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Del Barrio bags Outstanding Seed Grower Innovator award

by Emily B. Bordado

MALATE, MANILA - Bicolano rice farmer and seed grower Gil N. Del Barrio of Lag-on, Daet, Camarines Norte took the center stage as he was conferred by the National Seed Industry Council (NSIC) as Outstanding Innovator for Seed Grower category for Luzon for which he received a plaque and cash prize of P50,000. He bested rice farmers from major rice producing provinces of Luzon nominated for said category not only for the high yield he derived but more so, for his adoption of various

(Please turn to page 6)



Gil Del Barrio (center, holding trophy) receives the Outstanding Seed Grower Innovator award from DA Undersecretary Segfredo R. Serrano (8th from right). Dr. Mary Grace DP Rodriguez (beside del Barrio) also received an award as chair of search committee in Bicol.

DA-Bicol braces up for El Niño

by Emily B. Bordado

SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR - With the PAGASA prediction of an occurrence of El Niño in the first and second quarter of the year, the Department of Agriculture regional office here braces up and prepares its Action and Rehabilitation Plan.

Based on the assessment made by the DA technical team some 44,952 hectares rice area and about 45,383 farmers in the 6 provinces are projected to be vulnerable and likely to be affected. For corn, an estimated

28,918 hectares and 28,921 farmers are also expected to be affected. These are mostly the rainfed and upland areas and those at the tail end of irrigation systems. For high value crops about 484 hectares and 916 farmers are likely to be affected.

OIC-Regional Technical Director for Operations and Extension, Rodel P. Tornilla convened immediately the El Niño Task Force to firm up the contingency measures anchored on a three-pronged strategies. The first strategy will be maximization of production in less vulnerable areas. The second is saving production in vulnerable areas and third will focus on rehabilitation of affected areas.

(Please turn to page 10)



Climate resilient agri practices now in DA database

by Jayson M. Gonzales

NABUA, CAMARINES SUR --Monina de Belen along with other farmers from Barangays Cagbunga and Tampadong in Pamplona used to plant palay in their fields without checking on weather news or forecast.

However, with their training conducted by the Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA) in 2017, they became aware of how important weather forecast in their farming.

Thus, when Typhoon Usman brought heavy rains and flooding, the farm of de Belen and her fellow farmers were not affected much. She said that they decided to plant palay a week after the typhoon.

Now, her palay are in the flowering stage. However, her palay faces a new challenge--- the El Niño phenomenon.

According to Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) Chief Meteorological Officer Alfredo B. Consulta, the dry spell already started and could last until August this year with the month of May as the hottest and driest month of the year.

To mitigate the effects of El Niño on farmers and fisherfolks, the Department of Agriculture-Bicol convened more than 60 farmers, fisherfolks, researchers, agricultural technicians, representatives of government agencies to develop climate-resilient agriculture (CRA) practices database for rice; corn and cassava; high value crops like vegetables, pili and taro; livestock and poultry;

(Please turn to page 6)

Preparedness: the best defense against El Niño and La Niña

Unlike other natural calamities such earthquake or volcanic eruption, the El Niño and La Niña phenomenon can be forecasted even before they actually occur. El Niño is a large scale oceanographic or meteorological phenomenon, manifested through warm ocean currents, drought, hazardous forest fires. La Niña on the other hand is the opposite of El Niño. It is the cooling of sea surface temperature which could bring heavy rains and typhoons. El Niño and La Niña are two extreme conditions which proceed one after the other. But these two events can be predicted 12- to 18 months in advance. Thus, preventive action can be taken necessarily and its adverse effects can be mitigated or lessened.

The Philippines experienced the worst El Niño episode in 1997 to 1998. Thanks to the data accumulated in these past episodes of El Niño, the mitigating measures and the lessons learned by farmers during those time - there is not much reason why we should be ill-prepared for its regular recurrence.

There is nothing like being prepared and having the right information for any eventuality. Appropriate coping mechanisms - physical, technical, financial, structural and even

psychological should be put in place not only by the government but by all sectors before the onslaught of these global weather disturbances

Bicol region who has weathered all sorts of natural calamities is lucky that it has been recipient of various foreign funded projects like the AMICAF and DEPECHO funded by the FAO, the Bicol Agri-Water Project funded by the USAID and the locally funded AMIA project all implemented through the Department of Agriculture intended to mitigate adverse effects of weather disturbances and to develop resiliency and strengthen capacities of farmers and agri-stakeholders in coping with climate change and disaster.

With this year's recurrence of EL Niño, the Department of Agriculture in Bicol has already made on ground preparations to cope with the adverse effects of the EL NIÑO. The El Niño action plan is anchored on three strategies namely: 1) intensifying production in less vulnerable area to recoup losses from the affected production areas through provision of inputs to the farmers; 2) saving whatever could be saved or shifting to other crops that would be more tolerant in affected / vulnerable areas through provision of drought tolerant vegetable and

other crops and 3) rehabilitation of affected areas. Already the DA in Bicol has drawn up an action plan with the corresponding interventions.

Mitigation measures are also critically expected from the provincial, municipal and barangay level.

But in the final analysis, the preparedness of the people to cope with this phenomenon would be the most critical. Instead of just lamenting over the negative effects of this weather disturbance they should also look at the opportunities or the good things that could come out of this, just like what the rice farmers of Magarao did who shifted to watermelon production when they learned that the occurrence of El Niño would be inevitable this year. Instead of incurring losses their income tripled. Early warning or advanced information has enabled farmers to make decisions and prepare themselves and their farms for other options

While it is expected that the El Niño and La Niña would now become a regular occurrence we should not be overwhelmed but rather we should face up fully informed, prepared and equipped to buffer this challenge.

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DA's advisory board endorses P543.78M-worth of subprojects for PRDP FOREX Gain Budget funding

LEGAZPI CITY, ALBAY – Seven subprojects worth P543.78 million were approved and endorsed by the Department of Agriculture's Regional Project Advisory Board (RPAB) for possible funding under the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP).

The RPAB-approved subprojects consist of six infrastructure development (I-BUILD) subprojects with an aggregate amount of P533.53 million. These are the P122.59 million-worth Construction/Improvement of Segment A (Agpay to Bololo) and Segment B (Bololo to Batbat) Farm-to-Market Road, proposed by the local government unit (LGU) of Guinobatan, Albay, the Rehabilitation/Improvement of Macabugos-Tambo FMR and the Concreting of Malabiga-Sampongan FMR Section by LGU-Libon, Albay, which cost P68 million and P60 million, respectively, the Concreting of Bagolatao to Hamoraon (Coastal) FMR which amounts to P115.31 million by LGU-Minalabac, Camarines Sur, and the Concreting of F. Simeon-Upper Omon and Lower Omon FMR and the Concreting/Rehabilitation of Banga Caves, Upper Sta. Cruz and Lanipga-Cawayan FMR by LGU-Ragay, Camarines Sur which both amount to P113.78 million.

The RPAB also approved and endorsed the enterprise development (I-REAP) subproject Malilipot Abaca Twine Processing and Marketing by LGU-Malilipot, Albay. The P10.25 million-worth I-REAP subproject will benefit the abaca farmer-members of the San Francisco Irrigators' Association Inc.

The RPAB-approved subprojects will be submitted to the National Project Coordination Office (NPCO) for re-run under the I-BUILD Prioritization scheduled on February 28, 2019 in Quezon City for probable inclusion in the 2020 subprojects funded under the approximately P4.8 billion Foreign Exchange (FOREX) Gain Budget.

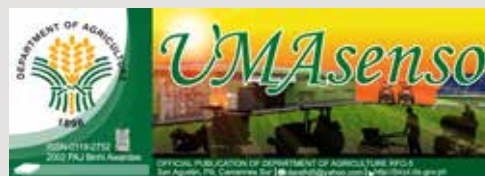
The RPAB is chaired by the DA Regional Executive Director and is composed of regional directors of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department

The RPAB members evaluate the PRDP subproject proposals from the LGUs.

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).
(Annielyn L. Baleza)



About the new UMAsenso masthead



Starting this issue our newsletter will be using a new masthead to depict the agriculture sector's transition towards a modern and mechanized farming. It however retains the name UMA Senso which is the combined words of "UMA", the Bicol term for farm and "asenso," the Bicol term for prosperity or to prosper. When taken as one word it means prosperity in the farm. UMA Senso also jibes with and summarizes the Department of Agriculture's vision of a "competitive, sustainable and technology-based agriculture and fishery sector, driven by productive and progressive farmers and fisherfolk, supported by efficient value chains, well integrated in the domestic and international markets, contributing to inclusive growth and poverty reduction.

A multipurpose coop inaugurates P6M Rice Processing facility and gets P1M seed capital

MAGARAO, CAMARINES SUR – The over 500 members of the Magarao Multi-purpose Cooperative were jubilant as they inaugurated the new P6M Rice Processing Center (RPC 1) and received the P1M working capital in time for their 19th Annual General Assembly on March 28, 2019.

In the consolidated report of the BOD committees and management, presented by BOD Chairperson Estrella G.

Bernardo and coop manager Elmer C. Basbas, the coop recognized the full support of the DA RFO 5 particularly the RPC, combine harvester, mini 4 wheel drive tractor, flatbed dryers and multipurpose drying pavement. Bernardo also cited the continuous training and mentoring support from DA's Engineering and Agribusiness Divisions to ensure the sustainability of the RPCs.

The coop which is also an

accredited CSO by the DA RFO 5 is a conduit of the DA Agricultural Credit Policy Council (DA - ACPC) for its interest free loans under Production Loan Easy Access (PLEA) and Survival and Recovery (SURE) Assistance where the farmers affected by calamities in the past have already received the loan assistance.



