



1898

ISSN-0119-2752

2002 PAJ Binhi Awardee

Vol. 30 No.1 | January-March 2021



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Regional Field Office No.5
San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur | ✉ darafid5@yahoo.com | 🌐 http://bicol.da.gov.ph

Regional Food Security Summit staged

by Lovella P. Guarin

NAGA CITY -The Department of Agriculture RFO 5 gathered the City/ Municipal Agriculturists, leaders of farmers' coops and associations and private sector representatives for the Regional Food Security Summit via a combination of face-to-face and virtual workshops on March 23, 2021.

Over 100 participants from Camarines Sur attended the face-to-face summit held in one of the hotels in Naga City, while over 70 participants from the provinces of Albay, Camarines Norte, Catanduanes, Masbate and Sorsogon were able to participate via google meet and facebook livestreaming.

Rodel P. Tornilla, Regional Executive Director in his welcome remarks underscored the utmost importance of food security in our survival amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Luz R. Marcelino, Regional Technical Director for Operations presented the Food Security Framework under the One DA Agenda and 12 Key

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MAYA Program takes off to prep young agripreneurs soar higher

by Emily B. Bordado

Sixteen Bicolano youths who have recently completed their four-year course in agriculture and related fields have qualified to the recently launched program of the Department of Agriculture called Mentoring and Attracting Youths in Agribusiness or MAYA.

Referred to as MAYA Interns these youths with age range between 20 to 30 years old are now deployed to different operating units of the DA Bicol regional office and agri-enterprises supported by the DA.

They will have the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills within a period of 24 weeks through experiential learning while at the same time give them the chance to put into practice the knowledge and skills they acquired from



the academe and from their own stock knowledge. The DA will provide them a monthly allowance of P20,000 each.

The program is being aggressively pushed by Agriculture Secretary William Dar to address the problem of aging breed of

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DA-Bicol turns over P12.42 million-worth agri inputs for typhoon rehab in CamSur

by Annielyn L. Baleza

PILI, CAMARINES SUR - The Department of Agriculture (DA) in Bicol turned over some P12.42 million-worth of agricultural supply and inputs for the rehabilitation of the agriculture sector in Camarines Sur on February 11, 2021 at the DA Regional Field Office (RFO) here.

DA-Bicol Regional Technical Director for Operations Luz R. Marcelino

led the turn-over ceremony to the Municipal and City Agriculturists of the 37 local government units (LGUs) in the province.

According to Marcelino, the DA RFO has accounted about P5.5



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Published quarterly by the:
Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Information Section (RAFIS)
Department of Agriculture Regional Field Office No. 5

Re-entered as a Second Class Mail Matter at the Pili Post
Office, Pili, Camarines Sur under Permit No. 2019-17 on
March 25, 2019.

Lessons learned from ASF

It has already been a year since the first African Swine Fever outbreak was reported in Bicol in the town of Bombon in Camarines Sur on February 21, 2020 to be exact. For 5 months, it was initially confined within the province of Camarines Sur and was on the down trend by July. But a second wave occurred in August as it spreads to the southeastern towns of Camarines Sur and spills over to Albay province almost the same time that incursions of the virus along the borders of Camarines Norte province were also reported in August.

The cases gradually declined and dipped again significantly by November after the occurrence of three successive typhoons but surged again in December and soared to its highest level towards January this time encroaching into the island province of Catanduanes, Sorsogon and Masbate. Over the past three months of 2021 however, a down trend has been noted in ASF cases in Bicol. From a high of 73 cases in January it slips down to 47 in February, 10 in March and 3 in April. It is early to say that ASF has already been eradicated in Bicol and the possibility of a recurrence or 3rd wave is still highly probable given that no vaccine is yet available for ASF virus.

But already there are valuable lessons learned in dealing with this swine disease which has affected the source of livelihood and income of over 25,000 raisers and cost the government over P100 million for indemnification and expenses for logistics, supplies and other expenses to contain, control and manage this disease.

For one, strict border control played a vital role in the containment and prevention of further spread of the virus. At the onset of the ASF outbreak in Camarines Sur, the DA & BAI managed check points were complemented and augmented by the LGU-managed checkpoints beefed up by PNP personnel. But as the focus of the LGUs shifted to the COVID-19 pandemic, the veterinary checkpoints diminished in numbers and some were altogether dismantled. This explains the occurrence of the second wave of ASF in August. Moreover, as entry of viajeros who had the necessary permits and documentary compliance was regarded by some LGU as an opportunity for their hog raisers (both commercial and backyard) to earn bigger profit

because of the very competitive price. But as a consequence it could have contributed to the resurgence and spike in the number of the ASF cases as these viajeros or their local agents go from one pig farm to another. As most backyards have inadequate biosafety measures this resulted to the further spread of the virus.

The unrestricted outbound or out shipment of the local hogs also triggered the spike in the price of live hogs and pork and the thinning of the supply of hogs and pork in the region. **Another important factor in ASF control is early reporting and surveillance to effect an immediate, efficient and coordinated response and enforcement control measures.** Some raisers and even LGUs deliberately did not report cases and if ever they do so only after an outbreak is already widespread. Worse, some pig owners dispose of their pigs by selling them or butchering them when they begin to manifest symptoms.

Of course the LGUs play a vital and critical role in the control of the ASF as they are in the frontline of this effort. The first two important factors mentioned lie on their hands. The DA and other government agencies provide only support and assistance. **Protocols, guidelines and policies have already been issued to guide the LGUs and other concerned agencies in preventing, controlling and managing the ASF.** While the Bureau of Animal Industry, the National Meat Inspection Service and the DA are mandated to perform regulatory functions, the LGUs at their level could exercise authority over their respective territories or jurisdiction. While the DA has been mandated to pay indemnification to the affected farmers and provide assistance, the LGUs are not prohibited to also provide assistance to their own animals raisers as what have been done by other local chief executives. Some of these LCEs provided the affected hog raisers with cash, rice and other assistance while waiting for the indemnification pay from the DA. This encouraged backyard raisers to voluntarily submit their animal for depopulation. **Strong collaboration complementation among the concerned agencies, i.e., the DA, LGUs, BAI, NMIS and even the private sectors who provided some logistics like disinfectants and**

(Next page please)

CSC Awards DA Bicol for attaining Maturity Level II under PRIME-HRM

The Civil Service Commission Camarines Sur Field Office awarded to the Department of Agriculture Regional Office No.5 (Bicol) the Resolution promulgated by the CSC Main office declaring the DA-Bicol as Bronze Awardee for attaining Maturity Level II Accreditation under the Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management or PRIME-HRM.

The DA-RFO V was able to comply with the stringent requirements and successfully hurdled the tedious and rigorous processes and moved up to the 2nd level towards the goal of transforming the agencies' Human Resource Management Systems, competencies and practices to elevate public sector HR to a level of excellence for good governance and for effective and efficient public service delivery.

Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla received the award in behalf of the DA.

Also given with the same Bronze Award for PRIME-HRM Maturity Level II accreditation were the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Regional Office represented by OIC-Regional Director Nelson B. Bien and the Camarines



Sur Polytechnic College (CSPC) based in Nabua Camarines Sur represented by Dr. April Z. Luzon, Director of the Institutional Planning and Development.

The awarding ceremonies was held on February 3 this year at the DA Regional Office Training Hall with only a very limited number of attendees and in strict compliance

with the health and safety protocols.

On the same occasion and venue the CSC also awarded the Certificate of Collective Negotiation Agreement (CNA) to the Bula Local Government Unit Employees Union.

The CSC Camarines Sur Field Office Director, Ma. Dolores D. Salud

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EDITORIAL

Lessons learned from ASF (from page 2)

other supplies also contributed a great deal to the control efforts on ASF in the Bicol region.

Some other positive results in the implementation of the ASF Control program is the heightened awareness of the backyard hog raisers on the importance of putting in place biosafety measures and the importance of maintaining sanitation in their farms. For the part of the LGUs, most of them now realize the importance of contingency planning for emerging emergency diseases and the importance of establishing first class slaughterhouses and for hiring qualified technical personnel who can respond to situation like the ASF outbreak.

It is also worth to know that the prevention and control of ASF is not only the concern or task of the government but requires the participation and cooperation of all key players and stakeholders in the hog industry.

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Letters

January 04, 2021

Mr. RODEL P. TORNILLA, MABE

Regional Executive Director
Department of Agriculture, RFO 5
San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur

Dear RED Tornilla:

A Blessed New Year!

We sincerely appreciate your effort in supporting NFA Bicol in its buffer stock build up through your information campaign to palay farmers, as well as in the provision of trucking facilities to our provincial offices through the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) executed on October 16, 2020. Through the said MOA, four (4) trucks were lent to us-one (1) unit for Albay; two (2) for Camarines Sur and another one for Masbate. Please be informed that three (3) of these units were already returned to your end; except for the one in Masbate since there are still palay to be harvested in most areas in the said province.

We are thankful for the deployment of the aforesaid trucks. These trucks helped us in penetrating long and narrow roads leading to farm sites where farmers wait to sell their produce to NFA Mobile Procurement Teams.

Again, thank you for your invaluable support to the NFA.

Very truly yours,
(signed)
EDNA R. DE GUZMAN
Regional Manager II

Rice farmers to receive free fertilizer under voucher scheme

Rice farmers in Bicol started receiving free bags of fertilizer from the Department of Agriculture, after DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla turned over P355 Million worth checks to the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) on March 4, 2021 at the DA 5 regional office.

The DBP is the designated government bank to pay the accredited fertilizer distributors.

Tornilla said that farmers will receive their preferred inorganic fertilizer (urea or complete) at two bags per hectare for inbred rice seed planted and three bags per hectare for farmers who planted hybrid rice.

"Each farmer will receive a fertilizer voucher with varying amounts which they will present to merchants or suppliers of fertilizers accredited by DA. The DA subsidized P1,000 per bag of fertilizer, so the farmer will shoulder the amount exceeding P1,000 of his preferred fertilizer," Tornilla added.

