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Bicol's palay and corn production up by 7.93% and 12.55% in Q1 of 2021

by Lovella P. Guarin

PILI, CAMARINES SUR –Amidst the raging COVID-19 pandemic, and several typhoons that hit Bicol in the last quarter of 2020, palay and corn production in the Bicol Region for the first quarter (Q1) of 2021 increased by 7.93% and 12.55% respectively, Philippine Statistics Authority recent report shows.

The regional palay production in Bicol reached 275,074 MT in Q1 of 2021 registering a 7.93% increment (20,218 MT increase) from last year's 254,856 MT production for the same three-month period. Only two provinces (Albay and Camarines Sur) registered production increments in palay in Q1 of 2021: Albay's palay production increased by 10,008 MT or a staggering 29.79% increase at 43,607 MT. Camarines Sur's palay production increased by 13,112 MT (9.6% increase) at 148,602 MT. Camarines Sur's rice area comprised 52% of the total rice area of Bicol region.

DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla attributed the increase in rice production to the resiliency of the Bicolano farmers amidst calamities and the on-going pandemic and adoption of appropriate technologies such as the use of high yielding varieties and fertilization.

Lorenzo Alvina, Rice and Corn Program regional coordinator attributed the production growth to the 4.54% increase in area harvested or additional 3,129 hectares in Q1 of 2021,

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DA-Bicol inaugurates state-of-the art and one-stop-shop laboratory facility

by Emily B. Bordado

The Department of Agriculture Bicol inaugurates today the P100 million Integrated Laboratory Division complex a state-of-the art, one stop-shop facility which offers plant, animal, pest, feed and food diagnostic, testing and other laboratory services. **Four major DA**

Laboratories which used to be located in different sites will now be housed in the 4 interconnected 2-storey buildings in a quadrangle-like formation. These laboratories are: The Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (RADDL), Regional Soils Laboratory (RSL), Regional Feed Chemical Analysis

Laboratory (RAFCL) Regional Crop Protection Center-Plant Diagnostic Laboratory (RCPC-PDL).

"We are committed to provide quality, accurate, and science-based results on agricultural laboratory analyses as we are also aiming and preparing ***(Please turn to page 11)***

ASF in Bicol on a downtrend: DA set to implement Recovery, Rehabilitation and Repopulation

by Emily B. Bordado

The African Swine Fever in Bicol is on a downtrend. This was noted by the members of the Regional Quick Response Team for Animal Disease Emergencies (RQRT) of the Department of Agriculture

during its recent regular meeting. **Based on the reported ASF cases as confirmed by laboratory tests from a high of 76 cases in January this year it went down to 47 in February, dived to 6 in March and went down**

to 3 in April and 2 this May and zero in June.

Since the 1st outbreak of ASF in Camarines Sur on February 21, 2020 there have already been 64

infected municipalities in the 6 provinces of the region. This represents 56% of the total 114 municipalities. Thirty four (34) municipalities have no ***(Please turn to page 8)***

DA, CSPC and ATI ink MOA for joint use of radio and TV facility for techno-transfer and info. dissemination

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Simple but meaningful celebration marked Farmers' and Fisherfolks Month

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PRDP: World Bank lauds PRDP-funded enterprise for making 'transformational impact' amid COVID-19 pandemic

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DA gears up for the implementation of the Mandanas Ruling

For the past months, national government agencies have been abuzz with speculations about the implementation in 2022 of the Mandanas Ruling of the Supreme Court after two former house representatives Hermilando Mandanas and Enrique Garcia pointed out and raised to the Supreme Court the erroneous computation of the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) for Local Government Units which was computed based on gross national internal taxes. The SC on July 2018 decided that the IRA of the LGUs is not limited only to national internal revenue taxes but includes collections from customs duties. Thus the IRA for LGUs will increase by 55 percent in the 2022 budget.

Dubbed as the “full devolution”, The Mandanas ruling also mandates that devolved functions must be permanently taken out from national government agencies, and efforts must be made to boost LGUs capacity to assume these new and expanded functions.

It would be recalled that in 1991, the Local Government Code mandated the devolution of the basic services to LGU’s anchored on the premise that LGUs are on the ground and can, therefore initiate prompt responses and can dovetail its services to local needs, making governance more inclusive. One of the functions devolved to the LGUs was the agriculture and fisheries extension formerly undertaken by the Department of Agriculture. However, over the years, the devolution did not yield the desired results as most of the LGUs did not appropriately utilize their agricultural extension workforce and instead gave them tasks unrelated to agriculture and fisheries. Despite the clamor of the Agricultural Extension Workers for the approval of a Magna Carta initiated then by the late former Congressman and Agriculture Secretary Salvador H. Escudero III to guarantee the rights and privileges of the devolved AEW this has not materialized. Moreover, due to funding constraints and because some of the municipalities were too small to have economies of scale these LGUs

have difficulties implementing their agriculture and fisheries programs.

To address this problem a group of scientists and development managers from Los Baños who organized themselves into the Coalition for Agricultural Modernization in the Phil together with the Rice Foundation, advocated that provinces be the focal point of extension services because they have the economies of scale; are more capable to enter into a co-financing arrangements and joint undertaking with the DA and other public-private partners in agri-development efforts. This strategic initiative is now called Province-led Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Systems of PAFES. This was piloted in Ilocos Norte in 2018.

This year Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar mainstreamed PAFES as the modality of implementing banner programs in the provinces. With the full implementation of the Mandanas Ruling, Sec. Dar declared PAFES “as the institutional arrangement in integrating DA’s various programs in the provinces.. Through PAFES DA will help boost the capabilities of the LGUs to implement agriculture and fisheries extension services” says Sec. Dar. “We at the national government will do the steering while the LGUs will do the rowing,” adds Sec. Dar.

In the Bicol region, the province of Albay has been selected as the pilot province for implementing PAFES. Already, the DA Regional Office and the PLGU of Albay and other PLGUs have been working closely to ensure the smooth transition and implementation of the “full devolution”. Review of the re-devolved functions and services and the division of labor between national government and the LGUs now are underway. But what is crucial is to ensure that the development goals of the national government and LGUs are well aligned and that service delivery gaps and duplication of functions are minimized and the fiscal management capability and absorptive capacity of the LGUs are considered. Only then can the LGUs achieve meaningful local autonomy.



DA, CSPC and ATI ink MOA for joint use of radio and TV facility for techno-transfer and info. dissemination

SAN AGUSTIN, CAMARINES SUR- The Department of Agriculture (DA) Bicol entered into an agreement with the Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges (CSPC) and the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) to jointly pursue aggressive technology

transfer and strategic communication employing both conventional media like the radio as well as modern on-line platforms like digital television and internet or web-based broadcast.