As a way of recognition and gratitude, the Magarao MPC awarded the DA RFO 5 with the Gawad Koop HILOT award (short for Highly valued Institution Leading our Coop towards Organizational Triumphs). Marissa Joy V. Berina, Agriculturist II received the award in behalf of DA RFO 5 RED Elena B. de los Santos. Berina also read the speech of Director de los Santos who was invited as the guest speaker during the general assembly.

The coop's theme "Productivity and Cohesiveness: coop's response to the present economic challenges", was anchored

on the preparations the coop is brewing to be at par with competitors under the Rice Liberalization Law.

Anicia Mancita, OIC Municipal Agriculturist said that the coop is a prime mover in Magarao with its 1,944 hectares of irrigated and rainfed rice areas being cultivated by a total of 1,516 farmers.

Currently, the coop is now classified as medium coop by NATCCO network standard, with an asset of over P51.4M and a net surplus of P1.9M as of December 31, 2019. (**Lovella P. Guarin**)

Philmech opens one-stop shop in Pili, CSur

SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR – Senator Cynthia A. Villar, Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food led the launching of the Philmech Regional Technology Management and Demonstration Center (PRTMDC) here on February 21, 2019. The PRTMDC is a one-stop-shop put up by the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development Mechanization (PhilMech), an attached agency of DA based in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija.

This is the first center of this kind established and operational in the country.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Baldwin G. Jallorina, Director

IV of Phimech said that the two-storey building donated by the DA RFO 5 will be a showroom of the technologies generated and farm machineries and equipment developed by the Philmech. As training and learning site, it will offer regular postharvest and mechanization courses. It will support hands-on training, participatory exploration and computer-aided learning. Farmers can also avail of the various IEC materials on postharvest and mechanization that will be displayed in the one-stop-shop as well as witness and personally experience the operation of the machineries for test runs and demonstration.

The launching was attended by over 500 stakeholders.



Expansion areas for corn, cassava and sorghum eyed using geotagging tools



Bjorn Boris de los Santos, Geographic Information System Specialist, assists the participants on use of the Applied Geotagging Tool and #Maize Pa More application.

Regional Corn and Cassava Program Coordinator Lorenzo L. Alvina challenged Bicol's provincial coordinators and AEWs determine possible production areas for expansion of corn, cassava and sorghum, DA's new priority commodity. Sorghum is being promoted because of its rising demand in the animal feed, distilled beverage, and starch industries. Sorghum bioethanol is also valued as a substitute for gasoline.

A Planning Workshop on the Expansion of Corn, Cassava and Sorghum Areas in Bicol was attended by 90 AEWs and program coordinators.

Dr. Mary Grace DP. Rodriguez, OIC-Chief of the Field Operations Division, on the other hand, told the participants that the workshop was a proactive activity and encouraged them to open their hearts, minds, and understanding as DA ventures in sorghum production.

This 2019, DA-Bicol targets 61,987 hectares for yellow corn production;

59,105 hectares for white flint corn; 1,385 hectares for white glutinous corn; 5,574 hectares for cassava; and 10 hectares for sorghum.

The AEWs and provincial coordinators committed to achieve these targets as they identify the areas in their respective localities which are suitable for production and expansion of said crops.

Alvina promoted the use of Applied Geotagging Tool to document the expansion areas. Geotagging also known as geolocation is the practice of associating a digital resource with a physical location. The DA has been mainstreaming AGT, which uses Information and communications technology (ICT) and Global Positioning System (GPS) application to get an accurate spatial visualization of interventions. He also announced that the DA-Bicol Corn Program is currently developing an application called #Maize pa more! which can track the accurate area and location of corn production area, corn buyers,

feedmillers, seed suppliers and other stakeholders in the corn industry. Bjorn Boris de los Santos, Geographic Information System Specialist, and the technical team from the DA's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office assisted the participants in the installation and application of said technologies.

Romualdo Elvira of Palaya Eco-Farm Corp. and Agritech Jerick C. Marcaida of San Miguel Food Inc. also shared some prospects for the Bicol corn and cassava industry. Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division Staff Sarah Apuli updated the participants on the corn and cassava farmgate and retail prices while Kenneth Valencia and Michael Jordan Roquid of Agricultural

Credit Policy Council oriented them about the Production Loan Easy Access (PLEA) and Survival and Recovery (SURE) Programs.

Engr. Christopher P. Gloria, insurance underwriter from the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp., discussed the available insurance lines for farmers. Corn seeds inventory and trichogramma allocation were also discussed.

Naser Tuazon, Statistical Specialist II of Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) shared that in 2018 Bicol region's corn production reached 279,732 metric tons with a harvested area of 111,900 hectares and 2.50 metric tons per hectare yield. (**Annielyn L. Balez**)

Typhoon Usman victims get quick SURE loan

OCAMPO, CAMARINES SUR – Barely a month after typhoon Usman left Bicol, the Camalig Bank, Inc. (A Rural Bank) Ocampo branch started releasing the P25,000 SURE loan proceeds to the initial 13 beneficiaries from Sagnay, Cam. Sur.

The rural bank is a conduit of the DA –ACPC which implements SURE with the help of the DA Agribusiness Division (AMAD).

One beneficiary was Emily B. Almonte, 68 years old farmer from Turague, Sagnay, Camarines Sur.

“May surat samo ang munisipyo na mag-atend ng orientation manungod sa SURE.

Naugma ako kan mahiling ko an ngaran ko sa listahan. Nag-atendir man ako asin duman na kami nag fill up kan application form para makasali sa RSBSA tanganing maka-utang ngani sa SURE. Asin dae nahaloy, maray ta marelease na,” said Nanay Emily. (The LGU invited us for an orientation on SURE. I was happy to see my name in the list. I attended the orientation and then and there, filled up the forms for RSBA and for the loan. I did wait for long, as the bank will now release our check.)

Nauugma ako ta may pambakal na ako ki abono asin iba pang kaipuhan sa sakong paroyan. Sana dakul pa ang



matabangan kan programang ini kan DA, she added. (I am very happy because I now have money to spend on fertilizer and other needs in my farm. I hope the program could be extended to more farmers)

Nanay Emily was just one among the first batch who got their checks on that day.

Djohanna T. Alcaide, the

branch manager of the Camalig Bank, Inc. in Ocampo said that another batches of farmers will receive their loan proceeds in the succeeding weeks.

“This SURE loaning program is a very good addition

to our existing loan windows on rice, sugarcane, vegetable production and hog raising. Almost 60% of our clients here in Ocampo are farmers. Hindi totoong, ayaw ng mga magsasaka na magpunta sa bangko dahil karamihan pa nga sa mga clients namin ay galing pa sa bundok,” Alcaide argues. (**Lovella P. Guarin**)

Del barrio receives ... *(from page 1)*

electronic and science-based applications and tools in his farm and for his innovativeness in the utilization of farm machineries and equipment and modern technologies which he also shares with fellow farmers.

The awarding was held at the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) compound here on March 28 which coincided with the 25th anniversary celebration of the NSIC. Two other farmers from Visayas and Mindanao were also recognized for the same category.

Also awarded for the Outstanding Plant Nursery Operator category was Aurelio Escala from San Isidro, Victoria, Oriental Mindoro. For the Outstanding Breeding

Institution category, PhilRice central station based in Munoz, Nueva Ecija bagged the prestigious award. Both awardees for said categories also received cash prize and plaque of recognition.

Agriculture secretary Emmanuel F. Pinol was represented by Segfredo R. Serrano, Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, Regulations and Research who also delivered the keynote speech. Serrano underscored the importance of quality seed and deploras the fact that only 50% of farmers are using quality seeds. "There is need to develop a new system with the old system as back-up, he said. He also pointed out the need to establish a network for seed quality and protocols

for accreditation citing for example the State Universities and Colleges which can also earn income through a rationalization of fees. But he also said that focus must be given to audit function.

The other distinguished guests present during said event were: BPI OIC- Director George Y. Culaste; Dr. Lorna E. Herradura OIC-Asst. Director for R&D, Production Support and Administration; Gerald Glen F. Panganiban, OIC - Asst. Director for Regulatory and Operations; Dr. Sailila E. Abdula, PhilRice Executive Director; Eng. Roger Navarro, president of PhilMaize; Dr. Herminigilda A. Gabertan, Chief, Los Banos National Crop Research, Development and Production Centers, BPI; officers of the Phil. Seed

Industry Association Inc.; Dr. Santiago Obien, Dr. Ruben Villareal and other pillars and key players of the seed industry from the government, academe and private sectors.

The finalists to the search and the members of the National and Regional Evaluation Committees were also awarded with certificates of appreciation. Dr. Mary Grace DP Rodriguez who chaired the Regional Search Committee in Bicol received the award. Also with the Bicol delegation were: Maritess Reyes, Chief, National Seed Quality Control Services (Bicol); Camarines Norte Provincial Agriculturist Eng. Almirante A. Abad; Cesar Miraña, provincial rice seed inspector of Camarines Norte; and other DA 5 staff.

DA develops climate resilient ... *(from page 1)*

pineapple; fiber crops (abaca); cut flowers; coconut and fisheries.

The identified CRA practices for brackishwater aquaculture include the application of GAP; maintenance of the correct carrying capacity in stocking for these species---Bangus (3,000pc/ha), Crabs (1,000-2,000/ha), and Shrimp (100,000/ha). During rainy season, root crops, banana, papaya and vegetables can be planted above the dike.

For cutflower, use of fishnet to minimize the effect of warm weather; use of good/disease-free planting materials from accredited private nursery and facility of DA Tissue Culture Laboratory; use raised beds for proper and better drainage; use driftwoods with cement; and use coconut husk as medium for anthuriums because of good water holding capacity.

