dai mi kayang bakalon ang mga produktong ini. (Through PRDP we received a capital

to start with. This is important because we cannot purchase these materials by our own means)," said BFFA officer Comprencio Olitan.

Rosechel Cambal Labilles, PRDP GEF-Bicol Natural Resource Management (NRM) Officer, further boost the community's enthusiasm by informing them of income-generating opportunities through the seaweeds technology demonstration farm.

"Sana dae kita mawaran nin pag-asa na magiging positive and successful ang techno-demo kasi may enterprise pa po kamo na seaweeds (We should not lose hope and let us be positive that the techno-demo will be successful because you still have a seaweeds enterprise in the works)," she added.

PRDP is a six-year development project under the Department of Agriculture aimed at establishing a modern, inclusive, value chain-oriented and climate-resilient agri-fishery sector in the countryside. The Project's total cost includes a P287 million-worth grant from GEF, a global partnership among 183 countries, international institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues and support national sustainable development initiatives.

(Annielyn L. Baleza)

Pili farmers ...

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cacao beans. The DA HVCDP will also provide trainings on new technology in cacao processing for the association. A multi commodity solar dryer will also be established adjacent to the cacao processing facility as the 310 sq. meters Choco Farm is also a haven to organic vegetables and other crops. In the past years, the DA has conducted some trainings on Good Agricultural Practices for cacao and gabi for the members of the BFCDA. A seedling nursery was also provided to the association.

The BFCDA is an agrarian reform beneficiary organization with 103 members

Petallo said they have been processing cacao food products in the individual households of the members since 2013. Now they are processing 40 kilos cacao beans into different food products which are being sold at Pasalubong Centers in Pili and Naga City under the label B-Farm Products.

Mayor Tomas Bongalonta expressed hope that with the establishment of the cacao processing facility, and with the existing 20 hectares cacao plantation in Pili, his town will soon be the center of cacao industry in the province and even in the region.

Other national government agencies that have been supporting the BFCDA have pledged additional support to the group such as Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Science and Technology, and Department of Agrarian Reform.

Also present during the inauguration were the members of the BFCDA; Binanuaanan Bgy. Captain Marcelo Buscargas; Pili Municipal Agriculturist Damaso Olivares; DA APCO Nena Adupe who represented DA Bicol RTD for Operations Rodel P. Tornilla.

(Lovella P. Guarin)



DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Elena B. delos Santos and Governor Miguel Luis R. Villafuerte led the turn over of agri machineries.

Farmers' day held in Cam. Sur

Over 700 farmers from the 35 municipalities and 2 cities of Camarines Sur took a break from their farm works under the sweltering heat of the sun and took part in a whole day of fun, games and prizes and surprises dubbed as CamSur Farmers' Day held at the Capitol Convention Center in Pili, Cam. Sur on May 24.

True to the event's theme "Unlimited Ligaya dahil Progresibo ang Agrikultura,"

the farmers gamely took part in the various games facilitated by the DA staff such as corn eating relay, manual corn shelling, balloon popping, and other games.

The highlight of the day was the distribution of certificates of award and turn over of agri machineries and equipment to the 70 farmers associations present represented by their chairpersons together with their municipal agriculturists, AEWs

One of the fun games was the corn eating contest.

and LGU representatives.

DA distributed a total of P49M worth of agri machineries, equipment and tools. The Rice Program gave over P9M worth agri machineries consisted of 18 hand tractors, 13 threshers, 4 combine harvesters and 2 units 4wheel drive mini tractor. The Organic Agriculture Program gave over P1M worth machineries consisting of hand tractor with trailer, corn mill, solar pump and engine sets for shallow tube wells. Meanwhile, the High Value Crops Development Program

distributed over P1.4M hand tractors, green house and water pumps. The Corn Program gave over P37.8M worth of agri machineries such as 2 units 4Wheel Drive Tractor worth P2.4M; 1 unit combine harvester worth P2.4M, 2 units mobile flash dryer worth P3.1M, 3 units seed storage worth P5M, two row planter, moisture meter, mechanical corn sheller, corn mill, hammer mill, cassava chipper, cassava granulator, cassava grater, cassava pulverizer. The Livestock Program gave 10 heads of native piglets and

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Catanduanes celebrates Farmers' & Fisherfolk's Day

VIRAC, CATANDUANES—

Over 350 farmers and fisherfolks attended the Farmers and Fisherfolks Day on May 30, 2018 here to close the month-long celebration of May as the Farmers and Fisherfolks Month with the theme "Maunlad na pagsasaka at pangangisda, pagkain abot kaya at sapat para sa lahat."

It also capped the celebration of the week-long Abaca Festival 2018 as Catanduanes is the abaca capital of the Philippines. It supplies 45% of the abaca industry in the country and 30% in the world market.

According to Catanduanes

Governor Joseph C. Cua, abaca generates P150M monthly for the province. By accelerating the development of the abaca industry, the economic growth of the province and our country will be propelled.

Cua also commended the abaca farmers for making the province number one in terms of repayment for the Agrikultura: Kaagapay ng Bayang Pinoy (AKBay) program for Bicol Region.

On same occasion, 70 Akbay recipients from the different municipalities

received P10,000 interest-free and no collateral loan payable in two years. Also, 13,529 abaca farmers received their Abaca Rehabilitation Assistance from the DA Bicol and PhilFIDA, part of the P50M Abaca Rehab Fund handed to the PLGU this year.

Aside from these financial assistance, the 11 LGUs received Php3,532,240.00-worth of certified palay seeds for seed exchange projects and hand tractor from DA-Bicol Rice Program.

Under the Organic

AKBAY check recipients

Agriculture Program of DA-Bicol, farmers associations and individuals from Virac, San Andres, Panganiban, Caramoran, Baras, and Bato received 1,719,700-worth of multi-tilling machine, shallow tube well, solar pump, small scale composting facility, and African night crawlers.

The High Value Crops Development Program also awarded Php786,332.00-worth of Organic Fertilizers, Power

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DA Bicol garnered 3... (from page 1)

and Presidential Citation. The Tigbao 4H Club of Aroroy, Masbate won the Outstanding Young Farmer/Fisherfolk award. Arlene Toledo, club president and Mayor Arturo Virtucio and DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Elena B. delos Santos received the award. The national outstanding Small Farmer/Fisherfolk organization award went to Gubat St. Anthony Cooperative of Gubat, Sorsogon. Engr. Rene Hermo and RED delos Santos received the award. The Municipal Agricultural and Fishery Council of Canaman, Camarines Sur won the Outstanding MAFC award. MAFC Chair Hubert Baynas together with Canaman Mayor Henry Ragodon and RAFC Bicol Vice Chair Jose Cordero received the award.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), headed by National Director Eduardo Gongona also honored the winners of the national search for Malinis at Masaganang Karagatan (MMK) 2017 which is now on its second year. The awards were given to top five Local Government Units that have implemented remarkable coastal resource management. The LGU of Laguindingan, a 4th class municipality in Misamis Oriental bagged the MMK award bringing home P30 million livelihood funds. The LGU of Cortez, Surigao Del Sur received the MMK Hall of Fame award and also received P30 million worth project grant.