The signing of the Memorandum of Agreement was

made by the heads of the three parties/institutions namely: Dr. Charlito P. Cadag, CSPC president; Elsa A. Parot, ATI-Bicol Director and; Rodel P. Tornilla, DA-RFO 5 Regional Executive Director held on May 19, 2021 at the DA Regional Office.

Under the agreement the CSPC, as the first party shall make available to DA and ATI its existing and currently operating radio facility, studio and radio frequency currently being used for its blended learning and soon to be operational digital television facility including the technical manpower.

The ATI for its part as the second party shall prepare the training designs and learning modules and broadcast materials to be aired in the radio/ tv station and shall conduct school-on-the-air and other development oriented agricultural radio programs; for farmers, women and youth.

The DA as the third party committed to initially transfer funds to the CSPC in the amount of one million pesos (*P1million*) to be used by the latter for enhancing, improvement and upgrading of their radio and television facilities for wider reach, more efficient and quality broadcast. The DA shall also make use of the CSPC radio and television facilities as channel for its information, communication and advocacy activities. The DA also commits to provide technical and additional logistical support in line with this undertaking as needed and based on submitted proposals and in accordance with the accounting rules and regulations and subject to availability of funds.

According to Director Tornilla, strategic communication is one of the key strategies that the DA will employ under the leadership of secretary William Dar to accelerate the transformation of the agriculture sector towards a modern industrialized Philippines. *"Improved information, communication technology capacities not only for research but also for extension initiatives will be supported. Moreover we are also instructed to mobilize and empower partners."* Tornilla added.

Dr. Cadag for his part said that the partnership forged with the DA is a significant step towards the advancement of their institution

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MUNICIPALITY OF CASTILLA
PROVINCE OF SORSOGON
Office of the Municipal Mayor

Letters

May 14, 2021

RODEL P. TORNILLA, MABE
Regional Executive Director
Department of Agriculture RFO 5
San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur

Sir:

In behalf of the people of the Municipality of Castilla, Sorsogon, we would like to extend our deep gratitude and appreciation for all the projects and support that your office has given us in the past and in the present.

These projects are indeed benefitting our farmers in terms of market accessibility, additional farm machineries, free palay seeds and fertilizers and vegetable seeds, which rebound to lesser farm expenses and added farm increase and additional income of farmers.

Your commitment to CADP-PILI Watershed project greatly assures our farmers and fisherfolks of your continuing support.

For all of these agricultural programs, projects and activities, again, we thank you and more power.

Respectfully yours,

(signed)
ISAGANI B. MENDOZA
Municipal Mayor



Legazpi City receives 2.5M-worth of agri interventions from DA

LEGAZPI City- The Department of Agriculture in Bicol turned-over to four agri-based organizations packages of agricultural assistance for urban gardening and mushroom production projects worth over P 2.5M under the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act.

The recipients were: the Albay Mushroom Producers Association (AMPA), in Barangay Taysan; Oragon Paric Farmers Association (OPFA), in Himalnod; Arimbay Irrigators Association (AIA) in Arimbay; Legazpi City Vegetable Producers Association (LCVPA), Bogña and Barangay Cabagñan West this city. These organizations will engage in intensified urban gardening project.

The simple turn-over ceremonies held on March 30, 2021 at the Legazpi City Agriculture Office graced by City Mayor Noel E. Rosal and City Councilor for Agriculture Diego Obiedo. DA Bicol representative Maricris Reforba said that these interventions are in line with the **Ahon Lahat Pagkain Sapat (ALPAS) Contra COVID 19 Program of Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar under the “Bayanihan to Recover As**

One Act” or “Bayanihan 2” to expand the government’s urban agriculture program and attain family household food security amid the pandemic.

Urban gardens will also boost the agricultural production in cities as the pandemic highlighted the importance of the sector in Philippine economy. OIC-City Agriculturist Shiela Nas expressed her gratitude to the DA Bicol and assured them that the city government is more than willing to implement the Urban Agriculture Program.

For urban mushroom production, AMPA received a package of assistance worth over P215,000 which included a mushroom house, humidifier, steel drum, water plastic drum, knapsack sprayer, garden tools, plastic crates, water hose, polypropylene plastic, white sacks, rubber band and absorbent cotton. AMPA President Nobelita

C. Condat said that these interventions will help the members in enhancing their mushroom production.

For Modernized Urban Agriculture project assistance the package was worth over P929,000 which included a greenhouse, grass cutter, knapsack sprayer, water plastic drum, wheelbarrow, garden tools, seedling trays, plastic crates, water hose, organic liquid fertilizer, vermicast, fertilizers, plastic UV film,



plastic mulch and assorted vegetable seeds.

According to Barangay Captain Gina A. Arevalo, this assistance will further boost their existing community garden. This will inspire the newly-

organized Rural Improvement Club (RIC) and the youths especially the Sangguniang Kabataan to engage in agricultural activities.

Moreover, households especially those under the 4Ps program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will be encouraged to have their own container gardens with the seeds to be given to them.

Barangay councilor for Agriculture Nelia Atutubo added that their community supply organic fertilizers to the City Agriculture Office and attributed their skills from the trainings conducted by the DA Bicol and the Albay Provincial Agriculture Office (APAO).

For Urban Community Garden, the OPFA, AIA and LCVPA received a package of assistance totalling to about P1.4 million which included grass cutter, multi-cultivator, knapsack sprayer, water plastic drum, wheelbarrow, garden tools, soft pots, vegetable twine, seedling trays, plastic crates, water hose, assorted vegetable seeds, urea, complete fertilizer, organic fertilizer and plastic mulch.

Rosal underscored that this program will contribute to the establishment of a resilient food system by

showcasing and implementing modernized urban agriculture and urban gardens. Said projects are being implemented by DA-Bicol through the High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP).

(Jayson M. Gonzales)

Sorsogon farmers, LGUs receive P40.9-M worth farm machineries from DA-PhilMech

SORSOGON CITY-The Department of Agriculture in Bicol Region through the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) turned over farm machineries to different municipalities in Sorsogon on March 30, 2021. The turn over was held at the Regional Dairy Production and Technology Center, Brgy. Cabid-an, this City.

Included in the machineries turned over by the PhilMech were 17 units Four-Wheel Drive

Tractor, 9 units Rice Combine Harvester and 6 units Hand Tractor. These were purchased through the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF). Nineteen (19) farmers' association from 11 municipalities of Sorsogon will benefit from these machineries. These municipalities are Magallanes, Casiguran, Barcelona, Bulan, Irosin, Prieto Diaz, Santa Magdalena, Donsol, Castilla, Bulusan, Gubat, Juban, and Sorsogon. Likewise, the LGUs of Magallanes and Bulusan also received

some machineries.