As of this writing, a total of 28,287 farmers in Bicol are qualified to receive the vouchers.

Meanwhile, DA Bicol Regional Technical Director

Luz R. Marcelino led the kick off ceremony of the Fertilizer Voucher distribution in Bicol held in the municipality of Libon, Albay on March 5, 2021.

"Marami pong proseso ang pinagdaanan ng Fertilizer Voucher starting from submission of masterlist from LGU, processing, clearing at regional office and submission to DA-Info and Communication Technology Service at DA Central Office until they are ready in voucher form."

She also encouraged farmers to apply sufficient fertilizer to increase yield as researches have shown that Bicol's soil is generally deficient in Nitrogen.

Libon Mayor Wilfredo Maronilla and Municipal Agriculturist Alejo Serrano received the fertilizer vouchers amounting to P11,445,480.00 for the 3,908 RSBSA-listed rice farmers who planted inbred or hybrid rice this cropping season.

Also present was Sto. Domingo, Albay OIC Municipal Agriculturist Dino

Gregorio who received a total of P1,093,620.00 worth fertilizer vouchers for 492 rice farmers covering 375 hectares.

Marcelino said that RRP 2 is different from RRP 1 in 2020 as the farmers (under RRP 2) will not be

one of the components of the Ahon Lahat, Pagkain Sapat kontra COVID-19 (ALPAS COVID-19) also known as Plant, Plant, Plant Program aimed to increase local rice production to combat global trade uncertainties and promote food security amidst the pandemic.

Marcelino added that Fertilizer Voucher distribution in the other five provinces of



required to present official receipts of fertilizer purchase, they just need to be registered in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA), have planted rice this dry season (Sept 16, 2020 to March 15, 2020) and have not yet received an in-kind fertilizer from DA during this cropping to qualify.

Bicol will also start.

All provinces and municipalities of Bicol are included in this fertilizer subsidy program. Marcelino added that those rice farmers who are not yet registered in the RSBSA can still avail of this subsidy as long as they complete their RSBSA registration.

Rice Resiliency Project is

(Lovella P. Guarin)

CSC awards DA Bicol...(from page 3)

in her message during the program emphasized that awards are not just recognition but motivation to strive harder.

In his acceptance speech Dir. Tornilla recalled the tedious and rigorous process that the prime mover and all the employees have to go through in 2019 including the meticulous and hands-on involvement of then Regional Executive Director Dr.

Elena B. de los Santos. He said that he is proud at the same time humbled in accepting the award.

"We will strive to go to the next level, the silver or gold not for bragging rights but with the end view to improve our services to our clients,"

Among the regional offices of the DA, so far, it is only the DA-Bicol which has been awarded

by the CSC the Maturity Level II accreditation.

While the assessment was done in 2018 the CSC deferred the giving of the award and accreditation as it was awaiting the application for accreditation by the DA Central Office and the other DA regional offices but since no application for accreditation has been forwarded to them the commission decided

to proceed with the accreditation and Awarding of the Bronze Award to DA Bicol.

According to Director Salud, the awarding of the CSC Resolution is just the preliminary or prelude to the actual awarding of the bronze award which shall be scheduled sometime later in another ceremony.

(Emily B. Bordado)

DA-Bicol awards to Naga City over P3.6M worth of projects

Barangay Balatas used to be known as the “smokey mountain” of Naga City because once was located here the open dumpsite of the city where a number of families made a living from the heap of garbage piled up everyday. But today, this Barangay assumes a new face-the unsightly view and the foul odor are gone and two new buildings, a multipurpose building and a training hall and a green house have recently been constructed just a few meters from the dumpsite. The barangay is now being developed as the hub for modernized urban agriculture.

It is also here where the Department of Agriculture-Bicol in partnership with the LGU of Naga City and the barangay officials will establish a showcase for a modernized urban agriculture and community gardens.

Thus, it was here that the DA recently turned over to the City of Naga three projects worth over P3.6 million under the Bayanihan to Heal as One Program. **The projects include 5 packages of supplies, tools including a multi cultivator and assorted vegetable seeds for community garden projects worth P2,305,390; a package of supplies, assorted vegetables, tools and green house worth P911,570 to showcase modernized urban agriculture and another 2 packages of supplies, tools, equipment (humidifier) and mushroom house with a total worth of P432,765 for urban mushroom production.**

Mayor Nelson Legacion together with Vice Mayor Cecilia “Nene”, de Asis, the City councilors and the barangay officials of Balatas (where most of the projects will be implemented) and the officers/officials of the farmers association and barangays identified as beneficiaries received the package of assistance during the turn-over ceremonies held at the interior

part of the barangay.

The signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the DA and the recipients formalized the turn-over. Dr. Mary Grace DP. Rodriguez, Chief of the Field Operations Division and regional coordinator of the High Value

“Pangangatamanan mi ining marhay (We’ll take good care of these),” he promised.

The seven (7) recipients of the DA projects were also present. For the urban community garden projects they were: the Panicuason Highland Vegetable Growers



Commercial Development Program represented DA Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla.

The occasion also marked the blessing and inauguration of the two completed infrastructure projects for the said barangay namely: the Multipurpose Building and the Urban Gardening Training Hall. Said infrastructures were funded by the Office of 3rd district Representative Gabriel H. Bordado Jr. through the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

Congressman Bordado was represented by his son George. Engineer Romeo Doloiras, DPWH 3rd District Engineer graced the occasion and delivered a message. Barangay Kagawad Ferdinand de Hitta represented Brgy. Captain Pedro San Juan, Jr. thanked the DA, the city Government, Rep. Bordado and the DPWH for the realization of the projects they once dreamed of but now a reality in their barangay.

represented by Adelbert Enriquez; Pacol Cut Flowers Association represented by Diosdado Ador; Pacol Magsasaka Prime Cooperative represented by Anghel Dolor; and Naga City Urban Poor represented by Danilo

Entrepreneurs Association for Bicol (BEAM) represented by Basil Caning and the Concepcion Pequeña Farmers Association represented by Marilyn Ponce.

Marilyn Ponce was delighted and very thankful: “Salamat na marhay sa DA sa tabang na ini. Makaka recover na kami sa mga losses mi dahil sa bagyo saka pandemya.” Basil Caning seconded, saying: “Nagpi-pick up na kita negosyo

mi (mushroom chips, and chicharon) pero puon maglockdown dai ko na nailuwas su mga mushroom products mi. Kadakul kita orders. Tapos nagbagyo pa lalong na distruso negosyo mi. Pero ngonian pwede na naman magpadagos. Salamat sa DA”.

After the turn-over ceremonies a lecture and techno demo was conducted for the projects beneficiaries by a resource person from the DA.

Aside from these recently turned over

projects in Naga City sixteen more associations/barangays from 5 more cities will be receiving the same package of assistance for Urban Community Gardens allocated as follows: 3 in Iriga; 2 in Ligao; 3 in Tabaco; 3 in



Ludivice and the Naga City Organic Farmers Association represented by Oscar Orozco.

The two recipient organizations for the Urban Mushroom Production Projects were: the Bicol

Legazpi; and 5 in Sorsogon. Likewise, three more farmers associations from Iriga, Ligao and Legazpi will also be provided a mushroom house by the DA.

(Emily B. Bordado)

Marginal farmers, IPs receive cash and food subsidy from DA

For over 15 years, fishing in Lake Buhi has been the major source of income for 26-year-old Benjie Merelles, a member of the Agta tribe settling in Brgy. Sta. Cruz, this municipality. He used to earn P700 a day from selling his fish catch at the nearby market.

However, his income dropped from P700 to P350 and even as low as P100 daily when the community quarantine protocols were imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To make both ends meet, he tried searching for an alternative source of income and got hired as a construction worker for P300 per day.

Thus, Merelles considers the release of the P5,000-

worth cash and food subsidy to indigenous people (IP) farmers on January 22, 2021 as a blessing. Finally, he can now go back to fishing. *"Masaya kami kasi makakatulong ito sa amin sa pang-araw araw... Yung P3,000 ibibili ko uli ng mga palalakihiing isda para may huli ulit ako araw-araw. Makakatulong din yung ibang binigay sa amin kasi unang-una hindi na kami bibili ng bigas at may pang-ulam na. Salamat po sa DA,"* he said.

Meanwhile, as early as 6:30 in the morning, 69-year-old Senina De La Cruz from barangay Alimsog waited at the Sto. Domingo Covered Court to receive her cash and food aid from the government

on January 26, 2020. Merelles and de la Cruz are among the beneficiaries of the



Department of Agriculture's Cash and Food Subsidy for Marginal Farmers and Fisherfolk (CFSMFF) Program.

CFSMFF is being implemented using an e-voucher system developed by the DA-Information and Communications Technology Service (ICTS) which has a unique system-generated reference code

or Quick Response (QR) code per beneficiary. To claim their cash and food **(Please continue to page 11)**



DA Bicol, BU ink Memorandum of Agreement with Albay for PAFES implementation

LEGAZPI City-*"This momentous event will further strengthen the partnership between Bicol University and the provincial government of Albay."*

This was the message of DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla during the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement for the implementation of the

Provincial-led Agriculture and Fishery Extension Systems (PAFES) in Albay which is geared towards bringing extension services to the grassroots level.

PAFES is one of the 12 strategies to guide the DA in pursuing major programs and activities for 2021 and targets the attainment of a 2.5% growth for the

agriculture for sector.

This strategy will involve a coordinated and strong partnership with LGUs in Albay as one of the pilot provinces. Albay will serve as a center for training and capability development based on the mandates of the DA, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Agricultural Training Institute, and the Bicol University.

According to Tornilla, DA Bicol will be allocating P1M pesos for the Rapid Appraisal to Assess the Resources and Capabilities of the Local Government Units (LGUs) in providing Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Services.

Moreover, DA Bicol will be providing technical assistance through conduct of orientations and briefings to its partner LGUs and BU, and monitoring of the progress of the study. Bicol University President Dr. Arnulfo M. Mascariñas underscored the importance of this study because this will serve as basis for the conduct of timely and relevant agricultural Research and Development (R&D) initiatives.