The hosting of the Gawad Saka in the Malacañan palace is like a homecoming for the department's oldest and most prestigious search. After less than a decade of being held in other venues, finally, the hosting of the Gawad Saka awarding was welcomed again by the Palace. The Gawad Saka or Parangal sa mga Natatanging Magsasaka at Mangangisda is a presidential award being

(L-R) President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol deliver their messages during the Gawad Saka awarding.



given by the DA which is the highest award from among the other contests of DA. It started in 1970 to give recognition to outstanding contributions of the farmers/fisherfolk in agricultural development.

President Rodrigo Duterte in his speech acknowledged the remarkable efforts of the awardees, their determination and willingness to adapt led to progress in agriculture and fisheries. He expressed hope that the outstanding farmers/fisherfolk will continue exploring new ways to further develop the agriculture and fishery sector.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Secretary Manny F. Piñol proudly announced the milestones his administration has achieved in the past two years. Topping the list was last year's 19.23 million metric tons harvest in rice, which according to him was the highest in the

history of agriculture. Secretary Pinol also announced that he had just submitted a proposal to President Duterte, which if approved, would mark a big shift in the policy of agriculture. As the public bidding in the government is a very lengthy process, he proposes for a shift from subsidy to credit assistance so that the farmers will be able to buy the inputs and machineries of their choice for their farm production activities.

Undersecretary Ariel T. Cayanan, Gawad Saka chairperson said that the winners aptly portray the anatomy of the modern farmers who are not only tillers of the land, but are now embracing new and challenging roles – as scientist, researcher, entrepreneur, businessman/woman, and teacher.

This year's Gawad Saka

categories include: Outstanding Rice Farmer, Corn Farmer, Coconut Farmer, Sugarcane Farmer, High Value Crops Farmer, Organic Agriculture Farmer, Organic Agriculture Entrepreneur, Small Animal Raiser, Large Animal Raiser, Fisherfolk (aquaculture), Fisherfolk (fish capture), Young Farmer/Fisherfolk, Young Farmer/Fisherfolk Organization, Farm/Fisherfolk Family, Rural Improvement Club, Barangay Food Terminal (BFT) (LGU operated), BFT (Non-LGU), Provincial Agricultural and Fishery Council (PAFC), Municipal AFC, Small Farmer/Fisherfolk Organization, FARMC, Agricultural Scientist, and Agricultural Researcher. (photos courtesy of AFID **Ardy Tompong and Darius Mangampo**)



DA honors national achievers in rice... (from page 1)



Outstanding SWISA special citation was awarded to Veneracion Farmers and Urban Poor Association of Pamplona, Camarines Sur. Jess Avocado and Romeo Manago received the P100,000 project grant and trophy.



Outstanding Irrigators Association - special citation was awarded San Agustin-San Ramon Farmers' Cooperative, Inc. in Bula, Camarines Sur. Edgar B. Razado and Arthur Rabeje received the P100,000 project grant and trophy.



Governor Jonah Pimentel and Provincial Agriculturist Almirante Abad received the P500,000 cash award and trophy for the province of Camarines Norte.



Levi Barcelona, provincial Rice Program Coordinator received the P250,000 project grant for the province of Sorsogon.

metric tons per hectare. He also shared the new policy shift in the department from the subsidies to easy access credit. He recalled that upon his assumption to the post, he delved deeply into the top 10 poorest provinces and he found out that these provinces all rely to agriculture as main industry but there was no access to credit and there were no banks particularly in the rural areas.

"Easy access credit is sustainable and will instill in the beneficiaries a sense of ownership. It will avoid the culture of mendicancy and will restore the pride among poor farmers and fisherfolks," added Secretary Pinol.

Senator Cynthia Villar, current chairperson of the Senate committee on Agriculture, in her speech, said that the Philippines will start imposing tariff on imported rice with the finalization of the amendments to the Agricultural Tariffication Act which will replace the quantitative import restrictions on rice. She added that the tariff income will proceed to the rice competitiveness enhancement fund.

To be competitive amidst the ASEAN free trade, the Filipino rice farmers should bring down the cost of their production, said Senator Villar. "The cheapest rice is produced in Vietnam at P6.00/kilo of palay while in the Philippines, the cost of production for a kilo of palay is P12.00. We have to step up on mechanization and reduce labor cost which is currently at P3.60 per kilo compared to P1.20 per kilo in Vietnam. Mahalin natin ang PhilRice at Philmech dahil sila ang makakatulong sa atin na mapataas ang 4.5 metric tons/hectare average production natin up to 6 metric tons/hectare," Senator Villar emphasized.

Senator Villar also disclosed that only nine provinces (including the Bicol region) provide the 75% rice

production of the country. If only these nine provinces will be able to compete with Vietnam, we can be more competitive. She also appealed to the rice producers and retailers to sell their rice at lower prices.

The Department of Agriculture gave a total of P55.2 million to seven outstanding provinces; three Outstanding Small Water Irrigation System Associations; four Outstanding Irrigators' Associations (IAs) under the National Irrigation System and four Outstanding IAs also under the Communal Irrigation System. Special citations were also awarded to top performing government units, IAs and SWISAs.

Meanwhile an outstanding municipality/city was selected from each of the 15 regions. For the Bicol Region, the Municipal Local Government Unit of San Jose, Camarines Sur bagged the award as Outstanding Municipality. San Jose Mayor Antonio B. Chavez received from Secretary Piñol the facsimile check amounting to P1 million in a form of project grant, and trophy. He was accompanied by Municipal Agriculturist Grace Santelices, and Agricultural Technicians Aira Rivero, Jonnie Parada and Kristine Morata.

Special Recognitions were also given to 10 Outstanding Small Water Irrigation System Association (SWISAs). Among them was the Veneracion Farmers and Urban Poor Association of Veneracion, Pamplona, Camarines Sur. Jess Avocado and Romeo Manago received the P100,000 project grant and trophy. Likewise, seven Irrigators' Associations were given special citation. Among them was the San Agustin-San Ramon Farmers' Cooperative, Inc. in Bula, Camarines Sur. Edgar B. Razado and Arthur Rabeje received the P100,000 project grant and trophy.

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DA consults CSO on 2019 budget & programs

NAGA CITY – To elicit the substantive participation of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the planning and implementation of agricultural development programs for the Bicol region, the Department of Agriculture RFO 5 spearheaded the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other Stakeholders Consultation on its FY 2019 Plan and Budget Proposal held on May 7, 2018 in a hotel here.

In attendance were DA 5 Farmer Director Alfredo R. Rillo; Cecilia V. De Asis, President Bicol Federation of Rural Improvement Club and RIC National President; Estephany Breboneria, President of the Bicol Federation of Irrigators' Association; representatives of DA attached agencies; Bicol Regional

Development Council; Provincial Agriculturists; provincial veterinarians; chairpersons of Provincial Agricultural and Fishery Councils; farmer leaders; rural based organizations such as P4MP, Federation of Pineapple Growers of Camarines Norte; and Cam Sur Chamber of Commerce, women's group; persons with disability and private sector.

Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria, Chief of the DA 5 Planning and Monitoring Division in her presentation of the rationale of the consultation, cited National Budget Memorandum No. 129 dated Jan. 2018 directing the shift from a multi-year obligation-based budget to an annual cash-based budget limiting

the budget implementation to just one year. This reform on public financial management effective 2019 aims to strengthen the government's focus and accountability as it clearly links the target output of the government programs to the appropriated budget. The agencies shall also ensure that their operations are on schedule and their appropriated budgets are fully disbursed in the fiscal year.

For 2019, the DA in Bicol proposed a total of P3,754,829,000 for the implementation of various projects on the DA's banner programs Rice, Corn, Livestock, High Value Crops,

Organic Agriculture; HALAL and locally funded projects like Farm to Market Road, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD).

The banner programs and locally funded project's coordinators also presented their respective proposed budget during the consultation. For the Rice Program, one of the projects in 2019 is the distribution of hybrid seeds to the provinces aiming to attain 4 MT/ha yield, namely: Sorsogon and Camarines Norte. Meanwhile, the Corn Program will promote white corn along with rice as staple food.

Director delos Santos also announced that DA region 5 ranked 3rd among the 16 regions during the first quarter national Financial Performance Assessment which was graced by Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol. According to director delos Santos, Bicol achieved 54% obligation of its annual budget for the 1st quarter alone. "Mabilis ang ginagawang pagbili ng mga interventions ng DA para mabilis din na maideliver sa mga magsasaka," added director delos Santos. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**

DA honors... *(from page 8)*

Special Citations were also given to 15 provinces that qualified for field validation and technical paper presentation. Among them were the PLGU of Camarines Norte and Sorsogon. Governor Jonah Pimentel and Provincial Agriculturist Almirante Abad received the P500,000 project grant and trophy for Camarines Norte, while Levi Barcelona, provincial Rice Program Coordinator received the P250,000 project grant for Sorsogon.

DA Assistant Secretary Ariel Cayanan; Asec Andrew

Villacorta; program directorate; heads of DA services and divisions, bureaus and attached agencies, governors and mayors of outstanding provinces and municipalities/cities graced the event.

The Bicol awardees were accompanied on stage by DA Bicol OIC Regional Technical Director Rodel P. Tornilla; ATI Bicol Director Vivien Carable; DA Bicol OIC chief of Field Operations Division Mary Grace Rodriguez and Rice Program report officer Ara Nicole Nicolas.

Farmers' Day... *(from page 6)*

2 heads of carabaos worth P113,000.

Director delos Santos said the farmers day which is being held annually is an opportunity and good venue for the bonding of the farmers, the AEWs assisting them, and the Department of Agriculture personnel. Mary Grace Rodriguez, OIC Chief of DA 5 Operations Division said the event is a treat to the farmers who have helped Camarines Sur province attain its 168% rice sufficiency in 2017.

Some farmers associations displayed and sold their products in the exhibit booths and the lucky ones received cash prizes. Adjudged as best booth with P5,000 cash prize

was the Rural Improvement Club of Pili. The best processed agricultural product award with a cash prize of P10,000 went to Castillan Sustainable Association. The best fresh product award with a cash prize of P10,000 went to Goa Agri Producers and Processors Association. The "Paraoma" (farmer) of the Day was Alex Doblón who rendered an on-the-spot acapella number and he received P5,000 cash prize.

The farmers' day is one of the events during the Kaogma Festival in Camarines Sur which opened on May 19 and culminated on May 27 on the day of the 439th foundation day of Camarines Sur. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**

DA celebrates Farmers Festival

SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR – The DA Bicol grounds here were filled with colorful and bountiful agricultural products coming from the six provinces of the region. The exhibitors started displaying their best products in their respective booths at the crack of dawn on May 15 in time for the opening of the two-day Farmers festival. The festive atmosphere was made more vibrant by colorful strings of flaglets flying in the air as the DA has celebrated the feast day of St. Isidore on the previous day – May 14.

A total of 68 exhibitors composed of individual farmers, women's groups, farmers associations and operators of barangay food terminals participated in the trade fair.

DA Bicol regional executive director Elena B. delos Santos said the Farmers Festival is being conducted yearly as a tribute to the

supreme contributions of the farmers to our food security. She thanked the farmers for actively participating in the festivity which reflect the Bicolano farmers' zest for life and unwavering capacity to enjoy it amidst hardship and calamities.

After the opening program, the exhibitors listened to the presentation of the ACPC programs and attended the meeting of the beneficiaries of the Rice Processing Centers (RPC).

The exhibitors garnered a total sales of over P600,000 during the two day trade fair.

The month of May is celebrated as Farmers and Fisherfolk's month. This year's theme was "Makabagong Magsasaka at Mangingisdang Pilipino Susi sa Tunay na Pagbabago." **(Lovella P. Guarin)**



The opening program was graced by (L-R) AMAD Chief Adelina A. Losa; Rosalina Tan; DA Bicol OIC Regional Technical Director for Operations Rodel P. Tornilla; Regional Executive Director Elena B. delos Santos; Albay Provincial Agriculturist Cheryl Rebeta; RAFC 5 Chair Alfredo R. Rillo, Farmer Director for the month of May. Also present were Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) national program director Bernadette San Juan; representatives from the Landbank of the Phils. Naga City branch and Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC).



Women play crucial role in the dev't of agri industry in Albay

CABANGAN, CAMALIG, ALBAY---Raising her closed right fist but with a smile, Albay Provincial Agriculturist Cheryl O. Rebeta exclaimed "Matitibay an mga babae (Women are great!)" during the Bicol Conference on Rural Women in Agriculture and Development during the 1st Bicol Agri Expo held on May 23, 2018 at the Albay Farmers Bounty Village (AFBVIII) here.

Rebeta said that the



AFBVIII is for all people from all walks of life and especially for the women, specifically the rural women who juggle family life as a mother, wife, assistant to her farmer-husband, and entrepreneur.

The AFBVill has a trading post where farmers can sell their produce which is usually done by their wives or daughters. It has a sweet potato and cacao processing facilities where women can processed their crops for food. It has training halls where skills development trainings for women can be conducted.



She said that this village was conceptualized by Albay Governor Al Francis C. Bichara for farmers and their families.

Attended in by more than 152 Albayanas and members of the Rural Improvement Clubs of Oas, Pioduran, Albay Artisan, Legazpi City, Polangui, Bacacay, Ligao City, Tiwi, Tabaco City, Malilipot, Camalig, Guinobatan, and Malinao, the conference has for its theme "Challenges and Opportunities in Climate-Resilient Agriculture for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls"

with sub-theme "Emancipating the Women from Hunger and Poverty."

Rebeta encouraged the participants to engage in selling food products from sweet potato, cacao, watermelon, and to engage in stingless bee culture and abaca products.