In their respective video messages, PhilMech Executive Director Dr. Baldwin Jallorina and Senator Cynthia A. Villar, Chairperson Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food expressed their support to the Bicolano farmers. "Tanggapin po ninyo ang mga makinaryang ito na tulong mula sa gobyerno. Bagaman ay libre ito, nawa ay alagaan natin ang mga makinarya at gamitin nang husto at sama-sama nating baguhin ang mga imahe ng pagbubukid sa mga mata ng susunod na henerasyon." PhilMech Executive Director Baldwin Jallorina conveyed in his message.

DA RFO 5 outgoing Center Chief/Superintendent

Dolores Ricafranca, in her message expressed her gratitude in behalf of the farmers. "We are thankful to the Department of Agriculture especially to Phil Mech because on my retirement day after my 44 years of service in Agriculture, I have seen that the farmers' dreams are now coming into reality with these farm machineries to improve their productivity."

Also present were Acting Provincial Agriculturist Roberto D. Fortez; Sorsogon City Administrator Atty. Mark Gerald Guirindola; DA Agricultural Program Coordinating Officer Florentino Ubalde; and Engr. Jesse Lopez of Regional Agricultural Engineering Division.

(Lovella P. Guarin)

AMIA conducts climate forum for wet season cropping

SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR -The DA Bicol through the Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA) Project recently conducted a climate forum for wet season cropping to disseminate important updates on climate outlooks to the Local Government Units.

The online forum was participated in by 67 provincial and city/municipal agriculturists from the six provinces of the Bicol Region.

DA Bicol Regional Technical Operations Director Luz R. Marcelino in her welcome message, said that climate information is a powerful tool which can aid farmers in planning their farm activities and also for pest and disease detection. She commended the AMIA group headed by Lorenzo L. Alvina for coming up with the Regional Seasonal Climate Outlook and Advisory. Since 2017, the AMIA

group has been releasing this advisory to the 114 provincial and city/municipal LGUs and SUC partners before the start of every cropping season. This is also being posted in the DA Bicol website and social media pages. It contains climate outlook for a 6-month period, including rainfall data which were consolidated by AMIA. The one-pager advisory also contains possible impact of the prevailing climate to agriculture and the interventions available to vulnerable areas.

Marcelino urged the LGUs to adopt the climate resilient agri practices being recommended by the AMIA as these have already been proven in a number of trials conducted in AMIA villages. "AMIA practices would also be mainstreamed in all the programs of DA Bicol following Secretary William Dar's "OneDA" approach towards climate

resilient environment and digitalization phase," RTD Marcelino added.

Fred B. Consulta, Chief Meteorological Officer of PAGASA in Pili, Camarines Sur presented the seasonal climate outlook for May to

agriculture. He urged the farmers to plant early maturing varieties to lessen exposure of the crops to pest and diseases. "The moisture accumulated during typhoon Bising in April and the forecast normal to above normal rainfall especially in Masbate, is favorable for early planting of corn and high value crops. Peak planting for rice may occur in June and July



October 2021. He said that La Niña conditions continue to weaken and a transition to ENSO-neutral condition will be likely in May to July 2021. Lorenzo L. Alvina, Disaster Risk Reduction head and AMIA focal person of DA 5 discussed the impact of the climate outlook to

as sufficient moisture (>200 mm) may be available" Alvina added. Alvina stressed that unsynchronized and delayed planting of rice may lead to occurrence of transboundary pests and

(Please continue to page 7)

as very soon it will be upgraded into a university and one of the offerings they are preparing for is Development Communication which would be the first in the region.

Director Parot also thanked the DA for engaging and involving the ATI to

so we also adapted the on-line or virtual or blended scheme," she added.



be part of the partnership. She said that as the training arm of the DA their institute is always finding ways to reach and teach more farmers using traditional and modern methods to transfer technology. With the pandemic still raging, face-to-face trainings are not allowed for a big number of participants

Also present during the MOA signing were: Luz R. Marcelino, DA Regional Technical Director for Operations; Dr. Mary Grace DP. Rodriguez, Chief of Field Operations Division (DA); Dr. April Z. Luzon, Director, Institutional Planning and Development; Heiji Dimabogte, Radio Station Manager, Charles Bolival, Director Extension Service, (all from CSPC); Primalou Imperial, Chief, Information Service Section, ATI and ; Emily B. Bordado, chief, DA-RAFIS

(Emily B. Bordado)

HVCDP pushes for malunggay mass production and commercialization

To address huge demand on malunggay (Moringa oleifera) and create vibrant malunggay-based enterprises in Bicol, the High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) embarked on a P1million Malunggay Production Project.

The HVCDP initially targets to establish 20-hectare malunggay (Moringa oleifera) production areas in Bicol. In Camarines Sur 10 hectares are targeted; 3 hectares in Camarines Norte, Albay (5 hectares) and Catanduanes (2 hectares) within the year 2021.

The identified recipients of the project were validated last year. In Camarines Sur, the recipients include the Organized Vegetable Association of San Roque Sagumay; Monte Calvario Smart Farmers Association (MOCSPA); Buhi Diversified Agri Beneficiary; Guinaban Multi-Purpose Cooperative; Minalabac Farmers Association; Biong Farmers Association, Inc.; Sto. Niño Vegetable Grower Association; Agripreneur Farmers and Producers Association, Inc.; Curry Vegetable Association; NVAC (Naga View Adventist College).

In Camarines Norte, the target recipients are San Lorenzo Ruiz Farmers Agriculture Cooperative; Manlimosito Agro Farms Association; and Laniton GK Farmers Association all from San Lorenzo Ruiz.

In Albay, the target recipients are RIC Doña Mercedes; Muladbuacad Grande Samahang Magsasaka;

Women's Organization; AFBFPP Organization—all from Guinobatan; and Buang-odalo Vegetable Farmers Association from Tabaco City. In Catanduanes, the Virac Producers and Entrepreneur Association is the target recipient.

As an initial activity, the HVCDP conducted a two-day training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) on Malunggay

organic fertilizer; 1 kilogram malunggay seeds; 8,000 pcs Polyethylene bags; Black Fine Mesh Net; UV plastic; Water Hose; Plastic crates; Hand trowel; Hand fork Prong & Hoe Cultivator; Water plastic drum; Empty sacks; Laminated sacks

Dr. Mary Grace DP. Rodriguez, Regional Coordinator of the HVCDP and Chief of the Field Operations Division said that



Production held at the Macagang Business Center in Nabua, CamSur on March 24-25, 2021. Over 30 farmers' associations identified recipients of the Malunggay Production Project attended said training.

The farmers organizations will receive a production package worth P46,401.00. The package shall consist of 10 bags

these farmers' organizations will be linked to the Mauswag Agribusiness Inc. based in Curry, Pili, Camarines Sur. Owned by Vimildo Avanceña, the Mauswag Agribusiness Inc. is a commercial producer and processor of malunggay powder which are being sold to pharmaceutical companies, supermarkets, and bakeries. Avanceña is also a member

of the Moringaling Philippines Foundation, Inc. (MPFI), an umbrella organization of malunggay producers and processors in the Philippines which is connecting all stakeholders towards a globally competitive moringa industry.