For vegetables, use of tolerant variety, provision of rainshelter for seedlings, soil sterilization, application of fungicide, mulching, irrigation,

and use of heat tolerant variety.

For irrigated ecosystem, planting of early maturing varieties; use of resistant varieties; adoption of wet seeding; alternate wetting and drying; changing of cropping calendar; construction of FBD; use of Combine Harvester; keeping abreast with the weather and climate update and advisory; early harvesting; use of rice tolerant varieties (saline varieties, GSR 11); use of modern post harvest technologies; crop rotation (from palay to mungbean); use of UVS plastics (for drying during wet season); and use of solar dryer.

For irrigated rice areas, use of rice-tolerant varieties (saline and submergence); changing of cropping calendar from the usual months to less-risky months; use stress tolerant varieties (submergence or drought resistance); use of early maturing rice varieties; use of UVS Plastic as alternative dryer; and use of ratooning technologies.

For pili, frequent

watering of seedlings; early morning/late in the afternoon application of fertilizer to make the seedlings vigorous; application of foliar fertilizer; biological control method; use of appropriate harvesting tools to ensure only matured fruits will be harvested; use of Maturity index; application of fertilizer to pili stocks; use of appropriate harvesting tools to ensure only matured fruits will be harvested; hardening and use of resistant pili varieties may reduce the risk of rate mortality; tipping and early pruning; lay-outting and contour farming; planting of shade trees or windbreaks (male pili trees); and use of bamboo/wooden palette/pili shell to avoid direct contact of pilinuts to the floor.

For Pineapple, manual weeding in the production area as soon as weeds emerge, or application of herbicides on sunny weather; Water drainage is highly recommended to flooded areas; Always check for waterlogging; and make sure to apply fertilizers or flower inducer on sunny weather.

Government agencies which sent representatives to the one-day training include Bicol University; Partido State University; LGUs of Nabua, Pamplona, Goa and Naga City; Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation; Philippine Fiber Development Authority; Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources; and the Philippine Coconut Authority. The database will lay down the series of activities for the establishment of climate information system (CIS) from the regional level down to the barangay level.

According to AMIA staff Sandy Bobier, the four LGUs were considered to be highly-vulnerable climate-risk with relatively low adaptive capacity.

The AMIA project will also be establishing protocols in the integration of CRA practices to the data of PAGASA for a 10-day weather outlook and 6-month climate outlook; and will craft CIS and mainstream it in government operations.



SAAD's native chicken interventions seen to increase farmers' income

PIO V. CORPUZ, MASBATE – Panfilo S. Gorillo, 68 years old beneficiary of the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) in barangay Lampuyang, this municipality tightly holds

the 2.2 kilo native chicken in his hands as he smiles for the camera. The native chickens, 25 heads of them, were delivered to Tatay Panfilo on December 5, 2018 by the SAAD staff after he completed the training on native chicken production.

Tatay Panfilo was very happy with the interventions he

received from SAAD as he was also able to help his neighbors. He opted to give five heads to his neighbor Rosejean Abenir. Rosejean has 5 children and small grand children who are staying with her. She looks forward to the time when the chickens start laying eggs.

Danilo Nelmidia, SAAD Area Coordinator in Pio V. Corpuz reported that for 2018, a total of 375 heads of native chicken were provided to 15 beneficiaries in Pio V Corpuz and total of 2,500 heads were distributed in the 6 municipalities that are included in SAAD program in Masbate.

Meanwhile, Dr. Mary Grace Rodriguez, SAAD

Bicol Action Officer reported that in 2018, a total of 5,450 heads of native chicken were distributed to the provinces of Masbate, Catanduanes and Sorsogon. The program targets to distribute over 5,000 heads to a new set of beneficiaries.

These native chickens may begin laying eggs on the 18th week and can lay up to 120 eggs in a year. Studies confirmed that they can lay eggs daily up to two to three years if they are well cared-for and healthy. Each beneficiary therefore is projected to get income from selling live animals, dressed chicken, breeders, hardened chicks meat or eggs. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**

DA forms loan facilitation team in 6 provinces

NAGA CITY – Following secretary Manny F. Piñol's directive to bring easy to access credit facilities to the poor farmers in the unbanked and underbanked areas, the Department of Agriculture regional field office No. 5 organized the Loan Facilitation Team (LoFT).

The LoFT's main task is to provide the needed technical assistance or support to farmers and fishers on credit awareness, loan acquisition, utilization and repayment. In Bicol the regional LoFT is headed by the OIC RTD Rodel P. Tornilla and Adelina A. Losa, Regional Agri-Credit Desk Officer as Assistant Team Leader. Members are the Agricultural Program Coordinating Officers (APCO) of the six provinces, representatives from the Planning, Field Operations, Agribusiness, and Engineering Divisions. Also included as members are the representatives of Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Philippine Crops Insurance Corp. (PCIC), Land Bank of the Phils., Provincial LGU Agri Credit Officer, and Regional Agricultural and Fishery Council (RAFC).

There are also provisional members: Phil. Fiber Development Authority (PhilFIDA), Phil. Coconut Authority (PCA) and National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

In every province, LoFT will be headed by the APCOs.

On March 13, 2019, the DA - Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) national office oriented the LoFT members of Bicol in one of the hotels in Naga City.

Romina A. Gil, Information Officer of the ACPC presented the functions and responsibilities of the loan facilitation team. Carlo Abarquez, also of ACPC, presented the different loan programs of ACPC, namely: Production Loan Easy Access (PLEA) (up to P150,000 at 6% interest per annum); Survival and Recovery Assistance (SURE) (up to P25,000 at 0% interest); Working Capital Loan (up to P5M at 6% interest per annum diminishing balance), Agri-Fisheries Machinery & Equipment Loan (open to individual borrower, up to P250,000 at 2% per annum interest). Michael Jordan Roquid, ACPC focal person in Bicol reported that as of February 2019, the ACPC has

released a total of P59.2M and P35M for SURE under 2018 funds.

Meanwhile, Amado Ersando of ACEF PMS reported that P1.44 billion was allocated for ACEF for 2019 which will be downloaded to the Land Bank. The 80% of this fund is used as credit facility for agri-based production, post production, processing machineries, equipment extended to farmers/fishers associations and cooperatives

(up to P5M); and to individual farmers (up to P1M).

Meanwhile, 10% is allotted as grant for research and development (R&D) of agri-fishery products commercialization including upgrading of R&D facilities or SUCs (up to P5M) per project. Another 10% is being used to finance scholarship grants to students taking agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and veterinary medicine being implemented by the CHED. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**



DA distributes P4.1M worth STW and pump irrigation

SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR – As a measure to cushion the adverse effect of dry spell now affecting our farmers, the Department of Agriculture Regional Field Office No. 5 led by RED Elena B. de los Santos distributed 47 units of Pump Irrigation System for Open Source (PISOS) and 3 units of Shallow Tube Wells to some 50 farmer beneficiaries from the provinces of Albay, Catanduanes, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte and Sorsogon. The PISOS was worth P3.9 million and the shallow tube wells was worth P193,191.00

The distribution was held at the covered court at the DA Compound on March 18, 2019. These initial beneficiaries included individual farmers, registered farmers' organizations and irrigators associations.

In the light of the implementation of Rice Liberalization, Director de los Santos urged the farmer recipients to support the National Food Authority



by selling a portion of their harvested palay to the latter. The NFA is currently buying at P17.00 plus P3.70 incentive (for drying and delivery) per kilo of dried palay. It also accepts fresh palay at P14.00/kilo plus P3.70 incentive.

Director de los Santos also said that to support the NFA in buying palay from the local farmers, the DA will lend its trucks, warehouses and Multipurpose Drying Pavement (MPDP) to the NFA during harvest time. The DA will also coordinate with the 37 Rice Processing Centers established by the DA all over the region if they can accommodate the

palay bought by the NFA in their areas.

She also announced that in the subsequent distribution of farm machineries and equipment to farmers, one of the requirements will be a certification from the NFA that the farmer has sold his/her palay in the last cropping season. "Ang mga Magsasaka at kooperatiba o samahan ng magsasaka na maraming naipagbiling palay sa NFA, ay makakatanggap ng mas malalaking interventions mula sa DA," Dr. De los Santos announced.

Eduardo Pacamara,

Chairperson of the Bagong Silang Organic Farmers' Association of Del Gallego, Camarines Sur was one of the recipients of the PISOS. The association which was organized in 2014 has at present over 40 members who are mostly rice farmers. "Hindi na kayang patubigan ng irigasyon ang aming 45 ektaryang palayan kaya kami ay humingi ng tulong sa DA." Meron din kaming higit 10 ektaryang sahud-ulan. Maganda itong Rice Tarrification dahil malaki ang suporta sa aming magsasaka at madali naming matanggap ang aming mga request, tulad ngayon," Pacamara enthused.

Director de los Santos said that these initial interventions were funded from the savings generated from the procurement through public bidding under Rice Program in CY 2018. While the approval of the GAA is still pending, the DA as well as other government agencies cannot yet disburse fund for current year.

As of this writing, the total agricultural area damaged by the dry spell is 8,331.48 hectares in the provinces of Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, Albay and Masbate valued at P282,670,914.55. Based on the initial reports submitted most of the areas affected were at their reproductive stage with a total of 7,275 farmers affected. (Lovella P. Guarin)

RPC recipients get P1M working capital

Five farmers cooperatives/ associations received the P1M working capital for their Rice Processing Center 1 to be used in buying palay from our local farmers.

DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Elena B. de los Santos led the turn over of checks on March 18, 2019 at the regional office.

The recipients were: Nabua Coconut Farmers Multipurpose Assn.; Nabua West Multi-Purpose Coop; Cam. Sur Multi-purpose Coop; and

Magarao Multipurpose Coop.

The DA has established a total of 37 Rice Processing Centers all over the Bicol Region. Most of it are in Camarines Sur as the province contributes more than 50% of rice production of the region.

The DA provides RPCs to duly registered farmers organizations engaged in rice farming palay/rice trading to provide them access to modern and efficient drying and milling facilities. The equity is in the form of lot with

a minimum area of 1,000 sq. m. and surrounded by more than 5,000 hectares rice area within 50-km radius.

The RPC has a multipass rice mill with 1.2 tons per hour output capacity; weighing scale; moisture meter; recirculating grain dryer with biomass furnace with a holding capacity of 6 tons of wet palay per set; 550 square meter warehouse with complete drainage, rat proofing and 3-phase line electrical system including transformers. (Lovella P. Guarin)

CSOs consulted on DA 2020 plans and budget

NAGA CITY – The Department of Agriculture in Bicol convened over 100 representatives of various stakeholders for the Civil Society Organizations Consultation on DA FY 2020 Plan and Budget Proposal in one of the hotels here on March 1, 2019.

Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria, chief of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (PMED) presented the FY 2020 budget totaling to over P8.1 billion. The biggest chunk of the budget will be allocated to the Locally Funded Projects such as Farm-to-Market Roads (P3.9 billion), Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) with P242.6 million, and the newest program of DA dubbed as 4Ks - P15 million. Meanwhile, the DA banner programs also got a huge share, to wit: Rice Program - P1.4 billion; HVCDP - P197.1 million; Livestock - P163.8 million; Corn - P126.8 million; and Organic Agriculture –P42 million. Meanwhile, HALAL program has P1 million.

Bañaria added that the proposed activities were framed according to the principle of Cash-Based Appropriations (ACBA). The ACBA is an approach that limits incurring and disbursing payments for goods delivered and services rendered, inspected and accepted within the fiscal year. The FY 2020 plans only contains projected budget requirements, activities and projects that

can be implemented and paid within the fiscal year.

The priorities for 2020 are five high impact projects namely: 1) FMR; 2) Small scale irrigation projects like Solar Powered Irrigation System; 3) Postharvest facilities for fisheries; 4) Logistics and transport facilities; 5) Easy access credit for food and agriculture production.

In anticipation to the passage of the new laws intended for the rice and coconut sub-sectors, the plan also included measures to protect local rice producers from unfair trade practices and necessary support services to raise productivity of the rice sector as laid out in the Revised Agri Tariffication Act. Also considered were initiatives to consolidate the benefits for coconut farmers and to expedite its delivery as stipulated in the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Act.

Rodel P. Tornilla, OIC Regional Technical Director for Operations and Extension discussed the draft IRR of RA 11203: An Act Liberalizing the Importation and Trading of Rice, Lifting for the Purpose of the Quantitative Import

Restriction on Rice. Fresh from Secretary Manny Piñol's briefing on Rice Tariffication for the South Luzon cluster at Lipa City, Batangas, RTD Tornilla said that with Pres. Duterte's signing of act, the Phils. will collect 35% tariff from rice coming from ASEAN member countries and 185% tariff from non-ASEAN member countries raising more funds for the government. On the other hand, rice importation and exportation will be free of tariff, what the rice traders will only need are phytosanitary permits to be issued by the Bureau of Plant Industry. The National Food Authority (NFA) was divested of its regulatory functions except maintaining the buffer stock for 15-30 days to be secured from local production of our farmers.

Tornilla added, that the farmers will ultimately benefit from the rice tariffication law with the allocation of P10 billion annual Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund (RCEF). P5 billion will go to Philmech for production of postharvest machineries and small irrigation projects; P3 billion will be given to Philrice for development and promotion of

inbred rice seeds; P1 billion will be given to DBP and Landbank for easy access loans; and P1 billion for extension activities, 70% of which will be given to TESDA.

RTD Tornilla urged those farmers organizations that have received farm machineries from DA without counterpart to support the NFA by selling a portion of their rice produce to the agency.

The consultation was attended by chairpersons of farmers' organizations, irrigators associations, rural women, representatives from the DA bureaus and attached agencies such as NFA, PCA, NIA, PSA, ATI, BFAR, PCIC, NMIS, PhiFIDA, from the academe and private sector. Representatives of the Cam. Sur Chamber of Commerce; New Hope Workers Coop for the PWD sector; investors; Provincial Agriculturists, Veterinarians; officials of the Regional Agricultural and Fishery Council (RAFC) and Provincial AFC Chairpersons. The banner program coordinators of the DA also presented their plans and budget for 2020. (**Lovella P. Guarin**)





RAFC 5 supports gender equality in governance

NAGA CITY – The Regional Agricultural and Fishery Council of Bicol “walks the talk” of Making Change Work for Women, as for the first time ever, the assembly was presided over not by its chairperson but by Ms. Rebecca S. Purisima, 2017 National 'Outstanding Rural Woman. This practice sets precedence for all Agricultural and Fishery Councils (AFCs) in the provincial and municipal levels to demonstrate that gender equality is not just to favor the women but to strike a balance and provide equality for women and men. It also recognizes the role of the private

sector in mainstreaming gender concern in the development efforts.

The occasion was held last March 28 as part of the observance of International Women’s Month. It was also witnessed by Luzon AFC awardees from Regions 1, 2, 3, 4A, 4B and Cordillera Administrative Region headed by Conchita del Rosario, Volunteer Management Section Chief of the Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF).

Highlights from the significant resolutions presented to and approved by

the council include: 1) “Urging the regional government agencies and LGUs to accelerate dissemination of Programs for Women coupled with more user-friendly templates for Project Proposal requirements, aside from, The establishment of regularly updated Regional Baseline Data on Women in Agriculture”; 2) “Advocating for the formation a Regional Cacao Industry Council and Accelerating the application of Geo-tagging and related technology to enhance implementation and monitoring of development programs of the sector”; 3) “Recommending

the inclusion of appropriate AFC representation during the Annual Plan and Budget preparations (similar to DA’s CSO Consultations) of Regional Commodity Agencies”; 4) “Endorsing the National Sectoral Committee’s resolution and disseminating the same to Bicol AFCs for contracted Caterers to serve locally produced fruits and vegetables in applicable activities”; and 5) “An urgent Proposal for a multi-stakeholder regional collaboration for more effective implementation of strategies on African Swine Fever Prevention”

(Please turn to page 17)

DA Bicol braces up ... *(from page 1)*

In order to maximize production, the DA will be distributing certified and hybrid palay seeds and fertilizers to rice farmers; open pollinated corn flint; glutinous & hybrid corn and GM seeds and fertilizers to corn farmers; lowland vegetable seeds including legumes such as mungbean and flower inducers.

Under the second strategy which will address saving production in vulnerable areas DA Bicol proposes to provide fuel subsidy. It has requested the DA central office for a budget for this amounting to P28million. Moreover, it targets to install an additional 200 units of Pump Irrigation from Open Sources (PISOS). To forestall pest infestation pesticides, insecticides and

fungicides will be distributed to rice farmers. Similarly for corn farmers and HVCDP fuel subsidy, distribution of PISOS are being considered as interventions along with distribution of sprinklers and HDPE pipes and plastic drums for HVCDP farmers.

The occurrence of El Nino might also cause heat stress to livestock and poultry production as well as affect the pasture areas for small and large ruminants. The regional office has thus buffer stocked vitamins, biologics, dewormers. It has also provision for feed supplements.

In addition, DA Bicol is promoting and positioning drought tolerant varieties like the Green Super Rice (GSR lines) and other NSIC varieties.

It is also promoting drought mitigating technologies such as the Alternate Wet and Drying Method, ratooning, silage making, drip irrigation, mulching etc. It will intensify its irrigation support for small irrigation systems such as the Shallow Tube Wells, Small Water Impounding Projects, Diversion dams, solar pump, wind pump, drip irrigation, drums etc. It is also fast tracking the Implementation of the Solar Powered Irrigation Project. To date there are already 3 of these now operational in Cam. Sur. Two more will soon be operational.

To date there are unofficial reports reaching the regional office reports that Castilla town in Sorsogon. San Fernando in Cam. Sur and Libon in Albay

are already experiencing long dry spell with below normal rainfall. According to the Agricultural Program Officer (APCO) Masbate, Wilfredo Nelmidia, 45% of their province is already affected by the long dry spell.

Although cloud seeding is being considered also as an option. this is not recommended to all areas. In Masbate for example cloud seeding may affect the mango plantations there which is now an emerging industry. Aside from being expensive because it needs a chartered plane and fuel is costly, cloud seeding is also dependent on the presence of clouds in an area and vulnerable to wind direction.

DA treats women clients on international women's day

MAGARAO, CAM. SUR – Over 100 women entrepreneurs and women leaders of various women-led associations such as Rural Improvement Clubs and DA-PCW Great Women project beneficiaries joined the celebration of the national Women's Day on March 8, 2019 at Sonrisa Farm in Barangay Carangcang of this municipality.

Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria, Chief of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division and DA 5 GAD focal person said that this year's, theme "We make change work for women" which is being used from 2017-2022, the celebration shall focus on strengthening

efforts to improve and track the progress of implementation of the Magna Carta of Women and other laws promoting women empowerment.

Globally, March 8 is also celebrated as International Women's Day. This year's international theme "Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change." According to the UN Women, a global champion for women and girls, achieving a gender-equal world requires social innovations and should start with ensuring that women's needs and experiences are integrated in our technologies and innovations.