She said that sweet potato is dubbed as "the healthiest food in the planet" and that in the past, sweet potato is considered food of the poor. Now, a lot of rich individuals who are health conscious eat

(Next page pls.)

Albay opens Farmers Bounty Village with 1st Bicol Agri Expo

CABANGAN, Camalig, Albay---“This is for the farmers of Albay!”

This is the message of Albay Governor Al Francis C. Bichara during the opening of the Albay Farmers Bounty Village (AFBVill) and the 1st Bicol Agri Expo held on May 22, 2018 here.

The AFBVill is a 15-hectare farm located seven kilometers away from the foot of Mayon Volcano. It will be the center of agricultural development in the province because of its various facilities for animal and plant production, processing, and learning center.

The lot was originally part of the 20-ha Animal Breeding Station (ABS) of the Department of Agriculture-Bicol which was a donation from former Senator Victor Ziga. However, Bichara requested the area from Agriculture Secretary Manny F. Piñol, thus, leaving the ABS with five-hectares.

Bichara cited that this AFBVill will soon become an agri-tourism site of Albay and will be producing food products for resiliency and during hazards; and to showcase new and proper technologies to strategize the impact of globalization and climate change.

Aside from agriculture, the AFBVill will also be the center and market of traditional food, delicacies and music. Thus, with this village, the community will be empowered and will generate additional income and employment.

The AFBVill facilities include four classrooms for farm school, laboratories for soil test and tissue-culture, a trading center, a dairy plant with equipment from China and the Department of Science and Technology, training halls, dormitories, cacao and sweet potato processing plants, organic gardens, animal pens, greenhouses, stockrooms and a motorpool for farm



Sen. Cynthia Villar was the guest of honor.

equipment and machineries.

Bichara also said that this AFBVill is the first in the country and which is a result of his trip to Israel with Senator Cynthia Villar.

In her keynote speech, Villar said that in the Philippines, public officials are more on infrastructure development. However, here in Albay, “gusto ng governor ninyo na itaas ang buhay at antas ng magsasaka at mangingisda (your governor wants to elevate the life and level of the farmers and fisherfolks).

Villar also said that her office allotted 750 M pesos to the Technical

Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to support and provide scholarships to students in 1325 farm schools in the Philippines.

Villar encouraged the farmers to send their children to farm schools; to engage in cacao and coffee farming as intercrop to their coconuts plus dairy farming; and farm mechanization.

Meanwhile, more than 1718 farmers and guests attended the opening of the 1st Bicol Agri Expo which is part of the celebration of Magayon Festival 2018.

According to Albay Provincial Agriculturist Cheryll O. Rebeta, the

(Turn to page 15)

Women play...

(from page 10)

sweet potato and other root crops because of their nutrients.

DA-Bicol Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division Chief Aloha Gigi Bañaria said that the office fully supports the endeavors and projects of rural women organizations. She stressed the importance of being registered as member of the Rural Improvement Clubs in their locality. The Gender and Development Program of the DA also has lined-up



Albay Provincial Agriculturist Cheryll O. Rebeta

seminars on skills development namely the Bangkuan Weaving



DA 5 Planning Division Chief Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria

Training, and the upcoming Embroidery and Crochet-Making Training.

Thus, DA-Bicol wants to strengthen women organizations, strategize their

plans and programs, and capacitate the members so that the “women in agriculture can pool their efforts in eradicating hunger in the country.”

The one-day activity was capped by a cooking demo by APICIUS Culinary Arts. **(Jayson M. Gonzales)**

Baluzo Family:

Nurturing the innate gifts of a talented daughter and the earth's natural bounty

By Emily B. Bordado

"Stardom should be a discovery. You don't hammer it into people's heads. You don't demand it. You command it," thus says Priyanka Copra, Indian Actress and Miss World 2000.

True enough, Kimberly Baluzo, 19-year senior high school student from Daet, Camarines Norte made her way to stardom via the Wishcovery, an on-line competition launched by FM radio station, where new talents are discovered and are given opportunity to shine and reach their dream. After a rigorous screening and elimination rounds she managed to stay in the competition and finished 1st runner-up. Her powerful voice, refreshing and pretty face and her other talents were her ticket to stardom. Apart from singing she also dabbles into song writing and playing of musical instruments. She is not just a singer, artist but also a leader and a young farmer with a cause. But reaching for her star was not easy. She prepared and really worked hard for it.

Her parents Annie and Eduardo discovered Kimberly's

talent in singing when she was only three years old and since then her mother had nurtured this gift by enhancing it further and finding avenues where her talent could be showcased.

As the family is engaged in farming, in 2014 Kimberly became a member of the local 4-H club, a global network of youth organization being supervised by the Department of Agriculture whose mission is "engaging youth to reach their fullest potential especially in the four personal development areas namely: head, heart, hands and health. On the same year she represented the Bicol region in the National 4-H Achievement Event held at General Santos and brought home the trophy as the national winner in the Original Pilipino Music singing contest where she sang "Habang May Buhay." The various activities and events of the 4-H club especially the annual regional

and national youth camps and achievement conference which featured talent competitions honed her innate gifts and opened opportunities for Kimberly to showcase her many talents.

Soon she was invited to perform in local provincial and regional events not only of the DA but by other agencies and institutions with her mother as her constant chaperone and manager. While she was mastering her craft and talent as a singer she continued to

pursue her studies as a senior high school student at the Camarines Norte National High School in Daet. Although she is the youngest among the 3 siblings she was also helping in the family farm and supporting his parent's advocacy for natural farming.

The Baluzo family nurtures not only Kimberly's natural talents but also mother earth and God-given resources. In their 1.3 - hectare farm are planted various fruit trees,

(Next page pls.)





vegetables, herbs, spices, ornamental plants which are naturally grown – no chemicals or synthetics applied. They also have a fishpond stocked with tilapia and they rear native chickens, ducks, goat and native pigs. A portion of their farm they have also planted mahogany.

They have opened their farm to farmers and other visitors who want to learn about natural farming and the Baluzo farm has been accredited as a Learning Site by the Agricultural Training Institute, the training arm of the DA. Likewise, it has been granted 2nd level accreditation by the TESDA as School for Practical Agriculture (SPA). Trainings are being conducted on the second floor of their house. The farm is now gaining popularity as an agri- tourism destination.

Despite the new status of Kimberly as a celebrity she is still shy and reserved but she exudes confidence. In one of her interviews she said: “Hindi ako yung tipo na unang na nag approach. Kaya try to approach me first. Hindi naman ako snob eh. I am me. In all the world there is no one else.”

She always look forward to going home to their farm not only to bond with her family but to feel the rustic ambience of their farm and home surroundings. Sans any make-up on her youthful face and trappings of a celebrity Kimberly feels relaxed, comfortable, natural and gleeful as she frolics in the farm in the company of his parents, her favorite farm

animals and plants. She relishes every minute and savors the tranquility and beauty of nature.