Malunggay is seen as a solution to end the nutritional deficiencies common in Philippine rural areas and urban slums.

Studies have shown that 100 grams of malunggay leaves contain 9 times the protein of yogurt, 10 times the vitamin A of carrots, 15 times the potassium of bananas, 17 times the calcium of milk and 12 times the vitamins C of oranges. (source: Malunggay Industry Roadmap 2019-2024 by Moringaling Philippines Foundation, Inc.)

Malunggay has great potential and demand locally and abroad due to its high nutritional content. It is also called superfood due to its richness in antioxidant properties. The malunggay leaves and seed oil are the major materials used in the food and nutrition industry.

Avanceña was the resource speaker during the two-day training which taught the malunggay participants on malunggay cultural management, propagation techniques, pest and disease prevention and control and Good Agricultural Practices. Meanwhile, Arlene San Buenaventura discussed the elements and process of GAP certification. The training was facilitated by the Institutional Development Unit headed by Ellen Villareal.

(Lovella P. Guarin)

Farmers urged to avail of GAP certification

SAN AGUSTIN, PILI, CAMARINES SUR –To ensure food safety and assure quality of agricultural products while taking into account environmental protection and that of workers' health, safety and welfare, the Department of Agriculture urges farm owners to take advantage of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) Certification Program through conduct of online trainings.

Over 100 participants composed of farm owners, Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs), and personnel of Research Outreach Stations (ROSeS) attended the series of online Advocacy Training & Updates for Stakeholders on GAP Certification held on April 15, 2021 for Camarines Sur; May 5 for Cam. Norte; May 6 for Albay; May 10 for Masbate; and May 11 for Catanduanes.

Rodel P. Tornilla, DA Bicol Regional Executive Director (RED), in his welcome message, said that food safety, which is an integral part of food security, is essential in protecting consumers from the hazards of foodborne illnesses that may be introduced at different stages of the food value chain starting from production at the farm and all the way to retail and food preparation. "As such, following a preventive control process is an important aspect to consider for the elimination of sources of food safety hazards before consumption instead of relying only on inspections at the end of the process" he added.

That's why the Department of Agriculture is implementing regulations on food safety requirement as provided for under Republic Act No. 10611, or

"An Act to Strengthen the Food Safety Regulatory System in the Country to Protect Consumer Health and Facilitate Market Access of Local Foods and Food Products". It is also known as the Food Safety Act Of 2013, and the ASEAN Good Agricultural Practices (ASEAN GAP) for the production of fresh fruits and vegetables in the ASEAN Region. Director Tornilla also said that PHILGAP program is aimed at

in 2008, Cambodia in 2010 and Brunei in 2014. In the Philippines, the PhilGAP started in 2006," Tornilla explained.

Meanwhile, Rosita Imperial, Chief of the Regulatory Division which implements PHILGAP Program said that the Code of Good Agricultural Practices is a set of consolidated safety and quality standards formulated by the DA for the production, harvesting and on-farm postharvest handling and storage of agri produce. This code of practice takes into account the Philippine GAP for Fruits and Vegetables which is based on the concept of Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points and

health, safety and welfare, and product quality. Compliance of farm owners with this set of practices enhances the trade and competitiveness of the country's agricultural products as well as promote consumer protection against food safety hazards", Imperial explained. Imperial added that PHILGAP Certification is based on the on-site pre-assessment or inspection at the farmer's farm location. Validation of farm is also being conducted at various stages of crop production.

It also entails dissemination of information on the protocol and standards. During validation, the farm will be assessed if compliant to the requirements of health and safety. Farm records including the use of fertilizers, mulches, substrates, fumigation, and irrigation will also be checked.

In the event of non-compliance, corrective actions will be recommended. The principles behind Good Agricultural Practices are: CLEAN SOIL, CLEAN WATER, CLEAN HANDS and CLEAN SURFACES.

The topics discussed during the online training were: GAP Certification Application, Requirements and Updates; and GAP on Produce Quality discussed by Helen Jovillano, Agriculturist I of Regulatory Division; GAP on Food Safety by Gisel Flores, Agriculturist I; Workers Welfare, Health and Safety by Arlene San Buenaventura, Senior Science Research Specialist; and Environmental Management by Edith Pelin, Senior Agriculturist and GAP Inspector.

There are 28 GAP certified farms in Bicol as of this writing: 5 in Albay; 2 in Camarines Norte; 16 in Camarines Sur; 4 in Masbate; and 1 in Sorsogon.

(Lovella P. Guarin)



facilitating access of our farmers' produce to neighboring ASEAN market and other foreign markets. "The ASEAN GAP was developed in 2006 to harmonize existing national GAP program or to serve as a model for adoption in countries without a national GAP scheme in order to facilitate trade between those countries. Other countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore started with Good Agricultural Practices in 2004. Thailand started earlier in 2003, Vietnam

management principles from farm to table with emphasis on the following six (6) key areas: Farm location; Farm environment; Farm structure and facility maintenance; Farming practices; Worker's health and safety; and Farm management (farm records, traceability, staff training).

"The practices in this Code aim to prevent and minimize risk occurrences that include those of food safety, environmental impact, worker

AMIA conducts climate...(from page 5)

diseases such as Rice Tungro Virus and Fall Army Worm (FAW).

Meanwhile, Janice Obias of the Philippine Crops Insurance Corporation (PCIC) discussed the insurance coverage for crops and livestock. Created in 1978, the PCIC's principal mandate is to provide insurance protection to the country's agricultural producers particularly the subsistence farmers.

Crops losses arising from natural calamities such as

typhoons, floods, drought, earthquake, volcanic eruption as well as plant diseases and pest infestation are covered by the PCIC.

The PCIC also provides insurance for non-crop agri asset losses due to perils for which the asset has been insured against. Obias added that agri insurance serves as an effective financial adaptation measure against the destructive effects of climate change to crops.

The PCIC's insurance lines include: rice crop

insurance, corn crop insurance, livestock insurance, fisheries insurance, non-crop agricultural asset insurance, high value commercial crop insurance, and term insurance packages.

Marissa Joy Beriña of the Field Operations Division presented DA's interventions to farmers for the wet season cropping.

Mark Ocbina of AMIA presented the Rainfall Tracker application being developed by AMIA

using real time data from Department of Science and Technology (DOST)-Advanced Science and Technology Institute (ASTI).

The Rainfall Tracker can serve as early warning to areas located along river basin. AMIA will install 2 new Automated Weather Stations (AWS) in Tiwi and Paracale to come up with a more localized climate information for the benefit of the farmers.

(Lovella P. Guarin)

ASF in Bicol on a downtrend...(from page 1)

reported cases but are considered pink zone since they are adjacent to infected zones; 10 are free zones and 6 are protected zones.