Women's day for employees

Meanwhile on March 13, 2019, 80 women employees joined the Women's Day celebration to treat them with the relaxing rural ambience and delicious food of Sonrisa Farm.

Peter Theodore P. Caro-Secretary of the Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Council (RAFC) 5 in his Impression, Research and Reflection (IRR) about women, cited that women are less

inclined to choose Science and Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) than men do. CHED reports 2.6%, TESDA 36 % of IT and ICT enrollees respectively, are female. The International Labor Organizations (ILO) identified the challenges which hinder the Filipino women to find interest in STEM such as lack of awareness of the modern technology and only a few

role models to look up to. "Kailangan ng kababaihan ang STEM to adapt to the shifting career pathways," he added. The ILO further reported that women are 140% more likely to lose their job than men because of automation, Caro added.

Another topic discussed during the said event was the Republic Act 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees by Jaymar Azagra-Human Resource Specialist II of Civil Service Commission, Camarines Sur Field Office. Meanwhile, Shyla Joy R. Bernal-Dumalasa, Legal Staff of SALIGAN (Sentrong Alternatibong Lingap Panligal) Bicol discussed the Manifestations of Gender Bias and Republic Act 9710 Magna Carta

families. Meanwhile, Atty. Armin Gomez from the Naga City Legal Office discussed RA 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women.

Women who were recipients of national awards also shared their inspiring experiences. They are Angelita Cerillo, 2018 Gawad Saka national outstanding Corn Farmer; Josephine Artiaga, national outstanding Rural Woman 2018 (2nd runner up); and Yolanda De Leon, president of Rural Improvement Club (RIC) of Bacacay, Gubat, Sorsogon – 2016 national Gawad Saka Outstanding RIC. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**

of Women. Dumalasa also explained the Expanded Maternity Leave Law which gives working mothers 105 days of paid maternity leave.

The highlight of the event was the #JuanaSaysChallenge contest where the participants were given 5 minutes to think of words that will complete the #JuanaSays. The first place was bagged by the employees from the Central Bicol Experiment Station (CBES) with their hashtag "#JuanaSays Always be the first great version of yourself rather than a second great version of others." Second placer was the "#JuanaSays If the wife is empowered, life will be easier for the men" from the Albay Experiment Station. Third place went to ILD (Integrated Laboratories Division) with the "#JuanaSays Empowered women build happy homes." The Winners received a gift from PMED. **(Zandra Abogado)**



El Niño: Bane for some farmers, boon for others

By Emily B. Bordado

For most farmers the El Niño phenomenon or long dry spell is a bane – it can only bring about distress, harm and damage especially for agricultural crops and even livestock. But for some farmers this weather disturbance could also be a boon or an advantageous and favorable opportunity. Thus, for some 36 farmers in the town of Magarao in Camarines Sur province the dry spell opened new opportunities for them to shift from palay to watermelon for this dry cropping season.

A rice farmer from Barangay Casuray of the same municipality who has shifted to watermelon production this cropping season is Dante Agorita who is also the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Management Officer (MDRRMO). He shares that as the MDRRMO he has been learning and discussing about disaster mitigation and resiliency. He gave testimony that one can indeed be resilient in the face of unfavorable or adverse weather condition. “Ngayon napatunayan ko na pwede talaga tayong maging resilient, Kahit may EL Nino natuto ang mga magsasaka na maka cope at mag isip ng ibang diskarte”, he pointed out.

He has two parcels of rice land where he planted watermelon. The first one was about

1.27 hectares and the other one was about 1 hectare. He also started planting in February and bought 10 cans of hybrid watermelon seeds. He also bought 10 bags of fertilizers. From the first parcel of land he harvested about 1,100 pieces of super jumbo sized (10 kgs up) and 2,200 pieces of jumbo sized (5kgs up) watermelon were harvested and loaded in four (4) ten-wheeler trucks and earned him an income of over P200 thousand. His other parcel of land with watermelon has yet to be harvested but already a buyer has contracted to buy all the yield from this lot.

Meanwhile, Frisco Bedrero Jr. of the same barangay revealed that he earned a gross income of P290,000 from his 3-hectare rice field and another P280,000 from his other one-hectare parcel of lot or an aggregate total of about P570,000 gross income or a net income of about P400,000 plus.

Not to be outdone, the barangay chairman himself Tomas Civico also ventured into watermelon production this cropping season knowing that rice production would be quite risky as the threat of El Niño looms. It's as if he hit the jackpot as he obtained the highest gross income of about P715,000 from his 3.2 hectares. He spent about P195,000 for

the inputs and labor. Thus, his net income was a whopping P520,000 plus.

A seasoned watermelon farmer Kapitan Sebico has learned some good practices and strategies. While most of his fellow farmers simply abandon left overs or the small-sized melons (called by the locals as “buraot”) after the first big harvest, he again applies fertilizers and regularly water these watermelon rejects. After 10 to 15 days these melons will have grown into jumbo size and ready for selling again. He also observed that over fertilization results to the cracking of the fruit, thus he ensures that he only applies the right amount. The other farmers in the barangay have adopted this practice.

The farmers in the area have dug a well in a portion of their farm from which they draw water to water the melons. A labourer is paid P300 daily to water the plants. Two laborers are needed for a hectare. A weeder is also being paid about the same amount to cut the grasses and weeds using a grass cutter.

“Nung unang nalaman naming na magkakaroon ng El Niño, medyo natakot kami



Farmer Dante Agorita who is also the Mun. Disaster Risk Reduction Mgt. Officer explains that adverse weather condition like El Niño could be mitigated and could even be turned to something positive.

kasi inisip kaagad namin na malulugi kami o hindi kami makakapagtatanim ng palay at wala kaming patubig. Nung natiyak naming na talagang hindi na maiiwasan ang El Niño nagdesisyon kami na mag tanim na lang ng watermelon kasi base sa experience namin nag thrive ang watermelon kahit walang tubig.’ This is what Arnulfo Bermas, a rice farmer and designated Local Farmer Technician (LFT) by the Department of Agriculture shared about his experience in melon production in the upland barangay of Carangcang. Bermas who is also the chairperson of the Municipal Agriculture and Fishery Council reasoned out that if he would not be able to plant and

Farmers Dante Agorita, Frisco Bedrea, Jr. and Tomas Civico proudly show off the super jumbo watermelon which weighed about 21 kls.



Happy farmers of Bgy. Casuray show off the super jumbo watermelon.



harvest palay this cropping he has at least a fall back.

Thus, he planted watermelon, the sugar baby variety in his rice field measuring .75 hectares in the upland barangay of Carangcang. Comes 2nd week of May he will start harvesting. Already a buyer has contracted to buy (pakyaw scheme) all good sized watermelon to be harvested from his farm at a prize of P90,000. The buyer along with his hired laborers will come over on the date of harvest and he will be paid right there and then. He estimates that he spent about P30,000 for seeds, fertilizers and man-say labourers he hired to water the plants. He applied 3 bags Urea and 3 bags 14-14-14 fertilizers.

It was several years ago when a long dry spell also hit Camarines Sur and a handful of farmers decided to venture into watermelon production. The venture proved to be very encouraging and promising so the following years more farmers were encouraged to go into melon production after harvesting rice from November to December. Most of the ricefields are not irrigated but as the barangay is located near the Bicol river and the water table is shallow water can be accessed from wells dug around the ricefields. Soon barangay Casuray and the neighboring barangays became known for its sweet watermelon and viajeros from Metro Manila

and nearby provinces would troop to the area to buy truck loads of watermelon.

The once unknown and sleepy barangay suddenly became a buzz with activity as several ten-wheeler trucks would go to and stay from some days in the barangay while the watermelon are being harvested and loaded. This went on for some years but there came a time when aphids and "hanep" infested most of the watermelon farms and many farmers incurred big losses.



A jeep load of large watermelon is worth P42,000 to P45,000 while a truckload could load about 1,100 pieces of extra jumbo watermelon weighing 10 kgs up valued at P110,000 to P130,000. For large size watermelon (weighing 5 kgs up) about 2,000 to 2,200 pcs could be loaded.



For some time farmers had stopped planting watermelon. But then again there were a handful of enterprising farmers who ventured into watermelon production whenever there is a forecast of El Nino or long dry spell. But over the past two years the weather pattern in the area somehow changed. Above normal rains would come even on the first quarter of the year which greatly affected the melon production. The unpredictability of the rainfall pattern discouraged farmers to plant melon.

But with the forecast of a long

dry spell and occurrence of El Nino during the 1st quarter and up to the 2nd quarter of this year, some farmers were emboldened to venture into watermelon production again. According to Annie Mancita, the Acting Municipal Agriculturist, there were 36 farmers who ventured into melon production this cropping covering about 54 hectares. The potential area for watermelon production in the municipality is about 200

hectares.

Aside from providing additional income (of about three times more than they were earning from rice production) melon production has also provided



Municipal Agriculturist Anicia Mancita explains how watermelon production started in their town and what is its potential and prospects. Lower photo is Arnulfo Bernas. LFT & MAFC Cair



be risk takers. "Kelangan tayong mga magsasaka marunong dumiskarte. Huwag tayong magpatalo sa El Niño o anum na sakuna. Kahit kami nalugi ng ilang beses hindi kami natakot na sumubok at sumabak uli," says Agorita. they echoed. And as precaution most of them have their watermelon crops insured by the PCIC.