“Proud ako na magsasaka ang mga magulang ko. Kailan man hindi ko yun ikakahiya,” she declared when she guested together with her mother on a national television segment of a popular TV host aptly titled “Talento na Inani sa Pagsasaka.”

For her part her mother Annie said that they have nurtured in Kimberly the value of being a farmer and always remind her to always look down and look back where she came from “kahit gaano man kataas ang kanyang marating sa buhay” and to love and relish every moment of life as it is God’s most precious gift to everyone. No wonder one of the favorite and winning songs of Kimberly in any singing competitions is the OPM “Habang may Buhay.”

Many doors have been opened for her but she also has to make some sacrifices. For now her schooling has to take a back seat as she has to fulfill her contract as a recording artist. She has to leave the comfort of her home, miss the company of her family and adjust to the fast pace of an urban life. Her elder brother was asked by her mother to resign from his job in Metro Manila and go home to Camarines Norte to help the family in manning the farm now that it is gearing up to be fully operational as a learning site and agri-tourism destination.

Three DA women employees finish post graduate degrees

By Emily B. Bordado



Rodriguez



Rafer



Adante

More and more professional women are surging forward, soaring high and proving their mettle in their profession by pursuing higher education.

Just recently three women employees of the Department of Agriculture Bicol have joined the list of the scholarly, highly educated and committed women who can contribute a great deal in realizing the mission and vision of the department and achieving the development goals for our country. Despite being wife and mother to their children they have balanced and managed well their time between career and their family and successfully pursued and finished their post graduate studies as scholars. They are now ready and eager to apply their new learnings on their job.

Mary Grace dela Peña-Rodriguez who hails from Sipocot, Camarines Sur completed her doctor’s degree in Environmental Science major in Agricultural

Economics from the University of the Philippines Los Banos, Laguna as a scholar of the Department of Science and Technology. She is only 37 years old but currently she is the Officer-in Charge of the Operations and Extension Division, one of the biggest and vital operating units of the agency. She is also the regional coordinator for the High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) and Regional Coordinator for the Kabuhayan at Kaunlaran ng Kababayang Katutubo (4Ks).

She also took and completed her undergraduate and master’s degree at the UPLB under a scholarship grant by the DOST and the Agricultural Training Institute, respectively. Her undergraduate course was Bachelor of Science in Agriculture major in Horticulture and her master’s degree was Applied Business Economics major in Food Systems Management. She started her work in the DA at the Research Division and later

(Turn to page 15)

Although Kimberly is now a star in her own right she is always proud to say that she has lived and was raised in the farm by parents who nurtured God’s natural endowment - the rich and bountiful farm and the innate beauty and talent of their daughter.

Included in her repertoire of songs she rendered for the Wishcovery grand finals was one of her favorite songs

“I Can” which she sang beautifully and powerfully. Indeed, Kimberly has proven to herself and to the world that despite being a “probinsiyana” at may angking talino na hinubog sa pagsaka” she can reach her dreams “...can touch the heavens above...and touch the rainbow in the sky” with her feet firmly anchored to her roots.

Josephine G. Artiaga 2018 Gawad Saka Outstanding Small Animal Raiser & Outstanding Rural Woman

by Lovella P. Guarin



To prevent mortality in farrowing, Jo devised individual farrowing crates made of steel pipes with enough free space for easy farrowing and to prevent cannibalism where the piglets are attacked by other sows. Jo gave each pig and goat a name which are written on their crates for easy identification. This way, she can still give specific instructions to the laborers even when she is not in the farm as the names are written on each crate or pen.

The hogs are housed in wooden pens with deep bed litter flooring system using rice hull, carbonized rice hull sprinkled with salt and sprayed with IMO or EMAS once a week to encourage growth of microbes which keep the bedding clean, smell free and fly-free. After eight months, the bedding is harvested and used as highly nutritious compost.

Agricultural wastes in the farm and animal manure are processed into compost and in vermiculture production. She also planted various species of legumes which serve as animal feeds, thus she can provide forage planting materials to interested farmers.

All these she learned when she attended various seminars on livestock raising and organic hog fattening under the tutelage of Fr. Ian S. Trillanes.

Now, Jo is a most sought speaker on native and organic swine raising, raising free range chicken, goat raising, and pasture and forage development.

The farm is into commercial raising of

organically certified swine, free range chicken and organic pork lechon. The farm is also selling organic chicken eggs carrying the label St. Francis St. Rita Nature Farm and are displayed at the DA organic showroom and Sonrisa farm. She herself designed the product brand and label as a requirement in the organic certification granted by the OCCP to her chicken and swine in 2017.

Jo is currently the President of the Lupi Organic Farmers and Agribusiness Association (LOFAA) She is also an active member of different rural based organizations such as Lupi MAFC; RIC; Goat Raisers Association; Organic Vegetable Producers Association; Organic Rice Farmers Association; Camarines Sur Goat and Sheep Raisers Association; and Lupi Local Poverty Reduction Action Team.

The Local Government Unit of Lupi and the Department of Agriculture salutes her for her vast contributions in improving



The St. Francis St. Rita Nature Farm diversified and integrated organic farm located in Bulawan Sr. along the highway of Lupi in the province of Camarines Sur, is a showcase of innovative organic agriculture technology and sustainability and profitability of livestock and crops integration.

Five years ago, Josephine Artiaga decided to come home for good after working as an OFW in Hongkong and the United Arab Emirates for 20 years and spent her hard earned savings to develop the one-hectare hilly land into an organic farm showcasing commercial raising of organically certified swine and free range chicken for meat and egg production. The farm also ventured into native swine raising; upgrading of native goats and sheep; geese and ducks raising. Organic crops

grown in the farm include salad greens, spices, and legumes.

She invested most of her income in developing the livestock houses and facilities from light-weight materials to climate resilient structures and facilities made of concrete and steel to endure even the strongest typhoons and provide the most comfortable environment for the animals.

Being single at 49 allowed her to devote all her time in the farm. Having finished a Secretarial course in college helped her to effectively manage the farm – from production to marketing. She maintains a detailed record of management practices starting from estrous cycle, breeding, gestation, farrowing and deworming.

She does most of the farmworks such as feeding, taking care of newborn litters, planting and harvesting with the help of her three laborers.



the lives of her fellow farmer through technology transfer, for restoring the ecological balance and contributing immensely to food security.

The DA Bicol hails Jo Artiaga as 2018 Gawad Saka outstanding Small Animal Raiser and Outstanding Rural Woman.

Catanduanes celebrates ... *(from page 6)*

Tiller, Rainshelter, Water Pump and Peanut planting materials to the municipalities of Baras, San Andres, San Miguel, Virac and Pandan.

The Livestock Program also dispersed Php364,835.00-worth of goats, native pigs, cattle, carabaos, and mallard ducks to the LGUs of Virac, Bato, Pandan, Viga, Baras and Bagamanoc.

A total of P6.4M worth of farm inputs, livestock and machineries were distributed by the DA-Bicol during the culminating activity.