"Rest assured that BU will deliver the task assigned to us by the DA and the Albay provincial government," he said.

Albay governor Al Francis C. Bichara underscored that since agriculture is the backbone of the economy, *"we have invested much already on this sector".*

He also acknowledged that the rapid appraisal will give the province a clear and real picture of the agricultural situation of the province.

The results of this initiative will also help the province to look for funding agencies for the creation of R&D council in the province. *"It is time to get serious, put our maximum effort and provide validated reports because I am committing myself that you will get results here in Albay,"* he concluded his message.

Present during the signing of the MOA were DA Bicol Regional Technical Director for Operations Luz R. Marcelino, BFAR Regional Director Dr. Nelson B. Bien and ATI Center Director Elsa A. Parot and staffs. **(Jayson M. Gonzales)**

billion-worth of losses caused by the three consecutive typhoons that hit the region in the last quarter of 2020. She added that Camarines Sur was one of the hardest hit provinces in the region with 17,402 hectares of damaged rice and high value crops areas valued at P810 million.

As part of its rehabilitation efforts, the DA-Bicol turned over 1,480 sets of assorted vegetable seeds and 40 sets of garden tools under the High Value Crops Development Program as well as 139 bags of open pollinated variety (OPV) corn seeds, 139 bags of complete fertilizer, and 278 bags of urea fertilizer from the Corn Program. Under the Rice Program, 888 packets of plant growth enhancers were distributed.

The LGUs also received 1,000 heads of free-range chicken under the Livestock and Poultry Program. "Ang Department of Agriculture Regional Office No. 5 po ay naging instrumento para tayo ay makabangon sa ating mga napinsalang sakahan, taniman, and even ng ating mga imprastruktura," Marcelino said.

Hector Llagas, Municipal

Agriculturist of LGU-Bato, Camarines Sur shared that the previous calamities swept about 90 to 95 percent of their rice, HVC, livestock and corn areas. He mentioned that this is because the municipality is a catch basin of flood from Lake Bato. "Pero sa ngayon, sa tulong ng Department of Agriculture, sa mga interventions na ibinigay nila, talagang umaasa po kami na babangon at babangon kami," he said.

Another municipality that incurred severe damage to crops, livestock, and fishery is Tigaon. Municipal Agriculturist Lea Beltran said that this affected almost 90 percent of people in the area who are dependent on agriculture as their source of income.

"Salamat sa Department of Agriculture kasi dae kami pinapabayaan na matawanan nin ayuda. Dakulaon na bagay po ini na magkaigwa sindang uumpisahan para makapadagos sinda sa saindang pagtatanom. Ang local na gobyerno po dae kaya na matawanan sinda nin mga arog kaining ayuda kasi aram ta man po бага na diiton an samuyang pondo. Kaya dakulaon pong bagay asin

pasasalamat mi," she added.

Rhona D. Huit, an Agricultural Technician in LGU-Caramoan, attested to the vegetable farmers' struggles after the successive typhoons. "Nung panahon na nasa stage na sila na malapit na silang mag harvest (saka) dumating yung typhoon.

Division Chief Mary Grace DP. Rodriguez said that some of the agricultural supplies and inputs for the rehabilitation of the agriculture sector in various municipalities and cities in Camarines Sur and in other provinces of Bicol have already been delivered early this year. The said interventions will be distributed by the



Tamang-tama yung pagbigay ng DA ngayon ng mga pangtanim kasi talagang magagamit nila yun and malaki yung pakinabang sa kanila na kahit doon man lang sa pag-umpisa nila nandoon na yung agriculture office na tumutulong sa kanila."

DA-Bicol Field Operations

respective Municipal and City Agriculture Offices to typhoon-affected farmers registered in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA).

The regional office's rehabilitation efforts will continue on the first quarter of 2021.

IPs in Iriga City receive agri, fishery interventions through 4Ks

SAN PEDRO, IRIGA CITY-A resounding "Iyo (yes)" and applause from the 28 Agta Tabangnon filled the San Pedro Tribal Hall here when asked of their commitment and interest to the Kabuhayan at Kaunlaran ng Kababayan Katutubo (4Ks) program of the Department of Agriculture-Bicol in coordination with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) during the Indigenous Cultural Community/Indigenous Peoples (ICC/IP) Assessment and Site Validation

held on March 17, 2021.

4Ks is a special program developed by the DA aimed to promote an enhanced provision of agricultural and fisheries related livelihood, investments and services to the IPs because they are the least attended sector in the country.

IPs live in poverty because their area is unutilized and undeveloped. During the coordination meeting, Tribal Chieftain

Margarita B. Cabria bared that her community is engaged in farming. Since their area is sloping and in high terrain, farm machineries are not viable and deemed useless. She suggested that plows and carabao be given to them instead. Also, since they are corn farmers, a corn-sheller machine will be helpful to them.

NCIP-Buhi Service Center OIC Engr. Andrea M. Villegas cited that generally, the

main sources of livelihood of the IPs in Iriga City are corn, root crops, vegetables, coconut, banana and adlai.

The IPs here in Iriga City own more than 2,493 hectares of ancestral domain. DA Bicol 4Ks program staff Angela Mae Oblinda said that 4Ks Program only caters to organized groups, whether registered or unregistered, and holders of Certificate of Ancestral Domains Title (CADT) or Certificate of Ancestral Domains Claims (CADC), provided that they are recognized by the NCIP as legitimate IP Organization.

(Please continue to page 8)

MAYA Program takes...(from page 1)

farmers and non interest of youth in agriculture. *"With an aging population of farmers and fisherfolk, we must continuously motivate, inspire and capacitate younger Filipinos to take on the challenge to help feed the nation, and earn in the process. Let us show them that there is indeed money and bright future in Agriculture,"* Secretary Dar said.

The program is being coordinated by the DA's Bureau of Agricultural Research. It aims to develop young Filipinos into agri-fishery entrepreneurs or "agripreneurs" or possibly technocrats also priming them to be future leaders of the DA or their respective communities and LGUs.

During the simple launching ceremony held at the DA regional office Regional Technical Director (RTD) for Research and Regulations Dr. Edgar Madrid pointed out that the word maya is usually associated with the small bird or tree sparrow which is found everywhere and considered pest by most farmers because they feed on seeds and grains especially palay. But he underscored that the **MAYA Program of the DA is intended to engage the youths in agriculture and make them productive and prosperous.**

RTD for Operations Luz R. Marcelino said that the MAYA Program was conceptualized to address the big decline in number of enrollees in agriculture courses. She explained that the program adopts a holistic approach, that is, the experiential learning for the interns will not only focus on increasing production but also on making farming a viable and profitable enterprise or business.

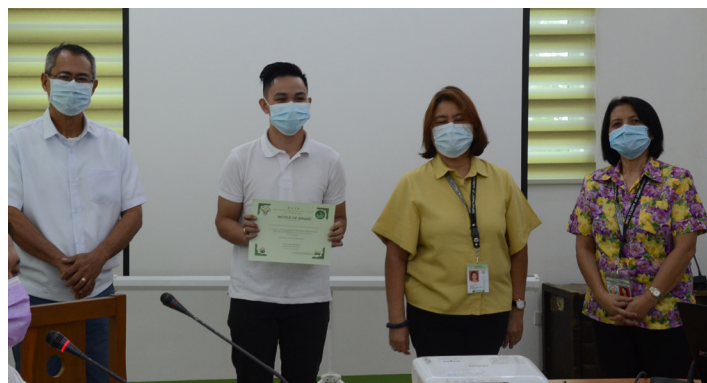
This year MAYA interns include 11 agriculture graduates from the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture (CBSUA) in Camarines Sur; 1 from the Camarines Norte State College (CNSC); 3 from Sorsogon State College (SSC) and 1 from Dr. Emilio B. Espinosa, Sr. Memorial State College of Agriculture and Technology in Masbate. The interns are as follows: from CBSUA - Princess E. Arcilla, Darwin I. Barrameda, May B. Basilan, Almira R. Billones, Ivy B. Dela Pacion, Alyssa B. Narvaez, Jomar S. Pagador, Domingo B. Sabularse, Jr., Roberto O. San Agustin, Jr., Juliana Louise N. Santos, and Paolo R. Pardiñas; from CNSC-John Paul J. Baytan; from SSC-Ailyn Bertumen, Cherry Mae B. Mallo, and Melvin M. Paclibar; from DEBESMSCAT-Joefe C. Salvador.

Ailyn Bertumen an Animal Science major who graduated

from SSC in Sorsogon has previously worked in a Goat Ranch sees this MAYA program as an opportunity for her to "get out of the box", enhance her knowledge and skills and discover new opportunities for future employment perhaps in the government agency like the

reasons he was informed that his employment will have to be deferred. But the MAYA Program rekindled his enthusiasm.

Having grown-up in a business oriented-family he now realizes agriculture and business could indeed go hand



DA or this could be a track that could lead to entrepreneurial undertaking of her own.

"Magaling ang mind set ni Secretary Dar, hindi niya kinaligtaan kaming mga young aspiring entrepreneurs. He recognizes yung kakayahan naming na maka contribute sa agricultural development," Ailyn said.

John Paul Baytan who is an agriculture graduate from CSNC in Camarines Norte was gearing up to apply his knowledge in a private agricultural corporation in Nueva Ecija after passing and complying with all the requirements. But for some unclear

in hand. *"Na realize ko ngayon na may pera sa agrikultura. Yung three hectares naming lupa pwede kong idevelop. Marami palang mga programa at assistance mula sa DA at iba pang agencies na available para sa gusto mag engage sa agribusiness. At dapat baguhin na yung mindset ng mga mellenials na ang farming o agriculture is a lowly or "dirty" undertaking kasi kailangan mag bungkal ng lupa."* John Paul shared.