We can learn some lessons from these farmers in this time when we are faced with this El Niño phenomenon. Let us remember that there are many negative and also positive seeds. The best thing to do is for us to avoid watering the negative seeds. Instead let us identify the positive seeds, water and nurture them so we have a good harvest. Let us be like these farmers who are resilient and who see opportunity in every difficulty instead of seeing difficulty in



The author interviewing the watermelon farmers of barangay Casuray

Bicol GREAT Women Project 2 enrollees embark on an entrepreneurial exchange program

by Lovella P. Guarin

To scale up women-led micro enterprises by exposing them to flourishing business and large corporations, the Department of Agriculture (DA) RFO 5 GREAT Women Project 2 (GWP2) brought 20 enterprising women on an entrepreneurial exchange program in Regions 1 and Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) on February 11-16.

The group was led by Aloha Gigi I. Banaria, Gender and Development (GAD) focal person of DA RFO 5. Aside from the women entrepreneurs enrolled under the GWP2, two outstanding rural women of the region also joined the trip.

The first stop was Sagada, Mt. Province, a 5th class municipality nestled in a valley (Central Cordillera Mountains) 7,000 feet above sea level. Mayor James B. Pooten, Jr. said that weaving is the major industry in Sagada, but it is now being overtaken by tourism as it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country today. Sagada is famous for cold temperature and amazing clusters of rice terraces which are really a feast for the eyes.

Nevertheless, the GWP 2 group interviewed Raymunda Kilowan, a master weaver and owner of Katagowan souvenir

shop located at the town proper. The shop sells woven bags, wallets, and other souvenir items. A clay artisan Tessie Baldo of Sagada Pottery demonstrated her skills in creating beautiful pottery using local clay blended with glazing materials like minerals and pine ash. Her distinctly Sagada stonewares are favorite exhibit pieces in pottery shows and festivals in Baguio City, Subic, Manila and other areas of the country.

In Guisad, Baguio City, the group dropped by Easter Weaving Room, Inc., one of the oldest stores in Baguio. It was established in 1908, and is owned by the Phil. Episcopal Church. The store has weaving area at the ground floor where tourists can watch the 25 weavers (21 are female) in action on their looms, while the second floor is an expansive display area of all kinds of indigenous textiles and beautifully made hand woven materials like bags, placemats, wall hangings, rugs, religious garments, footwears and wooden sculptures. Virginia T. Doligas, the General Manager said that the company is also helping weavers from other areas of the country as it serves as One-Stop Shop of their



One of the weavers at the Easter Weaving Room, Inc. in Baguio City.

products. The company is also recruiting interested weavers and conducts training (with a minimum pay of P475/day) for prospective weavers. Presently, it has contract with over 10 housewives to do the sewing and embroideries. Doligas also said that they need pineapple fiber for their products as some customers are looking for pinya cloth, but she could not find such fiber in the market.

Incidentally, one of the Bicol delegations who joined the tour was Beverly Medrano, secretary of the Labo Progressive Multipurpose Coop (LPMC) of Camarines Norte which is engaged in pineapple fibers production and processing. Seizing the opportunity, Medrano promised to submit samples of the LPMC pineapple fibers to the Easter Weaving Room, Inc. as soon as possible.

The group also visited the Benguet State University (BSU) in Baguio City. Lorna Daud, 67 year old wine connoisseur and producer of Lipote and mango wines under the brand "Yulaik Food Products" was happy to see her products displayed for sale at the BSU souvenir shop. Having a mango plantation in Tinambac, Cam. Sur with 1,000 trees, Daud is

continuously experimenting on different fruit extracts and recently put up a showroom of wines in Naga City funded by Bureau of Agricultural Research. She has also tied up with the DA Research Division and pioneered the commercialization of the Rimas ice cream which also carries her 'Yulaik' brand.

In Pangasinan, the group was impressed by the multi-billion peso Pilot Bamboo Manufacturing Plant in Amanperez, in Bayambang town which mainly produces bamboo floorboard. This is project of the CS First Green Agri-Industrial Development,



Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria, DA 5 GAD focal person talks with Virginia T. Doligas, the General Manager of the Easter Weaving Room, Inc. in Baguio City.



Lorna Daud (2nd from right) poses with her product displayed at Benguet State University in Baguio.

Rice seed grower is national outstanding farmer innovator

by Lovella P. Guarin

Gil N. Del Barrio, rice seed grower of Barangay Lag-on, Daet, Camarines Norte was conferred by the National Seed Industry Council (NSIC) as Outstanding Innovator for Seed Grower category for Luzon for which he received a plaque and cash prize of P50,000. The awarding ceremonies was held on March 28, 2019 at the BPI, Malate, Manila during the 25th NSIC anniversary celebration.

Del Barrio, 53 years old, is regarded in Cam. Norte as an innovator, strong advocate of rice mechanization and utilization of high quality seeds, a persistent researcher, Magsasaka Siyentista and successful entrepreneur.

In his 31 years in farming he has ventured into rice and vegetable production, tilapia culture, poultry and swine raising. It was in 2011 that he started producing rice seeds with the help of PhilRice and started sending palay seeds to the National Seed Quality Control Service for laboratory analysis. News about his success in seed production has spread fast and wide and he



has been deluged with a lot of orders.

He consistently searches for new technologies thru attendance to trainings; participates in Lakbay Aral and regularly browses the internet. Among the PhilRice Apps he uses daily are AgriDOC App, MOET App, the Binhing Palay App, and e-Damuhan app. He has also been using the Field Area Measure app although it has yet to be launched by PhilRice. This app which features geotagged locations of rice farmers helped him a lot in his business. He has also completed the National Seed

Training Course on In-Bred Rice Production, Certification and Quality Control for Seed Growers conducted by the DA NSQCS in Bicol.

He uses the top 5 rice varieties recommended by PhilRice Bicol like NSIC RC 222, 216, 238, 300 and NSIC RC 160 during wet cropping seasons. In dry months, he plants NSIC RC 346 or Sahod Ulan 11 which is a stress – resistant mutant rice.

During the dry season of 2017, he produced an average yield of 150 bags rice seeds per hectare. In the wet season of 2017, he produced

an average of 120 bags per hectare. With the earnings he derived from six years of seed production, he was able to purchase one unit of 4-Wheel Drive Tractor; 2 units Hand Threshers; 2 units Hand Tractor; one unit rice planter; and one unit Combine Harvester. At present, he owns 4 units of combine harvester which he acquired through loans.

He provides the services of these farm machineries and equipment to his fellow farmers with a minimum rental fee. He also imparts his technical knowledge on rice farming and entrepreneurship to other farmers as he is often invited as speaker on those topics by the DA Bicol, the Agricultural Training Institute, and various farmers' cooperatives.

One innovation which has tremendously benefitted him is the improvised dryer which he can use even during rainy season. He also installed a lifter at the back of the 4 wheel drive tractor instead of rotavator to haul and transfer the harvested palay.

He was conferred as Magsasaka Siyentista by the DOST – PCAARRD. He is also the Chairperson of Camarines Norte Seed Growers; an active member of Ambos Camarines and MASIKAP Multipurpose Cooperatives; P4MP and PARCOM; and cooperator of the PhilRice Rice Seed System project in Bicol.

He received various awards such as Dangal ng Daet Award as Outstanding Farmer in 2010; and Regional Gawad Saka Outstanding Rice Farmer in 2008.

With the challenges the rice industry is facing today, the likes of Gil Del Barrio who has spent his life perfecting his craft of producing quality rice seeds and making it available and affordable for the Bicolano farmers, Mang Gil truly deserves to be hailed as 2018 National Outstanding Seed Grower.

Inc. Bernard O. Bawing, the OIC President of the company said that once fully operational the plant will employ over a hundred manpower, will need 27, 500 bamboo poles per month to manufacture 3,432 strand woven block and 7,069 square meter floor board in a month. Bawing added that the plant was a brainchild of current Mayor Cesar T. Quiambao of Bayambang who got the technology from China. To support the need for the raw materials, which is Kawayang Tinik, a bamboo nursery plantation R&D project covering 300 hectares of bamboo plantation was established in Sitio Mapita, Laoag Aguilar, Pangasinan.

In Bauang, La Union, the

Bicol delegation visited a grapes (red cardinal variety) vineyard owned by Lomboy family. The farm was established in 1972 by the late Avelino Lomboy, who was known in the 1980's as Grape King of the Phils. Today, under the stewardship of the daughter, Gracia Lomboy, the farm continues to pioneer and innovate not just agricultural techniques in grape production but also in agri-tourism, being the first DOT accredited Agritourism site in region 1. The farm is selling grape fruits, planting materials and wines and marmalades. They also accept on-the-job trainees even from far flung areas and in-house training.

Seeing the potential of grapes as income earner and as

added attraction in the farms, Bañaria arranged for some of the women farmers and entrepreneurs to undergo an extensive training on grape production at the Lomboy's farm this year to start cultivating this berry in the Bicol region. Grace Lomboy is also collaborating with some of the GWP2 beneficiaries for the supply of their products such as Yulaik's wine, H.G.Q. handicrafts, and other GWP2 products from Bicol to add to their showroom collection.

Bicol region is one of the pilot areas of the GREAT Women Project 2, together with Region 2 and Region 6. GREAT stands for Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women.

Corn program puts up model farm for white corn in Masbate

CATAINGAN, MASBATE – A 50-hectare model farm of white corn stretching across seven barangays is found in this town of Masbate province. This is a pilot project of the DA Corn Program in Bicol to increase production and promote the consumption of white corn as staple food. Established in the last quarter of 2018, the corn crops are in tasseling stage as of this writing.

The Corn Program provided the seeds (Var 6 at 1 bag per hectare), fertilizer, hauling truck and one unit 4-wheel drive tractor to the Estampar farmers association which manages the model farm while the Municipal Agriculture Office extended fertilizer assistance to over 20 farmer-cooperators.