As of May 24 this year a cumulative total of 22,026 heads of hogs have been depopulated owned by 3,546 raisers. Of these 14,296 pigs owned by 2,614 raisers have been indemnified by the Department of Agriculture totalling to P71,480,000 million.

The DBM has just released another P8.885 million and an additional P7.350 million which are for obligation to be used for indemnification for the remaining unpaid hog raisers whose hogs were depopulated in the Bicol region.

The last province to be infected by the ASF is the island province of Masbate but the spread of the disease was immediately and effectively contained and limited to only three municipalities and 10 barangays after Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla immediately deployed two teams of technical staff who assisted in the monitoring, surveillance, depopulation and information dissemination campaign. *“Early reporting is vital for an immediate, coordinated and efficient response and enforcement of control measures”* says Rosita Imperial, chief of the Regulatory Division and also a member of the RQRT *“The successful control efforts also lie with the strong collaboration between the DA, the LGUs, partner-agencies and stakeholders,”* adds Dr. Josefina Bañadera.

Some local chief executives in Masbate and Albay provided assistance in cash or in kind to affected farmers in addition to the indemnification provided by the DA.

The putting up checkpoints which are really manned by authorized and knowledgeable personnel strategically located within the province and the issuance

of Executive Orders and ordinances by the LCES restricting entry of viajeros or designating only one pickup area also contributed to curbing the further spread of the virus, says Dr. Alex Templonuevo, OIC-Regional Director of the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS).

“With this slowdown or downtrend we are now set to implement the Recovery, Rehabilitation and Repopulation Assistance Program for ASF-Affected and Non-ASF-Affected Areas following the guidelines stipulated in Administrative Order No. 6 issued by DA Secretary William D. Dar on February 10 this year.”

This was the statement of Dr. Edgar A. Madrid, Regional Technical Director for Research and Regulations and incident commander of RQRT.

The primary objective of this program is to release an area or zone from “quarantine” following successive negative surveillance results in the Quarantine Zone; to restore livelihood and economic activities in red zones; increase resilience and capacities of pork producers in managing future disease outbreaks and guide commercial farms in their recovery, rehabilitation and repopulation efforts.

Release from quarantine to recovery would entail compliance with cleaning and proper disinfection procedures and observance of 30 days downtime to further decrease the area’s bacterial load and the risk of residual ASF virus. Environmental sampling or bioassay will be conducted through collection of samples from well water, topsoil, burial site, surfaces of pens, canals, pathways feeds etc. Two screening a week apart will be done. If results are negative the farm qualifies to receive sentinel animals.

To date, the Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory has diagnosed 9,433 animals; conducted

1,945 field investigation, collected and submitted for analysis 8,088 samples of blood, organs, meat & tissues and conducted 1,266 environmental swab.

The initial number of the restocking animals

the recommendation of the Regional Quarantine Officer and submission of documentary evidences.

The RQRT Bicol has initially identified and classified 14 ASF-infected municipalities which have no



to be distributed through eligible beneficiaries shall be determined by the TWG created by the DA Regional Office for the purpose.

Previously ASF-infected municipalities would qualify for progressive upgrading from RED to PINK zone if they have successfully implemented “Bantay ASF sa Barangay” Program. This is a community-based approach to prevent, control, and manage ASF applying sound epidemiologic principles; intensified risk assessment, surveillance and monitoring, stringent biosecurity implementation and use of available technology such as the use of ASF rapid test kits in cooperation with the LGUs and swine raisers. Based on Administrative Order No.6 issued recently by Agriculture secretary Dar local declaration of ASF free status at the city/municipal level shall be done by the Provincial Veterinary Office while local declaration at the provincial level shall be done by the DA Regional Executive Director upon

reported ASF case for the past 90 days as gray zones where environmental samples were taken and tested. Those areas with negative results after the second screening will be eligible for the deployment of sentinel pigs.

The Bureau of Animal Industry through its Regional Veterinary Quarantine Office has 23 existing and operational veterinary quarantine checkpoints all over the region even prior to the outbreak of the ASF in Bicol.

From March last year to May 25 this year it has confiscated/condemned 106 heads of hogs and prevented the entry and ordered return to origin some 2,128 heads of pigs and 67,730kg of meat. The Regional Veterinary Quarantine Office has likewise condemned and confiscated a total of 38,807 kilograms of meat and meat products. The National Meat Inspection Service in the region on the other hand, has confiscated a total of 450,331 kilograms of meat and meat products and 25 heads hogs.

DA-PRDP Bicol joins 12th World Bank Implementation Support Mission to the PRDP

The Department of Agriculture Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP) Regional Project Coordination Office (RPCO) in Bicol joined the 12th World Bank Implementation Support Mission (ISM) Kickoff Meeting conducted virtually on May 24, 2021.

This 12th World Bank ISM aims to highlight the progress made by the Project since the 11th WB ISM conducted in November 2020. Project implementation strategies and innovations done to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic and adapt to the new normal, implementation progress per component, institutional mainstreaming, fund utilization and additional financing will also be discussed during the three-week activity.

This year's ISM to the PRDP South Luzon Cluster will feature PRDP-Bicol's enterprise development (I-REAP) subproject Sweet Potato-Based Products Processing Enterprise in Brgy. Anislag Daraga, Albay and the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded Marine Reserve and Fish Sanctuary Protection and Reservation Bantigue Marine Reserve and Fish Sanctuary and the Milkfish Culture and Marketing in Pilar, Sorsogon.

About 307 participants from the WB headed by WB task Team Leader Eli Weiss, DA Secretary William Dar, PRDP National Project Coordination Office led by Undersecretary for Operations and PRDP National Project Director Engr. Ariel T. Cayan, Project Support Offices and RPCOs nationwide, DA

officials, and members of the National Project Advisory Board attended the said Kickoff Meeting. PRDP-Bicol organic and hired staff from all components and units of the Project, headed by Regional Executive Director and concurrently Regional Project Director Rodel P. Tornilla virtually represented the region in the activity. "I am truly grateful to what the PRDP has accomplished towards the realization of providing what is best for our farmers and fisherfolk while promoting good governance, transparency, and accountability at all stages of the project cycle," DA Secretary William D. Dar said. "We are really looking forward to interacting with all of you from the Project progress since

the last Mission and also solve and discuss any bottlenecks that you may have so that we can move forward". WB Task Team Leader Eli Weiss said.

In his presentation of PRDP Progress and Updates on Agreed Actions of the 11th WB ISM, DA-PRDP OIC National Deputy Project Director Shandy Hubilla discussed the component and GEF updates and milestones, PRDP's new way of doing things to adapt to the new normal, the Project's efforts to support digital agriculture, status of fund utilization and updates on the second additional financing.