The regional coordinator of MAYA program in Bicol is Corazon A. Orbon, chief of the Research Division assisted by Pedro Oliver.

IPs in Iriga City...(from page 7)



The IPs should be residents and are staying in their ancestral domain. However, in case they are not yet organized or registered as in the case of San Pedro IPs, the area coordinator will assist them to get organized and registered.

DABicol Regional Director Rodel P. Tornilla said that this new program will pursue investments and opportunities for IPs by utilizing vast

ancestral domains as potential food production areas.

The highlight of the one-day activity was the presentation and signing of Resolution No. 1 series of 2021 which formalizes their consent and agreement with the DA for the program.

The IPs in the provinces of Albay, Sorsogon, Camarines Norte and Camarines Sur are the identified beneficiaries of this program.

(Jayson M. Gonzales)

Farmers command better price for produce through of Enhanced Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita

BASUD, CAMARINES NORTE –More pineapple growers of this town can now transport their produce directly to Metro Manila markets with their recent acquisition of the P2M worth Kadiwa on Wheels (10-wheeler truck) by the Caayunan Multi-purpose Cooperative (CMC).

The CMC composed of 277 members most of whom are pineapple farmers, has qualified for the DA Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division (AMAD) “Enhanced Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita Inclusive Food Supply Chain Program” grant worth P2M which they used to purchase the 10-wheeler truck.

Angelica Z. Canaria, 22 year old General Manager of the CMC said that the 10-wheeler truck helped the coop achieve their long time goal to serve as consolidator of pineapple in the municipality of Basud. The coop also processes pineapple juice, pineapple tart and empanaditas. *“We were also able to provide direct market for the pineapple growers of Basud; na-minimized na din ang participation of middle men na kadalasan ay binabarat ang presyo ng pinya ng mga farmers; at mas marami pa ang na-encourage na mag-engage sa pineapple production. Added income din sa coop yun rental sa trucking.”* Canaria added.

Since the coop acquired the 10-wheeler truck, they were able to facilitate two (2) trips to Metro Manila in January and February this year, transporting 36 metric tons of Queen pineapple to Balintawak market, Quezon City. The five pineapple farmers assisted were able to gain a much higher income compared to their usual practice of selling to local traders in a

straight buying scheme or “all in” where there are only 2 standards – the “Good” pegged at P7.00/piece and the “Out” or batterballs which command a very low P1.00 per piece.

In Balintawak, the farmers can command higher prices depending on the size of pineapple. At the time of their shipment the extra large (1,000 grams above) was priced at P16.40/piece (price can reach up to P18.00/piece depending on the supply at Balintawak); large (851-1000 grams) -P11.33; medium (701-850grams)-P9.85; small (551-700grams)-P7.90; and extra small (351-550grams) –P6.73. But the farmers need to spend cash on labor/hauling, trucking, brokers fee and other incidental expenses.

Thus, the Caayunan coop offers three options of financial

the coop get 50% share from the marginal profit. **OPTION 3**–CMC will buy all the produce of the farmer at the prevailing price. All the farmers assisted so far have chosen Option 1.

Before each trip to Metro Manila, the CMC Kadiwa on Wheels goes to the barangay where the pineapple farm is located to pick up the pineapple products, saving the farmer from stress in hiring transport vehicle and the fruits from stresses in handling and hauling.

Showing support to the pineapple growers, Mayor Adrian S. Davoco of Basud launched the “*Tanim Mo Benta Mo*” some years ago. *“Napakalaki ng impact ng programa sa income ng mga magpipinya sapagkat*



assistance in the marketing of pineapples: **OPTION 1**–the farmer will not spend a single centavo during the transport of the produce to Manila as the CMC will shoulder all the expenses. The farmer will only pay a marketing fee equivalent to 10% of his net income from the shipment. **OPTION 2** –The farmer will receive a 50% downpayment from the coop for his produce, and the other 50% will be paid upon return of the truck. The farmer and

na i-direkta na namin ang farmers sa market. Sa simula ang daming challenges dahil nagrerenta lang kami ng truck at P30,000.00 per trip. Kaya nakakatuwa po at kami po ay nagpapasalamat ng marami sa Department of Agriculture dahil po kami ay nabigyan thru Kadiwa program ng isang 10-wheeler truck. Magiging dagdag kita po ito sa mga farmers at inspiration na maging responsible dahil sila na ang mag-memaintain ng truck.”

Municipal Agriculturist Harry James Felomino said that 450 hectares in the 29 barangays of Basud are planted to pineapple. *“Dahil sabay sabay kung mag-ani, naging problema noon tuwing anihan ng pinya, na minsan ay hindi dumadating yun truck na ni-rerenta namin. May mga nabubulukan po ng pinya dahil hindi namin madala sa merkado. “Ngayon po ay marami ng magsasaka ang nais mag-participate sa Tanim mo Benta Mo program dahil pag-aari na po ng kooperatiba ang truck,”* MA Felomino. Enthused.

Felomino also added that the Caayunan MPC has been included in the Farm Clustering and Farm Consolidation (F2C2) program of the DA to enable better farmers’ or fisherfolk’s participation in the value chain.

Adelina A. Losa, Chief of the Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division said that the “Enhanced Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita Inclusive Food Supply Chain Program” provides financial assistance for capacity enhancement of farmers and fisherfolk cooperatives, associations (FCA) on value adding activities in the food supply chain such as procurement of produce, processing, packaging, transport and distribution of agri-fishery commodities.

The program also gives financial assistance to community-based organizations for the operation and management of Kadiwa retail markets or stores. Losa also said that as of February 16, 2021, the DA Bicol AMAD has facilitated the shipment of a total of 515 Metric Tons of fresh pineapple to Balintawak, Quezon City and Pasig. Most of these produce came from Basud farmers.

(Lovella P. Guarin)

Regional Food Security...(from page 1)

Strategies that will accelerate transformation towards a modern and industrialized agriculture through an inclusive approach.

Dr. Mary Grace DP. Rodriguez, Chief of the Field Operations Division (FOD) discussed the rationale of the summit which was aimed to update the region's food security framework to be relevant in the new normal scenario, and to engage stakeholders in finding solutions towards socio-economic recovery and resiliency. *"The specific objectives we want to achieve are production and sustainability, accessibility and affordability, price stability, sustainability and food safety through various strategies such as farm consolidation, modernization, industrialization and inclusive agribusiness, export promotion and infrastructure development,"* Dr. Rodriguez added.

Meanwhile, Secretary William D. Dar in his video message, said that the onslaught of the disasters starting from volcanic eruption, incidence of African Swine Fever and the series of typhoons in the later part of 2020 have placed the national food security in a challenging position. He rallied the Local Chief Executives and the private sector to discuss and firm up the regional strategies that will form part of the national blueprint to address the impact of those recent challenges.

"Let us focus on the

doable solutions now and the more ambitious solutions for the future. Let's look at what we should improve from production, processing to marketing, the whole value chain, from technologies, practices, financing, policies, regulations to incentives," Sec. Dar said.

Lorenzo Alvina, regional coordinator of the Rice and Corn Program discussed the emerging threats in agriculture

Army Worm has affected 30 municipalities (Albay-5, CamSur-18, and Masbate-7) as of March 2021. Alvina also presented the maps developed by the AMIA Bicol project namely: Over-all hazard map of Bicol, Vulnerability map; Rice Suitability map with 2019 base year; and Bicol Rice Suitability Projections for year 2050.

Philippine Statistics



particularly the African swine fever, Fall Army Worm and geophysical hazards to agriculture. He reported that 57 municipalities of the six provinces of Bicol are already affected by the African Swine Fever—8 towns in Albay, 10 in Camarines Norte, 25 in CamSur, 10 in Catanduanes, 2 in Masbate and 2 towns in Sorsogon. Out of the 3,343 farmers affected, 71% were indemnification.

Meanwhile, the Fall

Authority R-5 Statistical Operations Division Chief Danilo Luceña and NEDA Supervising Economic Development Specialist Atty. Gieza R. Esparaguerra presented their respective reports on status of Bicol agriculture and economy amidst this pandemic.

Agricultural Credit Policy Council Bicol focal person Michael Jordan Roquid discussed the credit programs available for farmers/fisherfolk.

Kristian Carl E. Malazarte of the Camarines Sur Chamber of Commerce and Industry presented the online food and product delivery service-the MuraMart.

It is an online delivery service platform where farmers/producers can link their commodities or products, and where consumers can order food, general merchandise and medical supplies by downloading the MuraMart app in their cellphones. The project was initiated by the MuraMart Holdings, Inc. in partnership with the CamSur Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the DA Bicol.

The afternoon was spent on workshops where the participants were grouped by province and by focus commodities such as rice and corn; livestock and poultry; high value crops and organic agriculture. With the guidance of Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria, Chief of the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (PMED), Adelina A. Losa, Chief of the Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division, the sectoral groups were able to come up with action plan containing short term, medium term and long solutions and plans to address the identified problems on focus commodities of Bicol.

The activity was capped by the signing of the pledge of commitment to Food Security. The action plans were consolidated by the PMED to be submitted to the DA Central Office for the National Food Security Summit to be held sometime in April 2021.

DA Bicol joins Indignation Rally vs terrorism

The Department of Agriculture-Bicol together with over 300 uniformed personnel, representatives of government and non-government organizations, youths, leaders and residents of barangays Bariis and Banquerohan participated in the Indignation Rally on January 20, 2021 at

the Peñaranda Park, Legazpi City to condemn the Communist-Terrorist Group (CTG) Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF).

The DA is the Vice-Chair of Poverty Reduction, Livelihood and Employment Cluster of the National Task

Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF ELCAC).

According to Philippine Army (PA) Battalion Commander LTC INF (GSC) Emerson P. De Vera, in January 17, 2021, three army soldiers who were in civilian clothes in Barangay Banquerohan were killed by a SPARU murder squad. They were actually on an admin mission to coordinate with the LGU for the security of a major road construction project in Banquerohan-Villahermosa.