Municipal Agriculturist Wilfredo C. Melendres expressed his appreciation to the DA for the farm machineries



provided to them in the past years. The DA has turned over two (2) units 4-wheel drive tractors which were granted to farmers' associations such as the Estampar farmers association and Quezon Cassava Farmers Association, both based in Cataingan.

Melendres disclosed that corn is a major agricultural commodity in Cataingan as it is staple food for the 50,327 population (2015 census). As of January 2019, there is a total of over 4,000 hectares of corn areas in Cataingan, out of the 17,773 hectares agricultural area. White corn is also

the staple food in the towns found in the 3rd district of Masbate. Over 9,000 farmers are cultivating a total of 9,083 hectares of white corn areas in the whole province.

Lorenzo Alvina, Regional Corn Program Coordinator said that Corn Model Farm is a priority project of the National Corn Program to facilitate the entry of rice-corn blend in the local market. The infusion of corn component into our staple food supply is seen to effectively cover whatever shortage we have in grains. The DA Bicol has provided the farm inputs like fertilizer, soil

ameliorants and bio-control agents for free. They will also return one (1) bag of corn seeds for every bag of seed given to them, to be given to next in line beneficiaries. The model farm is also being monitored constantly as important data such as yield and farm practices are being collected.

White corn is milled into corn grits and used as alternative for cooked rice, or mixed with rice at a ratio of 70 % rice and 30% corn. This rice-corn blend is now being sold in some malls nationwide. (**Lovella P. Guarin**)

Farmers Field School on IPM Corn culminates in Masbate

CATAINGAN, MASBATE. After 16 weeks of schooling, more than 30 farmers from barangay Estampar of this province were confirmed graduates of the Climate Farmers Field School for IPM Corn by municipal mayor Atty Felipe Cabataña on Feb 26, 2019.

The Farmers Field School (FFS) was conducted by the Department of Agriculture Bicol thru the Regional Corn Program in collaboration with the Local Government Unit and barangay officials. The FFS started during the last quarter of 2018 and culminated this February. The lessons focused on Corn production Technology, its management practices which help them understand and manage complex agro ecosystem so that they can cope with the challenges on climate

change.

Through field observation, simple experiment and group analysis, the participants learned new things and come up with their specific decision about crop management practices.

"Himuong dapat mahimo" (do what you have to do) said mayor Felipe Cabataña. I am proud that my municipality was chosen by the DA as beneficiary of worth P3 million corn model farms established in various remote areas of barangay Estampar. He lauded the agricultural workers for providing technical assistance despite the risk. "Because of this, our municipality became popular." As our way of support and counterpart, our municipality with the approval



of the sanggunian members has allocated P8 million fund for fertilizer and other farm inputs." The municipality of Cataingan considers white corn as a staple food.

Also present during the event were: George Gonzales Jr. Vice Mayor; Wilfredo Melendrez, Municipal Agriculturist; Wilfredo Nelmda, Sr. Agriculturist; Jaime Arcenal, Barangay Captain; SB members, Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs), Barangay officials and DA Corn Program technical team.

In behalf of the participants, Delfin Argawanon, CFFS President, conveyed a message of gratitude during the folk media presentation. The DA Corn Program technical group also extended a message of encouragement to share what they have learned to other farmers and assured the participants of the agency's support and interventions. Field visits to model farms in various areas were also conducted on the same and following day. (**Blesilda A. Nuñez**)

DA trains recipients of combine harvester and 4WD tractors

NABUA, CAMARINES SUR – In its aggressive implementation of rice mechanization program, the Department of Agriculture provides farm machineries and equipment to eligible farmers' associations either through grant or counterparting scheme. The major responsibility of the recipient is to ensure that these machineries are always in good condition for their optimum utilization and benefits.

Thus, the DA RFO 5 in coordination with the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) is conducting training on basic operations and proper maintenance of those machineries.

On March 18-22, 2019, a total of 25 operators of 4Wheel drive tractors and combine harvesters attended the 5-day training on basic operations and maintenance of said machineries held in Macagang Business Center in Nabua, Camarines Sur.

Engr. Joseph Corporal Jr. and John Mark Licot of Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (Philmech) discussed the operations and maintenance of combine harvester, flatbed dryer and rice mill; occupational

health and safety measures in farm operations.

Representatives from the Aims Agri Ventures, Inc. also discussed the warranty terms. These combine harvesters make harvesting easier by combining



six operations such as reaping, gathering, transporting, threshing, cleaning, bagging into one machine and reduces grain loss to less than 1%. It can harvest 3 hectares of rice field per day at 8 hours per day of operation. A DC-35 model combine harvester consumes 6 liters of diesel per hour, while DC-60 and DC-70 consume 8-9 liters of diesel per hour.

The recipients of the 15 units combine harvesters worth P1M/unit granted by the DA in 2018 who sent a representative to said training were: Strategic Agro-Industrial

Lofty Tech. Marketing Coop of Tabaco, Albay; Nagkakaisang Magsasaka ng San Vicente Libon, Albay; Hibiga Ris (WMPA) IA, Inc. of Balinad, Polangui, Albay; At. Anthony Farmers Coop, Inc. of Mambulo Nuevo, Libmanan, Cam. Sur; Baliuag Viejo Farmers Assn. of Minalabac, Cam. Sur; St. Michael Farmers Association of Pamplona, Cam. Sur; Calabanga Organic Producers Coop of Cam. Sur; Naga City

unit granted by the DA in 2018 were: Catbadian Irrigators Association (IA) of Oas, Albay; Guisican Multi-purpose Cooperative of Labo, Cam. Norte; Patson Del Pilar Farmers SWISA Inc. of San Fernando, Cam. Sur; Rural Agrarian Reform Coop of Libmanan, Cam. Sur; Matatag na Samahan ng Magsasaka Coop of Ocampo, Cam. Sur; Cam. Sur MPC; San Jose Farmers Association of Iriga City;

North District IA, Inc. of Pacol, Naga City; San Antonio Farmers Irrigators MPC of Buhi, Cam. Sur; Macalinao Farmers Marketing Coop of Bula, Cam. Sur; Patson Del Pilar Farmers SWISA Inc. of San Fernando, Cam. Sur; Cam. Sur MPC; Libjo-San Pedro-Talisay Irrigators Services Assn. of Catanduanes; Bagacay Cabungalan Farmers Assn. of Gubat, Sorsogon; and Gabao Samahang Nayon MPC of Irosin, Sorsogon.

Meanwhile, the recipients of the 10 units four wheel drive tractor worth P950,000/

Lanang Farmers Association of Aroroy, Masbate; Siuton Irrigators Farmers Consumers Coop and Biga Farmers and Fishermen Association of Magallanes, Sorsogon; Capuy Basud MPC of Sorsogon City.

To be eligible for the combine harvester, the farmers' association must have a coverage of at least a cluster of 100 hectares rice area. To be eligible for mini combine harvester, the association must have at least a cluster of 30 hectares rice area. Proponent association must also be an accredited CSO by the DA. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**

RAFC 5 supports gender ... *(from page 10)*

These outputs were contributed by the various sectoral and working committees who reported their respective updates and accomplishments: Bernadette delos Santos for the Fruits and Vegetable Sector; Carina V. Arellano for the women sector; P. Theodore D. Caro for Livestock and Poultry; Jose R. Cordero for the cacao sector; Benedicto A. Palmares for the

Fiber Crops Sector; and Atty. Filemon B. Montenegro for the Membership Development Committee.

In behalf of DA Bicol OIC Regional Technical Director for Operations and Extension, Rodel P. Tornilla, the updates on Rice Competitive Enhancement Program and El Nino mitigation program were reported by Ara Nicole Nicolas, DA Rice Program

Report Officer.

The assembly was attended by over 60 AFC leaders and volunteers headed by RAFC Chair Alfredo R. Rillo and RAFC Executive Officer Aloha Gigi I. Banaria together with commodity sectoral leaders from the six provinces and the independent component city of Naga. Also present were representatives from DA attached agencies, namely:

Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), National Food Authority (NFA), PhilFIDA, and BFAR. Other partner agencies such as Landbank and DAR were also represented. **(Lovella P. Guarin with TD Caro)**

employees step up fire safety, disaster preparedness

"Naging successful an satuyang drill ngonian... Magayunon na marhay su pag-evacuate." This is the general observation of SFO1 Joey Ricky Cezar, Chief of the Bureau of Fire Protection's (BFP)-Pili Fire Safety Section, after conducting the 1st Quarter Earthquake and Fire Drill at the Department of Agriculture-Bicol Compound in Brgy. San Agustin Pili, Camarines Sur on March 7, 2019. BFP-Pili gave the office nine out of 10 (Satisfactory) rating based on its point criteria for the drill phases namely incident/ alarm, mobilization, and demobilization phase.

Led by OIC Regional Technical Director for Operations and Extension Rodel P. Tornilla as OIC-Building Disaster Risks Reduction Management Group (BDRRMG) Incident Commander, 220 DA-Bicol employees and clients simulated the six phases of an earthquake drill: alarm, response, evacuation, assembly, head count/ accounting, and evaluation

after hearing a loud 60-second siren which represented an earthquake.

Tornilla ordered that the drill be conducted at an unannounced time to thoroughly assess the employees' capacity and readiness in times of natural hazards and disasters. Members of the BDRRMG including the Assistant Incident Commander and various teams such as Security/Crowd Control; Transportatio; Supply; Communication; Warning; Evacuation; Firefighting; Search and Rescue; First Aid; Salvage; and Damage Assessment team composed of representatives from various divisions and sections of DA-Bicol were activated during the earthquake drill. The BDRRMG also practiced their fire suppression skills.