According to Engineer Ted Eleda of the Catanduanes Hilly-Upland Development Station

(CHUDS) who represented the Regional Executive Director Dr. Elena B. De Los Santos, DA-Bicol implemented the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) to lower the poverty incidence in Catanduanes. SAAD allocated 9M pesos fund to establish food production and livelihood projects.

DA-Bicol will also be constructing farm-to-market roads (FMR) worth 37M pesos. The ongoing Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) is targeting the construction of FMRs worth 127M so that the residents in the province can establish enterprises on Abaca,

Mangrove Crab, Commercial palay, and Broiler Production worth 17M pesos.

Because of the ongoing implementation of agricultural programs and projects in the province, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) noted the decrease in poverty incidence in Catanduanes. It is expected to further lower the poverty incidence because of the upcoming projects to be implemented by DA-Bicol.

As a special treat to farmers and to make the celebration more memorable, DA-Bicol allotted Php178,000.00-worth of raffle items like 15 bags hybrid rice palay seeds; 11 bags registered palay seeds; 50 laminated sacks; 10 wheelbarrows; 10 knapsack

sprayers; and 10 sets of garden tools.

Fisherman Bernardo Santelices of Pandan also received 2000 fingerlings of Tilapia to be cultured in his 1.5-ha fish pond. As Vice-Chairman of the Municipal Fishery and Aquatic Resources Management Council, Santelices looked forward for this annual celebration because they get to meet their other counterparts.

Games were conducted simultaneously in the afternoon such as Palay Henyo, Edible Dish Garden, Sex Identification of Tilapia and Singing Contest.

Indeed, the Farmers' and Fisherfolks' Month celebration in Catanduanes ended with a big bang! (**Jayson M. Gonzales**)

Albay opens ... *(from page 11)*

expo has 48 exhibitors which include Syngenta, Mcbride, Pigrolac, Univet, Tateh Aquafeeds, FeedPro, Supra, SL Agritech Corporation, DatingBayan, Kuliglig Farm Machineries, Inc., various cooperatives and products of the different LGUs of Albay, Villar SIPAG, and the Department of Agriculture.

The expo has lined-up activities that include Turn-over of various agricultural interventions of DA-Bicol to cooperatives and farmers' associations; business launching of Sweet Potato; Bicol Conference on Rural Women on Agriculture

and Development; Organic Agriculture Seminar; Induction and Business meeting of the Albay Provincial Organic Agriculture Association (APOAA) and Albay Adlai Growers Association (AAGA); Herbs Processing

and Utilization; Agri-business Forum; Goat Show; Farmers' Orientation on Dairy Carabao Raising; Vaccination and Animal Treatment; sale of live animals; and Seminar-Workshop on Mushroom Growing.



The five-day event kicked-off with a Holy Mass celebrated by Fr. Dave Ramoso who shared that "God entrusted the tilling and development of the land to the farmers." (**Jayson M. Gonzales**)

Three women ... *(from page 13)*

at the Planning and Monitoring Division. She is a wife and a mother of two.

Meanwhile, Ailyn Garido-Rafer who hails from Vinzons, Camarines Norte also recently completed her second master's degree in Soil Science from the UPLB under a scholarship grant of the DOST. She has earlier taken and completed a Master of Science Degree in Plant Science at the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture. She completed

her BS degree in Chemistry at the Adamson University. She is a licensed Chemist. She was formerly designated Officer-in-charge of the Regional Soils Laboratory and currently holding the position of Chemist III. At 37, she is a wife and a mother of three. She is currently designated as the regional focal person for Organic Agriculture Program and assigned at the Agribusiness and Marketing Division.

Another recent graduate

of a Master of Science degree from the UPLB is Ailyn Reyes-Adante who majored in Entomology. She is from Pili, Cam. Sur. She pursued her MS under a scholarship grant from the Bureau of Agricultural Research. Her undergraduate course was BS in Agriculture major in Crop Protection which she took at the CBSUA. She is currently holding the position of Senior Science Research Specialist at the Research Division and actually doing

research studies/work. At 44 she is also a wife and a mother of two.

These three women are DA's assets who will be the future managers, directors or administrators of the agency. They add up to the greater number of women (over men) now holding supervisory positions in the agency headed by a well educated, highly competent and dedicated woman regional executive director.

Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD)

SAAD beneficiaries attend livelihood trainings, receive agri inputs

By Lovella P. Guarin

Sorsogon Province

As an initial intervention to the beneficiaries of Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) in Sorsogon, two batches of training on Upland Rice Production were conducted by the SAAD implementation team recently.

The first batch was held at a resort in Dancalan, Donsol on April 16-18, 2018 and was attended by 55 participants from Brgy. Calongay and Sta. Fe from Pilar; Brgy. Pinamanaan, Lourdes and Malapoc in Donsol, a third class municipality.

The Second batch of training was held at the Casa Feliz in Juban, Sorsogon on April 18-20, 2018. Some 45 farmer beneficiaries from Brgy. Calmayon, Puting Sapa, Maalo from Juban (4th class municipality) and Brgy. Senibaran from Matnog (3rd class municipality) attended the two day training.

Majority of the participants are beneficiaries of the 4Ps and some are members of indigenous people or farmers located in bypassed marginal communities. More than 65% of the participants are housewives or female head of the family.

Florentino Ubalde, Agricultural Program Coordinating Officer for Sorsogon and Albay said that SAAD program targets to expand upland rice production in Sorsogon by covering at least 30 hectares for each of the five municipalities that are included in the program. The municipalities included under SAAD in the province are Magallanes, Pilar, Donsol, Sta. Magdalena and Juban.

A total of 200 individual beneficiaries were selected to receive upland rice seeds and complete fertilizer after their training. Meanwhile four organized farmers' groups will receive palay threshers.

Invited resource speakers for the two-day training were from the Department of Agriculture Regional Office. Corazon Orbon, Superintendent of Central Bicol Experiment Station (CBES) discussed the varieties of upland rice. Maricris Reforba of the Operations Division discussed rice pre and postharvest practices. Cindie Pardo of Regional Crops Protection Center discussed Integrated Pest Management. Aside from lectures, the participants had a workshop on farm planning and budgeting.

Catanduanes Province

Rice remains the staple food for the 260,964 Catandunganons (PSA 2015 census) but the limited access to irrigation water and the rugged and mountainous terrain of the island reduced its effective area planted to rice to 12,349 hectares or only 3.39% of the total 363,823 hectares rice area of Bicol region (DA Annual Report 2017). Although the province's rice sufficiency level increased from 69% in 2016 to 87% in 2017. Thus, the utilization of idle and marginal areas for upland rice in Catanduanes, coupled with provision of interventions such as upland rice seeds and complete fertilizer after series of training



First district participants from Pilar and Donsol, Sorsogon.



Second district participants from Juban and Matnog, Sorsogon.

for improved upland rice cropping system will not only augment household income and nutrition of the beneficiaries but also help the province attain rice self sufficiency.

This is the objective behind the conduct of Training on Upland and Rainfed Rice Production to some 55 beneficiaries of the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) program on April 17-19, 2018 at the Rakdell Inn, at Virac, Catanduanes.