The Mission will also be conducted in honor and in remembrance of World Bank Rural Development Specialist and Former World Bank Task Team Leader Carolina Figueroa-Geron who passed away in April 2021.

(Annielyn L. Baleza)

Bicol's palay and corn...(from page 1)

from 68, 889 hectares in Q1 2020 to 72,018 hectares in Q1 of 2021; and to the almost 30% growth in Albay's rice production.

He also attributed Albay's increase in production to its high utilization of hybrid and certified seeds. The province was not heavily affected by flooding brought by several typhoons that visited Bicol region in the last quarter of 2020, Alvina added.

Furthermore, the lesser drought occurrence despite the La Niña phenomenon was favorable to rainfed areas during the first quarter.

Four provinces of Bicol recorded growth in area harvested to rice in Q1 of 2021—Camarines Sur increased by 1,750 hectares (4.9%) at 37,480 has.

In 2021; Albay increased by 545 hectares at 10,755 has; Camarines Norte increased by 140 hectares at 6,329 has.; and Catanduanes increased its rice area by 854 hectares at 2,919 has even if three typhoons battered this island. Despite the increase in area harvested to palay in Catanduanes and Camarines Norte, palay production in said provinces as well as in Masbate and Sorsogon declined in the first quarter as a result of three typhoons numerous typhoons that passed through Bicol Region in the last quarter of 2020.

Alvina attributed the overall production increase of Bicol to the massive distribution

of inbred rice seeds under RCEF for Dry Season 2020-2021.

Under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), a total of 129,045 bags (20kg/bag) of inbred certified palay seeds were distributed to 56,018 rice farmers.

The DA also provided Financial Subsidy to Rice Farmers (FSRF) worth P317.4 Million to a total of 63,476 RSBSA registered rice farmers in four provinces included in RCEF in 2020.

Meanwhile, under the Rice Resiliency Program (RRP) II, a total of 72,383 bags were distributed (20,000 bags Inbred Certified Seeds and 52,383 bags Hybrid Seeds) to 77,048 rice farmers covering 72,074 rice areas. P211M worth of fertilizer vouchers were released benefiting 85,641 farmers in 88,791.95 rice areas.

Additional 592 hectares new rice areas were also irrigated in 2020 with the completion of 13 units diversion dam and 8 units irrigation canal.

Also, 55 hectares of rice areas were revived with the rehabilitation of 1 unit Small Water Impounding Project (SWIP) in Camarines Norte and 1 diversion dam in Albay. Corn Production Corn production for Q1 of 2021 reached 58,562 MT, higher by 6,533.93 MT or 12.55% from last year's 52,028 MT corn production in the same period.

All provinces except

Masbate registered an increase in corn production in Q1 of 2021. Albay's corn production reached 7,010 MT, higher by 1,336 MT (23.5% increase). Camarines Sur got 37,503 MT which is higher by 5,155 MT (15.93% increase). Camarines Norte got 661 MT in Q1 of 2021, which is



higher by 31 MT (5% increase). Catanduanes recorded an all time high increase of 216% in corn production despite the typhoons in 2020, at 107.65 MT. Sorsogon's corn production increased by 50% or 35MT at 104.45 MT in Q1 of 2021. Masbate's corn production declined at 13,176 MT in Q1 of 2021.

Alvina said that the increase in corn production may be attributed to the additional 1,961 hectares or 7.12% increase in area harvested to corn in Bicol. Bicol's area harvested to corn reached 29,486 hectares as all six provinces as a result

of expansion in corn area. Alvina also cited the increase in adoption of genetically modified (GM) hybrid corn which is less susceptible to Fall Armyworm attack.

The Corn program also provided various support services, interventions on

production and post-harvest, farm mechanization and capacity building through clustering and strengthening of farmers' associations and coops. There are 57 corn clusters in Bicol as of this writing. In Q4 of 2020, the Corn Program distributed 4,291 bags GM corn seeds which covered 2,145 hectares; 190 packs sweet corn seeds which covered 32 hectares to support food production during pandemic.

Other interventions provided to farmers were 5 units tractor, 4 units corn planter, 1 unit recirculating dryer and 6 units PISOS.

Tungro infestation reported in Albay town

Some 122 hectares of ricefields tilled by 114 farmers in the municipality of Libon in Albay were reported by the Office of the Municipal Agriculturist to be infected with Rice Tungro Virus (RTV) which results to stunted growth of the rice plant and a reduction in the number of panicles. The symptoms of infected plants are the usual yellow orange color of the leaves which start in clusters and later on spreading in other rice plants.

Already the Department of Agriculture has initially provided the MA of Libon 20 liters of insecticide to be sprayed in the affected areas. The 20 liters can already cover 80 hectares.

According to Giovanni Valenciano, OIC-Chief, Regional Crop Pest Management Center some of the reasons for the occurrence of tungro infestations are the presence of green leafhoppers (GLH)

which serve as vectors or carriers of the virus; the practice of some farmers of continuous planting of rice in the field without allowing for rest or fallow period; non-synchronous planting of farmers within the contiguous area which allows for the completion of the life cycle of destructive insects like the green leafhoppers; the use of rice varieties which are susceptible to the tungro virus or the continuous use of the same rice variety for successive cropping.

The age of the rice plant is also a factor that can contribute to the tungro infection. Rice plants at their early stage or young age are more susceptible and prone to tungro infestations and the manifestation of symptoms usually occur during maximum tillering stage. Monitoring of the population of GLH and the presence of inoculum in the area should give warning to the farmers for

possible infestation of RTV. Almost all of those affected rice plants in Libon are in their vegetative stage. These were those planted late or behind the usual planting period most likely because most farmers have to replant after their rice crops for the wet season cropping were destroyed by the three successive typhoons during the last quarter of the 2020. Most farmers too in the municipality and in the adjacent towns also practice three cropping which do not allow for a rest period for the rice crops.

Valenciano recalled that a few years back this viral rice disease was also major problem of the farmers in the town of Polangui particularly in barangay Balangibang. It was only when the farmers heeded the recommendations of the DA and the extension workers to practice again synchronous planting that the tungro infection in the area was minimized.

DA Regional Director Rodel P. Tornilla who immediately met with the Rice Technical team of the DA regional office instructed the team to provide the

necessary interventions and to disseminate the right information to the farmers regarding this disease. He said that "should massive spraying be necessary then this could be done using the drone". He emphasized that "what is needed and more effective is a group or community approach in addressing this problem.

Valenciano advises farmers that if ever they observe symptoms of the disease to immediately uproot the infected plants and surrounding grasses or weeds to prevent further spread of the virus; drain the paddies so that the weeds would not thrive; allow a rest period of at least one month for the rice field before transplanting again.

He cautions farmers that chemical spraying should be resorted to only when necessary and or the damage has already exceeded the economic threshold level. Further, he emphasized that spraying should not be done on the seedbed and when the palay grains are already more than 60 days.