"The government cannot end the communist insurgency problem alone without the active participation of its partners from the different sectors," he said. PA Commanding Officer of the 31st Infantry Battalion LTC Eric H. Culvera strongly denounced the acts of NPA and encouraged everyone to disclose to them any information or activities of this CTG.

Former rebels Ka Jessa and Ka Bal bared the lies, deception

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Marginal farmers, IPs...(from page 6)

assistance, beneficiaries only need to present their QR code, along with a government-issued ID.

Under this program, qualified farmers and fisherfolk received P3,000 cash via Mhuillier and P2,000 worth food pack containing rice, chicken and eggs. Moreover, this program provides market support to local producers of rice, chicken, and eggs; and opening up sources of livelihood for farmers, farmer cooperatives and associations, and micro enterprises as distribution partners in the program. Per amendment to the

Implementing Guidelines of the CFSMFF, the DA now allows its recognized supplier to conduct remote distribution and offline encoding of documents in the voucher management system in areas like Buhi where internet connection is poor.

For the province of Albay, a total of 209 cocoterors from Tiwi, Sto. Domingo, Polangui, Malilipot, Malinao, Guinobatan and Tabaco City will benefit from this government aid while 93 farmers from Balud, Masbate.

NCIP identified 1,468 IP farmers with one hectare and below landholding enrolled in



the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) as CFSMFF beneficiaries. About 58,462 eligible smallholder corn, coconut, and sugarcane farmers regionwide will also benefit from this program

which will be implemented until February 21, 2021.

The P4.5-B CFSMFFP fund is under the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act or Bayanihan 2.

(Jayson M. Gonzales & Annielyn L. Balez)

DA Bicol forms ADING Integrity Circle

SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR – Following Secretary William Dar's marching orders to grow the agriculture sector at a much faster rate and to wipe out corruption in all transactions, all DA operating units in the country are directed to create the Agriculture Dialogue and Information Network Groups (ADING). Thus, the DA RFO 5, has staged a virtual Orientation on ADING, Election of responsible persons and Planning Workshop on ADING which was attended by 26 participants composed of heads of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Farmers' Associations (FAs) on February 9-10, 2021. Also present were DA 5 officials, the resident Auditor, who was one of the resource persons, and members of the Bids and Awards Committee. DA Undersecretary for Policy and Planning Rodolfo V. Vicerra, who was virtually present during the orientation, commended the initiative of the DA RFO 5 as the first DA regional office in the country to establish an ADING Integrity Circle. "We seek to establish an active partnership with our clients and civil society organizations towards integrity building mechanisms and integrity circles," USEC Vicerra added. Jimmy Anadilla, Graft

Prevention and Control Officer IV and national ADING coordinator from the Office of Usec for Policy and Planning discussed the ADING Program. Anadilla said that ADING is a national integrity management program of DA aimed to improve and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the DA's various actions

economy and society at large.

On the same day, the election for the ADING Integrity Circle (IC) was held. Elected as ADING Chairperson for Bicol was Bernadette delos Santos, proprietor of Bidibidi enterprises and elected as ADING focal person was Rebecca Purisima, Agta Tabangnon

community dialogues; participatory mechanisms including monitoring of agri-commodities and prices.

ADING IC shall be independent consultative bodies directly linked to the Office of the Secretary thru the ADING Program Management Committee.

DA Bicol RTD for Operations Luz R. Marcelino in her welcome remarks, expressed her



and programs; enhance the quality and timeliness of delivery; prevent and avoid leakages and wastage in the use of the agencies' resources; institutionalize the value of honesty and principles of integrity; strengthen the relevance of DA programs, actions and strategies to the needs of the producers, consumers,

chieftain of Tigaon, Camarines Sur. They were elected from among the nine (9) CSO leaders, representatives and heads of farmers' associations.

The ADING integrity circle (IC) for Bicol will organize/coordinate integrity circles; observe the DA procurement process; validate DA programs and projects; conduct

appreciation of the support of the CSOs and volunteer leaders present.

Aloha Gigi I. Banaria, DA-ADING coordinator for Bicol said that the ADING orientation and Planning Workshop was the 4th activity on ADING as they have already participated in three national initiatives in 2020.

(Lovella P. Guarin)

DA Bicol joins...(from page 10)

and evils of the CTG. They urged their comrades to return and surrender to the government.

These FRs are now beneficiaries of the government's Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) which contains a holistic

package of benefits that they can avail such as livelihood assistance, medical assistance, education, housing, and legal assistance. Chito Ante, representative of Legazpi City Mayor Noel Rosal, said that the local government already passed

a resolution declaring the place as a Zone for Peace. If violence and terrorism continue in a place, this can impede economic prosperity, hinder sustainable environment and lowers the quality of life.

According to

PNP, communist rebels are present in at least 782 barangays across the country.

The short program was capped with a prayer for peace and unity.

(Jayson M. Gonzales)

Outstanding women agripreneurs share success stories, COVID-19 pandemic feats

by Annielyn L. Baleza

Women's contribution in societal development and transformation amid challenging situations cannot be discounted. Even as gender roles evolve over time, women maintained their position in shaping their communities and the world by showing that they can be more than their traditional stereotypes.

Bernadette de los Santos, Marilyn Haya, and Rossinni Obligacion are living proof that women can indeed rise above anything—even the COVID-19 pandemic.

The three women agripreneurs shared their success stories as well as their feats amid the COVID-19 pandemic during the “*Bida ang Wonder Bicol Juana: Agripreneur Talkshow*” as part of the Bicol Rural Women's Day celebration held on March 9, 2021 in Naga City.

De los Santos of Brgy. San Nicolas Baao, Camarines Sur is a visual artist and foundress of Bidibidi Enterprise, a social enterprise that provides jobs to rural women and scholarships to deserving youth in Baao, Camarines Sur.

According to de los Santos, since childhood, she held on to her three dreams: to have a garden, a gallery, and a charitable foundation which she achieved in less than 10 years after resettling to her hometown after many years of working in the U.S.

“Naniniwala ako na kapag mayroon tayong dream or goal, you have to write them down para mas ma-instill mo sa mind mo. There was never a day that I was never working or playing to achieve my goals,” said De los Santos who, aside from managing

her social enterprise, owns the La Huerta de Rosario, a one-hectare Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)-certified farm in Brgy. Sta. Teresita

“It all starts with what you love doing and be consistently authentic to yourself. It is always good to appreciate whatever grace

“Sa amin po kasi, ang dagat yun ang talagang pangunahing hanap-buhay sa amin, ang mangisda. Halos 90 percent ng tao sa



Baao, Camarines Sur, and the Café Bidibidi in Brgy. San Nicolas, which also serves as gallery for her masterpieces including her handcrafted bags and paintings.

The 2008 Regional Outstanding Rural Woman and 2nd place winner of the National Outstanding Rural Woman Award and the 2017 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Best Green Economy Project Awardee encouraged her fellow women to cultivate their passion to achieve success and reminded them to always practice gratitude.

or whatever opportunities that we are presented with. We always have to look back and be thankful. Sa ating mga kababaihan, we have to lift each other up not push each other down,” she said.

On the other hand, Marilyn Haya, proprietress of M. A. Haya Dried Fish and Flavored Tinapa in Brgy. Sabang Calabanga, Camarines Sur started as an ordinary housewife who desired to help her husband, a fisherman, gain more income for their family of six.

amin ang hanap-buhay is dried fish kaya ko naisip ito na tutukan din,” Haya said.

Known for her Dilis Delights or anchovies with a twist, Haya shared how her engagements with the Department of Agriculture through the Chief of the Regional Agricultural and Fisheries Information Section (RAFIS) and the Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT) Women Project as well as the Municipal

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Agriculture Office have helped her elevate the quality of her dried fish products.

She also encouraged her fellow Juanas to avail of capacity-building activities, seminars and skills trainings offered by the government to establish their own business enterprises and empower themselves and their communities.

"Ang pandemic na ito malaking aral, sana yung mga tao na imbes na nagtitsismisan sa ngayon, magsikap sila para magtrabaho. Kailangan pursigido ka, desidido ka, kahit hindi mo kaya, sasabihin mong kaya mo para sa pamilya mo at sa mga katulong mo. Hindi puwedeng mag-surrender kasi ang pamilya mo umaasa din sa'yo tapos mayroon kang mga tauhan na umaasa sa'yo. Pagka tinigil mo, wala na rin sila. Bangon! Kailangan lang wag tayong mawalan ng pag-asa."

Haya, who also serves as a community leader and co-founder of the Sabang-Talisay Fisherfolk Association, an organization composed of 60 rural women and nine fishermen, said.

Meanwhile, from being a registered nurse by profession, Oblacion transitioned into a certified organic farmer when her family decided to move to the province because of her congenital asthma.

She started developing the JoRoss Farm, a 1.8-hectare family-owned farm in Brgy. Tinampo Ligao City in 2012 by attending various seminars and trainings particularly on Integrated Diversified Organic Farming System provided by the City Agriculture Office, the Agricultural Training Institute, and the Department of Agriculture Organic Agriculture Program.

"Ang paniniwala ko talaga, ang lahat ng bagay puwede mong pag-aralan basta nandoon yung puso mo at ready ka kung anuman ang mga nakasalalay sa pag-aaral mo, ready kang yakapin

yun. Yun ang ginawa ko," Oblacion, now a Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) certified organic agriculture (OA) practitioner and trainer and a National Certificate II (NC II) in OA holder, said.