The participants, majority of whom are males, came from the six municipalities of Catanduanes which are included under the program namely: Bato, Panganiban, Bagamanoc, Baras, San Miguel and Gigmoto. Most of the

participants are abaca farmers and some are beneficiaries of 4Ps.

They learned the proper land preparation, upland rice production, pre and postharvest practices, managing pest and diseases and farm planning and budgeting through lectures and workshop.

In attendance during the two-day training were Lito Barba, Municipal Agriculturist of Bato; Asuncion Talan, Municipal Agriculturist of Gigmoto; Cheryl Tatel Municipal Agriculturist of San Miguel; Edgar Ollet, Agricultural Coordinating Office (APCO) of Catanduanes; and the SAAD provincial implementation team.

(Next page pls....)



The SAAD beneficiaries in Catanduanes came from the municipalities of Bato, Panganiban, Bagamanoc, Baras, San Miguel and Gigmoto.

of Esperanza on April 25-26, 2018 and Pio V. Corpuz on April 26-27. The participants were given OPV white corn seeds. Another two batches of training on High Value Crops Production were conducted in the two municipalities on same dates.

Wilfredo Nelmida, Agricultural Programs Coordinating Officer in Masbate who oversees the simultaneous activities of the SAAD program in the province advised the farmer beneficiaries to prepare the land before planting and practice synchronous planting for efficient use of irrigation and minimization of pest damage within an area.

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 in line with 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.

Masbate Province

In preparation for the planting season in May, five (5) batches of training on upland and rainfed rice, white corn production and processing, and high value crops production were conducted by the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) implementation team in this province.

One batch of training on Upland and Rainfed Rice Production and Processing was conducted on April 25 – 26, 2018, in Sitio Capatagan, Bgy. Cantorna, in Monreal, Masbate. Monreal is a 4th class municipality located in the northern part of Ticao island. The training was attended by 45 pre-selected beneficiaries of SAAD who are either beneficiaries of the 4Ps or farmers located in bypassed marginal communities.

Fred Alminana, 38 years old, father of seven children, is one of the participants. Despite his years, he shyly admitted that it was his first time to attend a training. He was overwhelmed by the latest farming practices and technologies shared by the speakers from the Department of Agriculture. He said that the knowledge he acquired on upland rice production during the two-day training particularly on the proper application of fertilizer, pest management and the proper time of harvesting rice will be a big help to him he is a

tenant of an 8-hectare coconut plantation. He hopes that with the aid the of the SAAD project implementers, he will make it big in his new enterprise. He will receive one bag of upland rice seeds and one bag complete fertilizer this coming May. The upland rice project is a welcome addition to his copra enterprise, he added.

The resource speakers during the training were technical staff from the Department of Agriculture Regional Office. Marcial Bustarga of the Rice Program discussed land preparation, rice production, pre and postharvest practices and farm planning and budgeting. Cyndie Pardo of the Regional Crops Protection Center discussed

integrated pest management. The farmers had a workshop and reporting on farm planning and budgeting.

Bustarga emphasized the importance of farm planning and budgeting, as the combination of the two will lead to wise decisions and proper allocation of farm resources, which will ultimately lead to productivity. "It is not enough for a farmer to know the cultural practices of rice farming. What is more important is he can plan these activities properly and allot his budget wisely so that he will know at once if he will profit or not on the proposed business.

Meanwhile, two batches of training on White Corn Production and Processing were conducted in the municipalities



The SAAD beneficiaries of Masbate province pose for the camera after their training.



DA Bicol continues to provide post-assistance to Mayon eruption-affected farmers

LEGAZPI CITY - The Department of Agriculture in Bicol continues to assist farmers affected by the January 13, 2018 Mayon Volcano eruption through a series of trainings on Bio-Intensive Gardening and Basket weaving; and distribution of garden tools, vegetable seeds and other inputs.

Even if Political Adviser and the president's designate to oversee the Mayon evacuees Francis N. Tolentino has already believe that the mission has been successfully accomplished by all the participating agencies, DA-Bicol still continues its mission to assist the farmers.

At present, the technical staff of the DA, the agricultural technicians of Polangui, Guinobatan, Oas, Sto. Domingo, Malilipot, Daraga, and Camalig and cities of Ligao, Legazpi and Tabaco, and Harbest Agribusiness Inc. are monitoring the tunnel-type

greenhouses established in the farms of the beneficiaries.

In Sto. Domingo, DA-Bicol conducted a series of Training on Bio-Intensive Gardening and distribution of vegetable seeds and garden tools to 500 farmers in the affected barangays of Fidel Surtida, Sta. Misericordia, San Fernando, Lidong, San Isidro and Sto. Niño.

The Gender and Development Unit of the office also conducted a Training on Bangkuan Basket Weaving for Women-Evacuees as another source of income for their families. The 40 participants from Guinobatan, Sto. Domingo, and Camalig received a set of bangkuan, a wooden mold, trimmer, abaca twine, hook, small knife, fabrics and kit box.

Bangkuan (Scirpus Grossus), one of the coarsest sedges in the Philippines, is a large, erect, aquatic or marshy reed. It is found in fresh water

During his visit to Albay, Francis Tolentino, Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs and designated Mayon crisis manager, lauded the efforts of government agencies that were assigned in various evacuation centers. For Sto. Domingo, the assigned NGA was the DA-Bicol.

Aside from the various interventions in the form of training and livelihood assistance, DA-Bicol has downloaded over P6.5M to the provincial government of Albay in the implementation of the replacement activity for the displaced goats.



swamps and in newly-opened rice fields at low altitude. The stems are mixed with ashes to soften the fiber and when dried turns into a brownish shade. The stems are used in making handicrafts such as sleeping

mats, bags or baskets.

DA-GAD will also conduct Trainings on Crochet-Making and on Basic Embroidery for Mayon Volcano Women-Evacuees. (Jayson M. Gonzales)

First AFC volunteers' day held in Cam. Norte



Sarah Guitierrez Cayona, PCAF Exec. Director



DAET CAMARINES NORTE. Over 200 volunteer participants composed of farmers/fisherfolks, various sectoral committee members, Municipal Agriculture Fishery Council (MAFC) coordinators and members attended the first ever Agriculture and Fishery Council (AFC) volunteers day on May 24, 2018 at the Provincial Capitol Compound this municipality with the theme "True leaders don't create followers, they create more leaders."

Sarah Guitierrez Cayona, Executive Director of Philippine Council for Agriculture & Fisheries (PCAF) enjoined the AFCs (Next page pls....)



Corn market forum held in Albay

LEGAZPI CITY---The Department of Agriculture in Bicol conducted its second Market Forum on Corn for farmers in Ligao City, Daraga, Tabaco City, Pioduran and Libon in Albay on May 4, 2018 in support to the Regional Corn Program to improve the income of small farmers through access to market and marketing services; and to discuss the market demands, requirements and conditions of buyers.