(Emily B. Bordado)

DA Bicol uses drone technology to control rice tungro virus

One of the measures employed by the DA Bicol to effectively control the Green Leaf Hoppers that cause Rice Tungro Virus incidence in four Albay towns was the use of agricultural drone sprayer or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) in spraying insecticides to affected rice paddies.

Earlier this week, DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla deployed four technical teams to each municipality/city reportedly affected by tungro virus, namely Libon, Polangui, Oas and Tabaco City, for the conduct of rapid assessment, field validation and coordination with LGUs.

The teams were composed of personnel from the Field Operations Division (FOD), Integrated Laboratories Division-Regional Crops Protection Center and Research Division.

Drone spraying was conducted in a hectare of rice field in vegetative to maturity stages in Balolo, Libon on April 28. In Polangui, 11.15 hectares Tungro-infested rice farms planted to hybrid and inbred rice varieties at vegetative stage in barangay Kinale were also treated with insecticide through drone sprayer.

Other affected rice fields were treated with chemicals through the use of knapsack sprayer and power sprayer.

Chemical insecticides were also distributed to LGUS and farmers for the spot application and control of GLH. Dr. Mary Grace Rodriguez, Chief of the Field Operations Division said that as part of its assistance, the DA 5 Rice Program distributed 20 knapsack sprayers and 20 laminated sacks



each to the LGUs of Libon, Oas, Ligao City, Tabaco City, and Polangui for distribution to affected farmers.

The Rice Program also lent one power sprayer to each municipality to be used for a month. DA Bicol RTD for Operations Luz R. Marcelino said that DA

RFO 5 continues to partner with PhilRice Bicol, LGUs, farmers associations and other stakeholders in the prevention, and monitoring

for early detection and control of rice tungro virus.

Lorenzo Alvina, head of the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) team and Rice and Corn Program Coordinator, said that the DA RFO 5 is studying the use of UAV for agricultural research and crops production.

(Next page please)

DA Bicol uses drone...(from page 10)

He added that the current infestation of Fall Armyworm in corn and Tungro in rice fields can be controlled through the application of insecticides. However, the conventional method that is manual spraying is risky for farmers and takes longer time to apply.

The drone sprayer, meanwhile can cover 20-28 hectares per day at 8-hour operation and can spray 12-Liters of insecticide per operation. Alvina added that the observed advantages of the drone technology are



the improved precision and calculation of pesticide solutions based on the computed area using GPS applications. "Chemical spraying however, should be resorted to only when necessary or the damage has reached a severe level," Giovanni Valenciano, chief of the RCPC said. "Spraying should not be done on the seedbed or when the palay grains are already more than 60 days."

(Lovella P. Guarin)

with reports from FOD
photo credits:
DRR/FOD/ILD/Research teams

DA Bicol inaugurates...(from page 1)

for ISO for Quality Management System Accreditation, says DA-Bicol Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla. "These buildings are just one aspect of it. We have also allocated budget for the procurement of the state-of-the-art equipment and facilities and we are putting the right and best people to perform the tasks and make these facilities function efficiently and effectively," he adds.

As with the other infrastructures now being constructed within the DA compound Tornilla explains that this is aligned with the DA's thrust of modernizing agriculture.

This integration and strengthening of our laboratory network system is also in line with the "ONE-DA" Masterplan being pushed by Secretary William D. Dar to help prime our national and regional laboratory services to tighten biosafety and bio security measures against infectious plant and animal diseases such as the African Swine Fever (ASF) in hogs, Avian Influenza in poultry, Foot-and-Mouth disease in livestock, Fall Armyworm in corn among others.

The new complex is located inside the 71-hectare DA compound in this municipality.

The proposal for this complex was initially crafted three years ago by then RCPC Head, Dr. Evangeline de la Trinidad upon the prodding of then RED Abelardo Bragas and then RTD Elena de los Santos and RTD Rodel Tornilla.

Construction began during the term of Rosita Imperial as ILD chief until the term of Tirso Perlas.

The ILD which is

in Camalig, Albay. The RADDL offers laboratory services for livestock which include parasitology, pathology, serology, virology, microbiology and molecular biology tests. RADDL also conducts ASF diagnosis using Real-time Polymerase Chain Reaction (RTY-PCR). It also uses Fluorescent Antibody Test for Rabies.

Meanwhile, the Regional Soils Laboratory which used to be based in Naga City is now headed by Mary Elizabeth S. Banda.

It conducts soil testing

compost, animal wastes, plant tissue samples and other ameliorants. It also provides technical assistance to researchers, field technicians, students and other individuals, and LGU's on proper land husbandry and promotes Soil Testing Program using Soil Test Kits.

The Regional Feed Chemical Analysis Laboratory headed by Coren Holly G. Martinez on the other hand conducts laboratory and chemicals analyses for determining quality and nutritive value and determining trace minerals of feeds and feed ingredients; conducts aflatoxin analyses for feed ingredients, feed formulation and corn samples for corn quality monitoring and food safety

For its part the Regional Crop Production Center-Plant Health Clinic headed by Giovanni Valenciano focuses on plant disease diagnosis, plant pest identification, and control.

The simple inauguration ceremonies was attended only by selected DA employees. This is part of the month-long celebration of the Farmers' and Fisherfolk month.



composed of about 40 staff and personnel is now headed by Dr. Rona Bernaldes who is also the head of the RADDL which used to be based

and recommends tentative fertilizer usage in major food crops; conducts physical/chemical analysis and conducts quality test of soil, water, fertilizer,

Kadiwa Master Chef Cook-Off marks DA-Bicol's Filipino Food Month 2021 celebration

The Department of Agriculture (DA)-Bicol held a cooking contest among its employees on April 23, 2021 at the DA Malasakit Center in Pili, Camarines Sur to mark the Filipino Food Month celebration.

Dubbed as “Kadiwa Master Chef Cook-Off,” the activity aims to highlight the use of local farmers’ produce from the Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita retail outlets as the only source of ingredients in preparing Filipino dishes in line with the theme “Iba’t Ibang Luto, Pinoy ang Pusong (Different Dishes, Pinoy at Heart).”

“At the Department of Agriculture, our focus is on food production. Because of this pandemic na-emphasize ang pangangailangan sa pagkain para tayo mag-survive sa pandemyang ito. Ito pong activity na ito should be a tribute to the ingenuity ng ating mga tauhan,” Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla said. For her part, Regional Technical Director (RTD) for Operations Luz R. Marcelino said that the activity is a great opportunity to promote the marketing and innovation of farmers’ produce. She also underscored the essence of making use of ingredients that are in season.



DA-Bicol through the Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division (AMAD) headed by Adelina A. Losa

provided each team with P1,500 to purchase all the ingredients they need from the Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita retail outlet inside the DA compound. AMAD also provided all contestants with cooking stove and cooking utensils. The contestants were given 30 minutes to buy all the needed ingredients, one hour and 10 minutes to prepare the dish, 10 minutes for plating, and 10 minutes to prepare the title cards and recipes.