The 2019 Regional Outstanding Rural Woman and 2nd place winner of the National Outstanding Rural Woman Award offers this advice to her fellow rural women *"Be sincere, be kind kahit minsan ayaw mo na, andun ka kasi maraming umaasa sayo. Kapag lalo kayong pinagpapala, lalo kayong maraming opportunities na dumarating sa'yo, lalo kayong mag papakababa, lalo kayong maging humble, lalo kayong maging ready to help. Nakakapagod pero ito po talaga ang kailangang gawin ninyo at parati kasama po ng pamilya natin magiging magandang ehemplo po tayo."*

With their innate creativity, passion, resilience, and servant-leadership, the three women agripreneurs were able to not just survive but thrive amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the cancellation of almost P250,000-worth of orders because of the lockdown, de los Santos remained undaunted. Rather, to keep the employment of her sewers, she thought of repurposing the stocked fabric into face masks and distributed them for free. She also conducted workshops on embroidery with students from Naga City and Baao, Camarines Sur. By the end of 2020, Bidibidi Enterprise was able to produce 10,000 pieces of embroidered face masks branded as *"Mascaras."*

The fabric face masks have reached as far as Europe, Las Vegas, and Florida in the U.S. which eventually drew support for her advocacy. *"To me, it means, more*

faces, more jobs for my embroiderers," she said.

Likewise, after the economic setbacks caused by the pandemic and the series of typhoons that hit Bicol, M. A. Haya Dried Fish and Flavored Tinapa is back into business in various provinces in Bicol as well as in Batangas, Laguna and Cavite.

The pandemic also paved the way for JoRoss Farm to partner with TESDA, Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in offering Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Courses through blended learning activities. It also expanded Oblacion's sphere of influence in promoting organic agriculture not only in Bicol but also abroad.

Dr. Gilda Gayle R. Abonal-Gomez, a psychologist from the Local Government Unit of Naga City also delivered a womenar on *"Mental Health Care Amid the Pandemic."*



The Bicol Rural Women's Day celebration was organized by the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (PMED) and Regional Gender and Development (GAD) Focal System headed by Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria.

About 100 rural women, women agripreneurs, GREAT Women project beneficiaries and leaders of women-led organizations such as Rural Improvement Clubs

regionwide attended the blended learning activity.

DA-Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) Director Jocelyn Alma R. Badiola, Undersecretary for High Value Crops and Rural Credit and Chairperson of the DA GAD Focal Point System Evelyn G. Laviña, Naga City Vice Mayor and Bicol Rural Improvement Club President Cecilia V. De Asis, DA-Bicol Regional Technical Director for Operations Luz R. Marcelino, and Camarines Sur Multi-purpose Cooperative (CSMPC) General Manager Annielen L. Panerio graced the occasion which was also highlighted with the awarding of cheques worth a total of P500,000 to five rural women beneficiaries of the DA-ACPC's Agri-Pinay Credit Program.

To cap the activity, the rural women were enjoined to participate in an Agri and Non-Agri Purple Showtime, featuring a fashion show and various contests in support of the Philippine Commission on Women's (PCW) advocacy campaign

for the 2021 National Women's Month celebration. Furthermore, Bañaria assured the women participants of the DA's commitment to advance gender equality and women empowerment saying *"Keep in mind that pandemic or not, the Department of Agriculture will always be here for you. Together, we STRETCH-Strive Tirelessly to Reach Excellence and Triumph over Challenges and Hurdles because Juana Laban sa Pandemya, Kaya!"*



Take a look, be awed and be inspired by the *El Miro de Shie Farm*

by Jayson M. Gonzales

Nestled at the foot of the majestic Mayon is a sprawling seven-hectare farm that is creating a buzz among local tourists even if many-a tourist sites have closed or stop operating since COVID-19 hit the country and continue to prevail. Located at Barangay Salugan, Camalig, Albay, the El Miro De Shie or “The Look of Shie” Integrated Farm is considered “the only positive thing that happened to us caused by the COVID-19 crisis,” Barangay Captain and owner Shiela Dino said.

She recalled that when the whole family was subjected to 14-day quarantine after their attendance to the party with the Mulatto Band, she was so stressed out. Adding to her worries was when the whole country was placed into Enhanced Community Quarantine and a total lockdown was imposed. “Pano na ang mga tao natin sa FLFB Construction business namin? Paano na ang aking mga tao sa barangay?” she worriedly asked her husband Engineer Edmiro.

Believing that “when God closes a door, He also opens a window”, Shiela saw an opportunity when she saw their large property. With gardening as a hobby, she mobilized and led her construction workers, staff and her neighbors (to help her) in cleaning up their property. They were paid for their work, thus, sustaining

their livelihood and taught them the value of farming and hard work.

“*Dakuluun na tabang samon yading farm tapawno, indinapundo su hanapbuhay namon, kina naturuan pa kami magtanum, kina pigatawan pa kaming gugulayun san tagsadiri, (This farm was big help for us as it sustained our livelihood and we were taught how to plant and we were even supplied with vegetables by the farm owner)*” shared Beth Pabon, a staff that worked for five years already with the company.

April Jay Nocillado, a grade 12-student of Malabog National High School also said that aside



from the pay that he is receiving, he is inspired to take agriculture at Bicol University College of Agriculture and

Forestry in Guinobatan this year. “*Malangogma ko pawno magtanum kina nawawara an kapagalan kina stress dara sading COVID-19 sa buway ko, (I was very happy because by planting I feel relieved from the tiredness and stress brought about by COVID-19)*” Nocillado said.

Another youth-worker Reynante Gordo related that “*nagdakulu su utang san pamilya ko dahil sa lockdown kaya nagtrabaho ako didi sa farm. Tama man yading desisyon ko ta durudiretso an trabaho kina nakatabang ako sa pamilya ko na mabayadan an samon na utang dawa nag COVID. (Because of the lockdown our family’s debt increased so I work in this farm. It was a right decision as my employment was sustained and I was able to help my family pay our debts)*”

As the farm is just a few kilometers away from the Department of Agriculture-Albay Breeding Station, the Dino couple also sought the assistance of the station manager Dr. Elsa Maranan on how to avail of the DA’s services and programs. Maranan presented the DA’s “Plant, Plant, Plant Program” or “Ahon Lahat, Pagkaing Sapat (ALPAS) Laban sa Covid-19” program which will benefit farmers, fishers and consumers as proposed by Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar to increase the country’s food adequacy level during the emergency situation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aside from the vegetable seeds, DA-Bicol provided 25 heads

each of Kabir and Camarines Strain Native Chickens, and five native pigs (a boar and four sows).

Moreover, the couple and their farm workers attended the Training on Native Chicken and Pig Production before they received those animals. Maranan said that their staff constantly monitor and provide technical assistance on vegetable and livestock production and management and on pasture development. *“Malaking tulong sa amin ang DA kasi po naturuan kami about farming and its technicalities. Computer graduate ako kaya wala talaga akong alam ng iba pang technicalities sa agriculture,”* “Kap Shiela” said as she is fondly called by her constituents.

Other DA technical staff; Leo Beltran and Pedro Oliver provided inputs in developing the farm into a lush horticultural haven and in establishing a mushroom production area. At present, they have already 1000 mushroom bags. During the interview, this writer met Polangui assistant parish priest Fr. Al Ray Compuesto together with his parish staff who were touring around the farm. He said that he is getting some ideas and new technologies which he could adopt in his own parish.

This integrated farm is now an accredited Agricultural Training Institute

interesadong matuto ng farming.” Kap Shie said that the farm also allows the local community to share and invite people to experience, participate and appreciate the agricultural landscape.

The farm offers “Instagrammable” scenes of nature in full bloom with Mayon as backdrop. The trees, grasses, colorful flowers and vegetables certainly looks like the perfect place to go to.



The farm also operates a restaurant that serves freshly-picked vegetables and juices to tourists. *“Kumbaga, nothing beats eating food straight from the farm!”* However, the management

The entrance fee of P50.00 helps maintain the area and its staff. Moreover, the farm also provides fresh vegetables for the weekly feeding of children and pregnant women in her barangay, and as daily source of food for Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs) billeted in Salugan Training Center. The flowers in the area are donated to the parishes of St. Jude in Legazpi City and St. John

the Baptist in this municipality. According to DOT, the EMDSIF is one of the 16 farm sites which highlight agricultural products, research developments, and farmers’ training. Agri-Tourism is seen as a key for the recovery of the economic impact on the local tourism industry by the pandemic.

On November 2020, the farm became an Integrated Science Farm and Learning Site. On January 20, 2021, the farm in partnership with TESDA-Special Training and Employment Program and Albay 2nd District Representative Joey Salceda culminated its Organic Agriculture NCII program with 50 scholars.

“El Miro de Shie” is not only a beautiful place to look at and behold. Truly, this farm serves its purpose of enjoyment, education and inspiration to all who visit the farm.

And most importantly, the farm is a living proof of what Kap Shie believes—“the more that we take care of the environment, the more that it will thrive and prosper lalo na kung para sa mga kabarangay ko.”



Learning Site; an accredited tourist spot of the Department of Tourism and an accredited skills development area of Technical and Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA). *“Maglalagay kami ng multi-purpose building para sa mga*

requires visitors to wear face masks and observe social distancing despite its spacious grounds. “Ayokong madaanan nila ang stress ng quarantine kasi napagdaanan ko na ito kaya, dapat sundin an protocols pa rin.”

ACEF scholarship *changing lives, building hopes* for agriculture

by Lovella P. Guarin

After 10 years of supporting the college education of deserving children of farmers/fisherfolk, the DA Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund -Grants-In-Aid for Higher Education Program (DA ACEF-GIAHEP) in Bicol have already produced 262 young graduates.

One graduate under DA ACEF-GIAHEP is Sherwin M. Baja from Del Gallego, Camarines Sur. *"Ito pong ACEF scholarship ako sa college dahil sa hirap ng buhay namin. Pito po kaming magkakapatid at ako lang po ang nakatapos ng college—at yan po ay dahil sa ACEF,"* Sherwin said.

Sherwin is 28 years old now. He graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2015 from CBSUA, with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Agriculture major in Entomology. When he took the Licensure Examination for Agriculturists (LEA) in 2016, he was the 10th placer among the 32% passers of the examinees from all over the country.

At first, Sherwin was reluctant when he was offered with the scholarship for an agriculture course after he graduated as valedictorian in High School. But he was persuaded finally after realizing that ACEF was his only ticket to college. In the end, he fell in-love with the Agriculture course and how it has changed his life.