According to Supra Feeds Raw Material Purchasing Head Joevie Jacob, since its summer time, yellow corn should be of high quality. However, the corn delivered during the second harvest season around September will be subject to laboratory tests before being bought by the company.

Jacob also said that corn production in Bicol is low compared to Northern Luzon provinces like Isabela and Pampanga.

To increase the corn production in the Bicol Region, DA-Bicol provided various support services and interventions on infrastructure/post-harvest development,

farm mechanization, capacity building, research and extension support for priority corn and cassava producing provinces, particularly in clustered areas.

According to DA-Corn Program Report Officer Dean Medrano, in 2017, Bicol region posted 289,770 metric tons in corn production from 114,657 hectares with an average yield of 2.53 mt/ha.

Medrano also disclosed that DA is developing a genetically-modified (GM) corn variety to provide a cheaper option for farmers as compared to the corn variety produced by Monsanto and Syngenta.

For this year, DA-Bicol is targeting 297,015 metric tons in corn production from 114,921 hectares with an average yield of 2.58 mt/ha.

The Bicol region has 42 corn clusters composed of 18,997 farmer-members.

DA-Bicol is trying to solve a number of problems besetting the corn industry. To counter the low production of corn due to low-yields and non-adoption of new technologies, DA will generate yield-boosting and cost-reducing technologies, promote hybrid and open-pollinated varieties, and expand white corn areas in Masbate. It will also be investing on



A corn farmer airs his views during the market forum.

processing and value-adding facilities; and work for a more stable price due to high domestic demand for corn for animal feeds.

Cederick S. Ardid, the Operations and System Administrator of Soro-soro Ibaba Development Cooperative, also presented its different programs to assist the corn farmers in their financial needs. Ardid said that aside from the agricultural production loan for yellow corn farmers, they are into contract growing of corn to provide raw materials to their agricultural feed lines.

The same forum was also conducted Camarines Norte and Masbate City. **(Jayson M. Gonzales)**



Alfredo Rillo, RAFC Chair and DA-5 Farmer Director during the month of May which is celebrated as Farmers & Fisherfolk's Month.

to help secretary Piñol fast track the implementation of the projects of the DA. One way of extending support is through credit. She also lauded the efforts of the LGU Cam. Norte for initiating this kind of endeavor." Sa next round baka ireplicate ng ibang probinsya ang ginagawa ninyo, kayo ang nauna," she said.

Alfredo Rillo, RAFC Chair and DA-5 Farmer Director, said that the AFC is equivalent to Committee Development Partners. "Ang Kagawaran ay isinusulong ang Kaugnayan sa stakeholders, pagpapatama ng patakaran at maayos na pagpapasunod ng patakaran. Bilang pagpapahalaga, itinakda ang araw na ito para sa inyo. "Kayong mga volunteers ang boses o tulay sa pagbigkas ng mga issues na pang agrikultura at isulong ang magandang pangarap at adikain ng AFC" he said.

Aloha Gigi Bañaria, RAFC Executive Director said that AFC day will soon be institutionalized. She said that in recognition to the vital roles of the AFCs, the budget of the council will be doubled from P1.8 to P3.6 million.

Topics presented were: DA Programs in Support to AFC, BFAR Program, to Fisherfolks and Role of the AFCs. A competition dubbed as "Tagisan ng Talino" was held in the afternoon which gave opportunities to the members/volunteers to showcase their talents. **(Blesilda A. Nunez)**

Budding Bicol rural... (from page 20)

cooking demo on various Filipino dishes like marinated porkchop, mushroom pancit and tofu sisig using the products brought by the participants.

The 2nd day was devoted to individual product assessment done by the market and product experts from Manila. According to Aloha Gigi Bañaria, DA Bicol Regional Gender and Development (GAD) Focal person and Chief of the Planning and Monitoring Division, this activity could result to improved products and may eventually lead to market agreements, product promotion and securing contract just like what happened after the product assessment for the batch of women entrepreneurs in 2016. Bernadette de los Santos

of Bidibidi Enterprise based in Baao, Camarines Sur has now 2 shops in Palawan and displays her products at the Avenue Plaza Hotel. Karen Arellano, president of Nasipit Rural Improvement Club in Sorsogon City has signed a contract with Citimalls to supply coco jam and atchara to all their branches. The Labo Progressive Multipurpose cooperative on the other hand had clinched a multi-million peso contract with two state universities in Bicol to supply Salampay fabric for the graduating students. Meanwhile, Adel Magsino of Goa, Camarines Sur has tied up with the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture for the development of her mushroom crunch products. **(Emily B. Bordado)**



Budding Bicol rural women entrepreneurs primed on product dev't

NAGA CITY – To capacitate budding and potential rural women agri- entrepreneurs the Department of Agriculture Bicol in partnership with the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) once more gathered about 26 women entrepreneurs and engaged in food and non-food small enterprise for entrepreneurial training and product assessment. This is one of the activities under the Gender Responsive Economic Action for Transformation or GREAT Women Project, Phase 2 funded by the Canadian government. Twenty six individual and rural women's organization were invited to take part in this year's activity held in one of the hotels in this city on June 14 and 15. Of the 26 participants, 16 of which are first timers while 10 of them were already part of the first batch which enrolled already with the project and have already business contracts with various partners after being assisted by the GREAT Women project.

The first day was devoted for entrepreneurial training

and industry update and the second day was for product assessment. Dr. Mary Grace Rodriguez, OIC Chief of the DA Regional Operations Division, who represented Regional Executive Director, Dr. Elena de los Santos underscored the importance of capacitating our agri- entrepreneurs in the light of the ASEAN Integration. She enumerated the five important elements in any business enterprise which are: product quality, quantity, price, reliability and networking. She also stressed the importance of value chain analysis before going into any business to determine the gaps.

Kathleen Aquino, Planning Officer IV of the PCM discussed the overview and objectives of the activity. Reena Francisco, owner of ECHOSI store in Makati and founder of ECHOSI foundation discussed the current trends and food innovations in local and global market. She shared that the food trend now is geared towards health and wellness thus, there is a big demand for what is fresh, natural, healthy



and environmentally safe products and packaging.

She added that to be competitive an entrepreneurs must not only improve their product but must do them differently. On top of the list of food commodities in big demand in fresh or processed form is mushroom followed by ginger, peanut butter, banana, dried pineapple, cacao, pickled vegetables, cassava, chili garlic, sea weeds, goto kola, dried fish/ seafood and fruit wines and spirits

Meanwhile, Zarah Juan, owner of Estudio Juan tackled the topic on "Partnerships among government agencies, private sector partners and women entrepreneurs products." She also discussed the trends or market demands in non-food commodities the most in demand of which are bamboo, abaca bungkuas, water hyacinth among others.

Chef Jam Melchor of the Philippine Culinary Heritage Movement conducted a

(Turn to page 19)



Dr. Mary Grace Rodriguez, OIC Chief of the DA Regional Operations Division underscored the importance of capacitating our agri- entrepreneurs in the light of the ASEAN Integration.



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