SFO1 Joey Ricky Cezar, Chief of the BFP-Pili Fire Safety Section, led the evaluation of the DA-Bicol's disaster awareness and preparedness pursuant to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC's) Memorandum



Circular for 2019 National Quarterly Earthquake and Fire Drill, which aims to prepare and gauge the efficiency of warning dissemination and level of preparedness of offices and surrounding communities when an actual earthquake occurs, to train its personnel on the actual exercise of "duck, cover and hold" concept, and to test and evaluate the office's contingency plans. Together with him were Fire Officer (FO) 3 Aniano Layosa Jr., FO2 Ramon Sambo Jr., FO1

Gaudencio Atanacio Jr., and FO1 Eric James Bañadera.

The activity was also conducted to strengthen its zero-casualty advocacy during disasters in line with the Fire Prevention Month celebration.

The BDRRMG identified two safe zones for all employees when disasters occur such as the open spaces in front of the Administration Building and at the back of the Central Bicol Experiment Station (BEST). (**Annielyn L. Baleza**)



Rabies Awareness Month

Pets get free vaccination, castration



PILI CAMARINES SUR. Rabies is a deadly viral disease that is often spread to humans through the bite of an infected animal. In observance of the Rabies Awareness Month this March, the Department of Agriculture in Bicol through the Regulatory Division and in partnership with other Institutions, conducted a one day free rabies vaccination, neutering, spaying, deworming and consultation for dogs and cats at the DA compound on March 29, 2019.

A total of 95 dogs and cats, some were cross breeds but most were aspins (asong pinoy) from nearby barangays and municipalities availed for the free service. 52 dogs and cats were vaccinated, 18 were neutered and spayed, while 34 were dewormed. Said services were performed by veterinarians from the Department of

Agriculture (DA-5), Central Bicol State University of Agriculture (CBSUA), Philippine Veterinary Medical Association (PVMA) Bicol Chapter, Camarines Sur Provincial office, and LGU Pili.

"Animals are not human beings but they have also feelings" said Dr. Edgar Madrid, Regional Technical Director for Research & Regulations. "Animals deserve to be treated like humans, it is the responsibility of pet owners to subject them for vaccination and administer other needs such as vitamins" he said.

Meanwhile, Raymund Marcelino, Chief of the Regulatory division welcomed all pet owners to be part of the activity. "This is one way of eliminating rabies and enhance prevention by way of vaccination" he said. Dogs and cats with health issues were also brought in for free consultations. Marcelino calls for responsible pet ownership and be an advocate for the prevention of this deadly disease. Freebies such as dog soap and vitamins were also given during the day. (**Blesilda A. Nuñez**)

Agri Chief interacts with and extends assistance to calamity stricken Bicol farmers

LIBON, ALBAY - With the Bicol region having the highest death toll and damage on agriculture, Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol of the Department of Agriculture rushed to the region on the first working day of the year to personally inspect the areas heavily affected by Typhoon Usman and confer with local officials and farmers. He was accompanied by Ret. Commodore Eduardo B. Gongona, Undersecretary for Fisheries and Jocelyn Alma Badiola, Executive Director of the Agriculture Credit Policy Council (ACPC).

He first went to Masbate City where he interacted with some 500 farmers and local officials as part of his "Byaheng Bukid" or provincial sorties where he intends to bring the government closer to the people. He then turned over agri -assistance consisting of production inputs & farm equipment amounting to over P16 million. He was met there by DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Elena B. de los Santos and the two Regional Technical Directors-Edgar Madrid and Rodel Tornila, Masbate City Mayor Rowena B. Tuason.

Sec. Manny F. Piñol had a selfie with a farmer during his Byaheng Bukid in Libon, Albay.



From there the team flew to Libon, Albay and conferred with mayor Wilfredo Maronilla and interacted with about a thousand farmers leaders, local officials heads of DA attached agencies, and municipal agriculturists and extension workers who gathered at the municipal gymnasium here.

Easy Access (PLEA) Programs. Under the Survival and Recovery Assistance (SURE) Loan Program, an emergency loan assistance of P5,000 will be immediately provided to farmers affected by a calamity to buy their basic needs. An additional P20,000 recovery loan assistance will likewise

waiting for them to bring palay to their buying stations.

On same occasion the DA turned over interventions and assistance to 15 municipalities and 3 cities agricultural interventions and assistance totaling to over P3.5 million. These include certified palay seeds, open pollinated variety white corn seeds, assorted vegetable seeds; ducks, cattle, turkey, and native pigs.

As of this writing the partial damage report wrought by Typhoon Usman in the agriculture sector for the six provinces of Bicol is valued at almost P600 million with 29,114 farmers affected covering an area of 30,240 hectares of these 23,953 hectares are rice areas; 5,686 are corn areas and 550 hectares are vegetables and high value crops.

On his second day in Bicol he had also a meeting with Albay Governor Al Francis Bichara, who is also the Regional Development Council (RDC) chair. He also met with the regional executive directors from the four affected regions that is: CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, Bicol and Eastern Visayas together with Christopher Morales, DA chief, Field Programs Operations and Planning Division to firm up the rehabilitation plan for the affected farmers and fisherfolk. He later joined President Rodrigo Duterte who came over to Camarines Sur to also visit the affected areas and meet with the local officials. **(Emily B. Bordado)**



Sec. Piñol interacted with the farmers in Masbate and turned over P16M agri assistance

For the Albay province Piñol committed an additional P50M to be accessed by small farmers/fisherman as loan under the Production Loan

be provided to be used by farmers to purchase the needed inputs so they can immediately start again their farming/fishing operations and recoup their losses. He urged the farmers to avail of these loan assistance which he said he conceptualized and promised to be back after one year to one and a half year to see the impact of this program on those farmers who availed of this special window.

In response to the complaints of farmers that they get low price for their palay, he immediately ordered the NFA provincial manager Alexander C. Parerra to start going around the province through mobile buying facilities to buy palay from farmers instead of just



Distribution of interventions to LGUs and farmers in Albay.

DA inspires youth to support agriculture

LEGAZPI CITY – Who wants to be a farmer or the boss of his/her own business? Many students raised their hands as each speaker posed that very important question during the nationwide Information Caravan for the Youth held at the Albay Astrodome this city on March 7, 2019.

Over 1,000 senior high school students from private and public schools took a break from their daily classes to know what agriculture can offer during the first leg of the nationwide Caravan to promote the theme “Kabataan sa Agrikultura para sa Bayang Masagana.”

With the dwindling number of Filipino farmers whose average age is 57, the DA launches the youth caravan to persuade more youths particularly senior high school students to enroll in agriculture courses.

Cheryll Rebeta, Albay provincial Agriculturist, cited RA 10618 or the Rural Farm Schools Act which mandated the establishment of rural farm schools as alternative delivery mode of secondary education. Rebeta cited the Albay Farmers Bountry Village in Cabangan, Camalig, Albay, a one-stop shop farmers’ complex as the LGU’s major project in support to the youth as it serves as “farm school” showcasing production, processing and marketing. The trainings are for free as it is supported by TESDA. Students who will finish a course at this farm school will have National Certificate II on Organic Agriculture.

Dr. Mary Grace Rodriguez, OIC Chief of DA 5 Field Operations Division represented DA 5 Regional Executive Director Elena B. de los Santos. Having Bachelor of Science in Agriculture major in Horticulture as an undergraduate course, Dr. Rodriguez said that being an Agriculturist was her choice even when she was still in High School. She also discussed the business opportunities open to students who are interested



L-R Joseph Pacon, Alternative Head of Geomapping and Governance Unit of DA – Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP); Dr. Rodolfo P. Estigoy, Chief SRS of PhilMech; Nomer Mortega, 4H Club president of Magallanes, Sorsogon were among the resource speakers.



in agriculture such as the interventions under the High Value Crops Development Program. She urged the students to support agriculture as it is the backbone of the economy and it supports all the sectors. “Kung walang magtatanim, walang kakainin ang mga propesyunal gaya ng doctor, inhinyero, abugado, guro at mga pulis at hindi sila magiging produktibo. Sa patuloy na pagdami ng ating populasyon, hindi makakamit ang food security kung wala tayong gagawin para iangat ang sector ng agrikultura,” Dr. Rodriguez said.

Meanwhile, Dr. Rodolfo P. Estigoy, Chief Science Research Specialist of the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) discussed the different farm machineries developed by the PhilMech. Also, Glenn De Peralta, Senior Science Research Specialist of the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) discussed the technologies it has generated.

Other speakers included: Joseph Pacon, Alternative Head

of Geomapping and Governance Unit of DA – Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) discussed digitization of agriculture; Nadine Coronado, Project Development Officer of DA – Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) discussed the various scholarship programs being offered by the BAR; Sarrah O. Sambajon, Faculty of BUCAFe imparted their courses and scholarships in agriculture.

Nomer Mortega, 25 years old farmer and 4-H Club president of Caditaaan, Magallanes Sorsogon also shared his experience as a multi-awarded young farmer.

Mortega was DA national Gawad Saka finalist in 2016 and Jaycees International - TOFARM awardee in 2018 as National Outstanding Young Farmer.

The whole day event was made colorful and lively by fun games and freebies from participating bureaus and attached agencies of DA such as BFAR and ATI. The caravan was a joint effort of the Agriculture and Fisheries Information Division based in Manila and the Regional Agricultural and Fisheries Information Section of DA 5. **(Lovella P. Guarin)**



Department of Agriculture
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Information Section
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visit our website:
bicol.da.gov.ph

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at Pili, Post Office,
Pili, Cam. Sur
under Permit No. 2019-17
on March 25, 2019