"Napakalaking tulong po ng free tuition, book allowance at stipend. Ang pag-aaral ay hindi lang naman po about buying books at pangangailangan sa school, kailangan ko din kumain araw-araw. Malayo po ako sa bahay dahil 4 na oras ang biyahe mula Del

Gallego patungong Central Bicol State University of Agriculture (CBSUA) sa Pili, Camarines Sur. Ayaw sana akong payagan ni Mama, umiiyak siya dahil magugutom daw ako. Salamat po talaga sa stipend ng ACEF na sumagot sa pang-araw-araw na pagkain ko sa school noon" added Sherwin.

After graduation in 2015, Sherwin first worked as a Research Assistant in

the CBSUA Regional Apiculture Center.

He has also worked as part-time instructor in the CBSUA College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. After earning a Master's Degree in Plant Protection major in Entomology, he was appointed as permanent faculty in the CBSUA.

Sherwin is currently employed at the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture as Review Center Director and Adviser of the University Supreme Student Council.

He hopes that his fellow youth will see the importance of agriculture. *"Nakita ko po na napaka-importante ng agriculture lalong-lalo ngayong may pandemic dahil nagkukulang na tayo sa pagkain. Sana magkaroon sila ng passion sa agrikultura,"* Sherwin enthused.

Another scholar of ACEF-GIAHEP is Cristy A. Benarao of Labo, Camarines Norte. She is 25 years old now. She also graduated Cum Laude in 2017 with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness from the Camarines Norte College of Arts

and Business in Bagong Silang 2, Labo, Camarines Norte.

She will be finishing her Masters Degree in Public Administration at CNSC in June. She is currently working as Scholarship Coordinator at the Camarines Norte College of Arts and Business.

"In behalf po ng mga co-scholars ko, very thankful po kami sa DA dahil 23 po kaming nagtapos noong 2017 at lahat po kami ay ACEF scholars," Cristy quipped. *"In-demand po dito sa amin sa Cam. Norte ang agriculture courses dahil agriculturists ang nagpapakain sa mga tao sa ibang propesyon.*

Sa kursong Agribusiness, pwede akong mag-establish ng sarili kong business. Pero sa ngayon nais ko po munang mag-empleyo" Cristy added.



CHRISTY A. BENARAO

Cristy is also an instructor at the Ciudad Callente Livelihood Farm—an ATI and TESDA-accredited learning site. She is one of the instructors for the competencies leading to complete TESDA programs, such as Organic Concoctions and Extracts Production leading to Organic Agriculture Production NC II; Plant Crops leading to Agricultural Crops Production NC II; and Control Weeds leading to Agricultural Crops Production NC III.

Marquedeo H. Sarucam from Camarines Norte is also an ACEF scholar. He finished Bachelor in Agricultural Technology at the Camarines Norte State College in Talisay, Cam. Norte. He is currently working in a feed manufacturing company.

Meanwhile, two Area Coordinators of Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program of DA in Bicol are also ACEF scholars.

Dave Villanueva from Masbate City and Mark Cristobal from Mandaon, Masbate both graduates of Dr. Emilio B. Espinosa Sr. State College of Agriculture



MARK CRISTOBAL



DAVE VILLANUEVA

and Technology (DEBESMSCAT) with Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering degree in 2017.

The two are currently assigned at Masbate Center for Livestock Development.

The DA's ACEF-GIAHEP grants college scholarship to incoming freshman students who will enroll in recognized programs in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, veterinary medicine, education and related agricultural education programs. Dr. Edgar R. Madrid, Regional Technical Director for Research and Regulations and Regional Coordinator of ACEF-GIAHEP in Bicol said that there are 302 scholars currently enrolled in various State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) or Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) regionwide.

In Bicol, 598 youths have already been enrolled as scholars under ACEF-GIAHEP.



This Commercial Pig Farm *thrives, diversifies and levels up* amidst ASF threat

by Emily B. Bordado

At this time when the hog industry is grappling with the dreadful viral disease known as African Swine Fever that has adversely affected the livelihood of thousands of backyard raisers and the businesses enterprises of commercial traders, retailers and meat processors, there are only a handful of commercial hog raisers who have managed to keep their business afloat and thriving.

One such enterprise is the Siguenza commercial swine farm which currently has 250-sows in their 2-storey all-concrete modern pig house in the town of Buhi, one of the remaining ASF-free municipalities in the province of Camarines Sur. They rear, breed and sell piglets, fatteners, breeders and boars and supply carcass - fresh or chilled pork meat to meat shops, restaurants and hotels and other establishments. It is now also operating 3 meat shops which sell premium quality meat in Naga

for fattening. Pig figurine is a popular lucky charm especially in Europe as it is associated with good luck, financial prosperity and happiness. The newly wed then thought of buying another piglet using the cash gifts they received during the wedding. Thus, when they started their life as a married couple they also started their love affair with the pigs which became their lifetime investment and source of income.

Manny who tucked an accountancy degree opted not to seek employment in any government or private office but set his mind on having his own business and enterprise no matter how small. Before settling down with her wife, Maning has already a small agricultural and poultry supply store. Myrna on the other hand was a school teacher then but has to give up teaching upon Maning's prodding.

from other pork meat available also in the market he said: *"Ang baboy kung ano ang pinakain mo siya din ang quality ng karne nya. Kung yung mga tira-tira lang o yung swill feeding lang don't expect na maganda ang karne. Karaniwan makapal ang taba."*

At first he did not believe in vaccinating pigs and dismissed it as just an additional expense. But when he lost about 100 pigs due to pneumonia he then reconsidered. *"Animal vaccination although expensive is a necessary investment,"* he says.

They prepare their own feeds as they have a leeway in choosing which among the raw materials are most cost efficient at a particular time or season in terms of their availability and cost. He only buys biologics and other feed products or supplements which have been proven and tested because he gives premium to the quality of the pigs they produce and the meat from these pigs.

Soon their customers were not only interested in buying meat from them but were also interested in buying their piglets. So he shifted again to breeding. In 2004, he had about 100 breeders. But soon oversupply of piglets became his problem. So he started looking for possible market outside their locality.

Maning has already constructed a 2-storey full concrete piggery with a capacity of 250 sows at Barangay San Isidro of their municipality where their residence is also located. He has seven (7) regular personnel in their farm. Already they were observing bio-safety protocols such as the installation of foot baths, restriction of entry of unauthorized persons including buyers; regular spraying and disinfection and close monitoring of personnel working in the farm.

He demands deep loyalty from his personnel. He cited an instance when he found out one of his workers was buying pork not from their own farm but elsewhere so he dismissed him. *"Dapat they should be the first to be convinced of the product we are producing and selling and they should be loyal,"* he reasoned out.

Last year, he decided to establish his own meat shop. He got

(Please continue to page 18)



City and in Buhi their home town. The farm and stores are owned and managed by Maning (Mariano-his real name) and Myrna Siguenza. Perhaps their business success was brought about by the lucky charm given to them on their wedding day. A relative gifted them a piglet

They started rearing hogs for fattening. But when it is time to sell them the price is usually very low. So he tried butchering some of their pigs and sell them at their store. Their customers liked the quality of their meat and they kept coming back. Asked what made their meat different



PRDP-Bicol to intensify use of drone technology for infra, enterprise subprojects monitoring

To ensure transparency and supervision in implementing Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) subprojects in Bicol, the Project's Geomapping and Governance Unit (GGU) will be intensifying the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) or drones in planning, monitoring and evaluation of infrastructure (I-BUILD) and enterprise development (I-REAP) subprojects.

According to Joseph Pacon, Alternate GGU Head of the National Project Coordination Office (NPCO), considering the restricted mobility and existing protocol in several project sites because of the threat of COVID-19, the PRDP GGU plans to maximize the use of drone footages which PRDP component and unit staff may access to facilitate virtual site visits and serve as basis for their subproject review and appraisal. He mentioned that all GGU staff nationwide will be receiving one unit of UAV and smartphone for geovideo.

He added that the PRDP NPCO GGU is currently preparing for the conduct of a virtual technical training

on flying a drone tentatively scheduled in March 2021.

Aside from the virtual exercises or online trainings, the NPCO GGU team will produce a comprehensive module which covers the application of all the digital infrastructure.

In 2020, the PRDP was recognized by the World Bank for establishing a global best practice of conducting two virtual support missions despite the pandemic through innovations such as virtual field visits using digital tools like smartphone, drone, laptop and Internet connectivity. PRDP-Bicol Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Officer Engr. Philbert Nebres cited the benefits of using drone technology in subproject monitoring saying "Ang advantage ng drone video is nakikita natin yung

impact (ng subproject)—yung top view nya na mga commodities, marami nang pagbabago like sa production area tapos nag dadagdag na rin yung mga residents along the site's road so yung impact ng before and after ay nakikita natin.

He added that it keeps the project managers updated about each subprojects' accomplishment status.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, PRDP-Bicol has been using drone

technology in subproject monitoring using borrowed UAV and with technical assistance from DA Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Information Section (RAFIS) V and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Unit.

"In the coming years, we are hopeful that we will be able to mainstream these tools to our partners especially our local government units," Pacon said.

(Annielyn L. Balezsa)



Feature

This commercial pig farm...(from page 17)

a loan from a commercial bank and purchased modern equipment such as chillers, meat cutters, hired trained personnel, rented a strategic location and opened his first meat shop in Naga City along the highway in Barangay Concepcion Grande. His second meat shop is located near the city's supermarket was recently opened.

With the incursion and eventual spread of ASF in Bicol especially in Camarines Sur compounded by the

proliferation of viajeros who buy hogs at higher price, the supply of live hogs became thin. Aside from pork meat they now also sell dressed chicken, beef and other processed deli products.

With the continuing threat of ASF and the dwindling stocks of hogs in the province, the Siguenza farm is no longer selling pigs even to viajeros. According to Maning, their target is to breed 40 to 45 sows monthly or about 400 piglets to be reared monthly. His goal now is to repopulate their current stock with

new and quality pig stocks or semen. But because of the still raging COVID-19 pandemic and ASF plague, movement is still restricted so this has to wait. He hopes to avail of the repopulation program being planned by the Department of Agriculture to help the hog industry recover.

The Siguenza couple have known the best and worst of times as they try to sustain their pig business but still managed to overcome challenges. Even the current and ominous threat of the

African Swine Fever have not discouraged them. They make the necessary biosafety measures to protect their stocks from being infected, they regularly clean and disinfect their farm they innovate and they diversify and they look beyond the present. "In any business setbacks should be seen as challenges and opportunities. Ako kung noarin may problema saka ako na cha-hallenge at saka ako nakakaisip nin mga paagui. Dapat dai kita ma overwhelm kan problema", these were Manny's parting words.



Enterprising SAAD farmers get golden opportunities from value adding



DONSOL, SORSOGON – “Opportunities don’t happen, you create them”. Chris Grosser was right when he said that.

A lot of opportunities came to the Tres Marias Drive Vegetable Growers Association (TMDVGA) when the initial 28 farmers were organized by the implementers of the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) on June 2, 2020 as TMDVGA.

Barely eight months in existence, is the association now a trailblazer in barangay Tres Marias and even in Donsol town. The association President Mr. Manuel Alim who is a degree holder in Agriculture conceptualized and implemented various strategies to help members sell their produce amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

“May mga members kami na matagal nang nagtatanim at malalawak ang taniman. Pero ang problema nila ay halos hingiin na lang ng mamimili ang mga gulay sa baba ng presyo ng buyers. Kaya nag put up kami ng Weekend Market noong September 5, 2020. Binibili namin ang mga ani ng aming members sa rasonableng presyo at yun ay direkta na tinitinda namin sa TMDVGA vegetable stall para hindi na dumaan sa middlemen,” explained Alim.

The association is also engaged in value adding activities such as making pickles, turmeric powder (turmeric tea), and tableya de cacao. “Para hindi masayang ang mga gulay o prutas na deformed o iba ang sukat

at hindi pumasa sa quality inspection, ginagawa naming pickles. Malaki ang kita sa processing. Ang benta namin ng raw na cucumber ay P40.00 per kilo. Samantalang ang 1 bote ng pickled cucumber ay nabebenta namin ng P100.00 per bottle. “Base sa records namin, ang average na total na dinadala ng member growers namin ay 250 kilos na gulay at ang pinakamataas na daily sales namin ay P10,000.00,” Alim added.



To boost their volume of production, they tied up with other vegetable farmers associations in Donsol such as Small Farm Progress Organization in Sitio Panangquilon which offered their produce such as cucumber which they use as raw materials in the production of pickles. President Alim also envisions their 500 square meter communal garden to be a show window and a learning site, to facilitate transfer of technology from technical experts to the farmers, and to serve as seed bank where farmers can get readily available seeds of commercially indemand vegetables and fruits.

When asked on specific

technologies he wants to impart to other farmers, Alim enumerated the following: 1. Use of mechanized equipment to lower labor cost. 2. Mulching. 3. Soil rejuvenation and organic agriculture. 4. Use of postharvest facilities and storage of produce. 5. Processing of surplus. Kadiwa on Wheels is a marketing strategy he also wants to adopt to command equitable price for their produce.

A religious sector in Donsol requested a seminar on vegetable production. After the seminar, Alim plans to provide the group with vegetable seeds, seedlings and seedling tray.

After the onslaught of three strong typhoons in Bicol in November 2020, the TMD doubled up their vegetable production as they know vegetable supply will dwindle. They are now selling their products online through social media. They used their savings from selling vegetables and processed foods to establish a mini training center which now serves as venue of their meetings and trainings.

Some groups and individuals who witnessed the TMDVGA members’ hardwork have been inspired to help their cause and donated numerous bags of cement and laptop which they now use in training other farmers.

“Ang gobyerno po ay napaka-supportive sa ating magsasaka sa ngayong panahon. Bigyan natin ng pagpapahalaga ang mithiin ni Secretary William Dar. Nagpapasalamat po kami kay DA 5 Regional Executive Director and SAAD Program Director Rodel P. Tornilla at sa SAAD dahil nabigyan kami ng pansin,” Alim said.

In June 2020 they received the SAAD Vegetable Production Package consisting of vegetable seeds, organic fertilizer, drums, garden tools, plastic tray, HDPE pipes, wheelbarrow, plastic mulch,

knapsack sprayer, planting materials of rambutan and lemon, rootcrop cuttings and cassava seed pieces.

Another vegetable production and entrepreneurship development package will be given to TMDVGA this year. Dr. Mary Grace Rodriguez, Bicol SAAD Action Officer said that a total of 44 Farmers’ Associations (FAs) of SAAD beneficiaries composed of at least 30 farmers like the TMDVGA were organized by SAAD in Sorsogon since 2018.

These FAs are engaged in various enterprises such as corn and cassava processing, peanut butter making, molido candies, pili favored squash molido, salted egg with different flavors and herbal soap making.

Six FAs were given rice production packages and 30 FAs were given high value crops production packages. Since 2018, SAAD has helped and trained farmers in the remote areas of target provinces on rice and corn production and value adding, high value crops development, livestock, and organic agriculture production.

The beneficiaries who have been identified and profiled in 2018 are still being supported by SAAD up to this time. In each year of SAAD implementation, new beneficiaries are also being identified and given complete packages of interventions.

SAAD Focal Person of Bicol Luz R. Marcelino said that as of December 31, 2020, SAAD in partnership with the Office of the Provincial Agriculture Offices and Municipal Agriculture Offices has delivered various agricultural interventions that has benefitted 108 farmers associations and 2,212 individual farmer beneficiaries in the Bicol region.

(Lovella P. Guarin)

with reports from Mary Rose Detera of SAAD Sorsogon photo credit: Mark Barja)

Iriga City Vegetable Growers get 2.5 Million worth of gardening package

IRIGA CITY-To continuously carry out its mission to secure food for urban families amidst our present situation, the Department of Agriculture Bicol thru the High Value Crop Development Program distributed a total of P2,529,186.00 worth of gardening equipment to various Urban Vegetable Growers/ Organization from different barangays on March 22 at the Oragon Farm, San Isidro of this City.

Said farm which is owned by the Local Government of Iriga City also showcase modern urban gardening technology to inspire urban families to grow their own vegetables.

The provisions include: Community garden package like cultivators, fertilizers, garden tools, assorted vegetable seeds, greenhouses and urban mushroom production package.

During the turn over ceremony, City Mayor Madelaine Alfelor expressed her concern on the misconception on farmers as being poor. "Pag sinabing farmer ang iisipin ng marami, mahirap. Gusto ko, isipin

naman na ang farmer ay mayaman" she said. But with the support of the DA and other partner institutions and cooperation of everyone, there is great hope that farmers can really be wealthy she added. She pointed out that the adoption of modern mechanization, digitization and diversification will encourage the youths to replace aging farmers.

Meanwhile, one of the recipients, Marjorie Mabunga of Millennial Farmers Association shared that she was surprised of what was allotted to them. "*Hindi namin inaasahan na mabibiyayaan kami ng DA ng ganito kalaking halaga ng mga kagamitan sa gardening tulad ng cultivator, knapsack sprayer, water plastic drums, fertilizer at iba pa.*"

"Maraming salamat sa mga kinauukulan at ipinapangako namin na aming pagyayamanin at iingat

ang mga kagamitan upang lalong umunlad ang aming samahan para makatulong sa iba at mapalago ang aming garden," she quipped.



Dr. Mary Grace Rodriguez, chief, Operations Division and HVCDP coordinator represented Regional Executive Director Rodel Tornilla in the MOA signing.

Other guest and officials present were: Madelaine

Alfelor, City Mayor; Engr. Janice Orciga, OIC, City Agriculturist; Edgar Oliva, City HVCDP coordinator, Pedro Oliver, Sr. Agriculturist and focal person on Urban Mushroom Production, and

some barangay officials. Beneficiaries were: Millennial Farmers Association; Greenstar Vegetable Growers Association; San Rafael Vegetable Growers Association. Marilou Lee received the package for Urban Mushroom Production. (Blesilda A. Nuñez)

Legazpi City agriculture office receives STKs from Regional Soils Lab

LEGAZPI CITY-Technical personnel of the Legazpi City Agriculture Office received 10 Soil Testing Kits (STKs) from the Regional Soils Laboratory of the Department of Agriculture Bicol on March 4, 2021 which they can use to assist farmers in the estimation of soil nutrients present in their farms.

Department of Agriculture Soil Chemist Elizabeth Banda said that LGUs need to undergo a hands-on training for the use of the STK before they are provided with the kits. She added that this training will re-tool and update the knowledge and skills of agriculturists in soil testing.

The STK is used to asses the quality of the soil to test the pH (acidity and alkalinity), nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. OIC-City Agriculturist Sheila B. Nas said that more than 200 farmers will benefit

from from the STKs that they have acquired from DA -Bicol. However, they will submit soil samples for laboratory analysis to RSL. Laboratory soil analysis will quantify the organic matter, potassium, phosphorus, pH and soil texture from the STK.

For the first quarter, the same intervention will be given to Tabaco City in Albay; Del Gallego, Tigaon and Caramoan Camarines Sur; PLGU of Masbate; Paracale in Camarines Norte; Bagamanoc, Catanduanes and Castilla, Sorsogon.

RSL Agriculturist II Arlene Babilonia discussed "Paraan ng Pagkuha ng Lupang Ipasusuri", while Marife Valenciano demonstrated on how to use STK.

The STK is farm management tool with a potential benefit to the farmer of increased yields, reduced operating costs and environmental risk management. Each STK costs P5,000.00

(Jayson M. Gonzales)





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ISSN-0119-2752
2002 PAJ Binhi Awarded

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE RFO-5

Department of Agriculture Regional Field Office No. 5
San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur
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at Pili, Post Office, Pili, CamSur under Permit No. 2019-17
on March 25, 2019