The judges rated the dishes based on taste and nutritional value (50%), creativity (20%), and technique in terms of execution, use of ingredients, and cost-efficiency (30%).

Louie Cortez and Noriel Gallarte of the Office of the Regional Executive Director were named Kadiwa Master Chef 2021 with a cash prize worth P5,000 for their Mixed Vegetable Fritter. Irish April Oliver and Emegene San Buenaventura of the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) tied with Lea Capucan and Wilbina Barnedo of the Research Division as second place winners for their Farmer’s Bounty (Sweet and Spicy Adobo, Ensalada, with Camote Fries) and Cordon

Green, respectively. Jefferson Villaezar and Paulo Royoll of the Field Operations Division (FOD) won third place for

their Chicken Adobo ala Potoy. They received cash prizes worth P3,000 and



P1,000, respectively. Non-winners were given P500 cash as consolation prizes.

Other entries prepared by the contestants were Pilar Version Laing with Garden Salad, Bistek-style Tuna Steak with Pako Salad, Adobo with Pineapple ala C, Adobong Isda with Ensaladang Gulay, and LABer’s Fish Salpicao.

RTD for Research and Regulations Dr. Edgar R. Madrid said that the activity promotes cooking Filipino dishes which are safe, delicious and nutritious. He also encouraged everyone to support locally-cooked food with local ingredients. “Tangkilikin

natin ang sariling atin. At the Department of Agriculture, palagi nating pinu-push yung cooking of local dish because we want to help our local farmers and fisherfolk continuously produce our own food. In that way, we are helping them to increase their income and production,” he added.

DA-Bicol observed the

health protocols and guidelines set by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) while conducting the activity.

Filipino Food Month celebration started in 2018 when President Rodrigo



Duterte signed on April 13, in the same year, Presidential Proclamation No. 469 declaring the month of April as National Filipino Food Month.

The month-long celebration is led by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the Department



of Agriculture (DA), and the Philippine Culinary Heritage Movement (PCHM).

Aside from promoting the country’s culinary traditions and treasures and their role in Filipino culture and heritage, the Filipino Food Month celebration also aims to support local industries as well as the agri-fishery sector nationwide.

(Annielyn L. Balaza)

Simple but meaningful celebration marked Farmers' and Fisherfolk's Month

Various yet simple activities gave color to the celebration of the Farmers' and Fisherfolk's month and St. Isidore's feast day at the Department of Agriculture Regional Office in Bicol on May 14, 2021 amidst the raging COVID-19 pandemic.

At 6:00 in the morning, selected farmers toured the 13-hectare hybrid rice derby site at the Central Bicol Experiment Station inside the DA compound. Dubbed as "Hybrid Rice Derby Site Farm Walk and Digital Agricultural Equipment and Farm Machinery Demonstration", the activity aimed to showcase the different high yielding hybrid rice varieties and demonstrate new farm machineries and equipment developed by private companies.

Eleven private seed companies participated in the derby. Among the hybrid rice varieties planted at the derby site were: Bigante plus, AZ7888 and Habilis plus produced by Bayer Crop Science Philippines; S6003 and NK5017 by Syngenta Philippines, Inc.; SL20H and SL68H by SL Agritech Corporation; PHB79

five (5) on-going hybrid rice demo farms in the Bicol which was initiated by the DA Bicol Rice Program for this dry season 2020-21. Other hybrid rice derby sites are located in Labo, Camarines Norte; Malinao, Albay; CBSUA Calabanga campus, and Lagonoy in Camarines Sur.

Meanwhile, new farm machineries were also showcased and demonstrated to the farmers, namely: 4WD tractor and precision seeder by Brixton Construction and Industrial Supply Corporation; drone sprayer by DA 5 DRR team; drone seeder by New Hope Corporation; and combine harvester by AIMS Agri Ventures, Inc.

In his message to the farmers, DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla said that the "farm walk" was conceptualized to give the farmers an upclose and personal encounter with the high-performing hybrid rice varieties and compare them to their own farms. *"Diyang natin makikita kung ano ang dapat nating i-adopt sa ating mga sakahan at ibalita sa mga kapwa natin magsasaka ang mga best practices dito. As you tour around our office,*

I also want you to see the developments inside the DA regional office such as the newly completed integrated laboratories complex. We believe that improving our facilities

will also lead to improved services to the farmers" director Tornilla explained.

Director Tornilla added that the "farm walk" and other activities were also a tribute to the farmers and fisherfolks who continuously toil to provide food for the people.

In honor of St. Isidore -the patron saint of the farmers-the nine-day novena culminated with a solemn

mass which was followed by the blessing and inauguration of the newly completed Integrated Laboratories Division



Also on the same day, the DA RFO 5 welcomed Jose R. Cordero as Farmer Director for the month of May. As the chairperson of the Regional Agriculture and Fishery Council (RAFC) in Bicol, Cordero has been designated by Secretary William Dar to assume the roles and tasks of the DA Regional Executive Director (RED) particularly those non-policy determining activities. Director Cordero thanked the DA family for the warm welcome. *"Ito po ay isang magandang hamon sa private sector bilang farmer director. It is an honor to be surrounded with hardworking and dedicated people and I'm happy with this new role knowing that I*

attainment of food security and sufficiency in the region" Director Cordero added.

Director Cordero has been serving the Agriculture and Fishery Council (AFC) for four decades. He started as Municipal AFC Chairperson of Tigaon, Camarines Sur, and later on elected as Provincial

AFC Chair of Camarines Sur, RAFC Vice Chair and now the Chairperson. *"Ang RAFC ay isang malakas na consultative partner ng DA in the formulation of policies to uplift the lives of farmers and fisherfolk"*, added Director Cordero.

In the afternoon, the highlight of the celebration was the nationwide "Pinaka" contest which was participated by about 80 farmers who submitted their biggest, heaviest or longest harvests.

Farmers in Camarines Sur submitted their entries to the DA RFO 5 while farmers in the other provinces brought their PINAKA commodities to the DA



am with a very talented and powerhouse team, together with the RAFC Regional Executive Officer Aloha Gigi I. Bañaria, EXECOM officers and Sectoral Chairpersons who will give the support for

Research Outreach Stations (ROSEs) in their respective provinces. The judging was simultaneously conducted and livestreamed on social media on May 14, 2021.

(Lovella P. Guarin)



and PHB77 by Corteva Agriscience; US88 and TH82 by Seedworks Phils., Inc.; Mestizo 20 by DOSEPCO; BioRice453 by BioSeed Research Phils, Inc.; LP534 and LP 205 by Longping Tropical Rice Development Inc; Jackpot WinAll 102 by Leads Agri Products; and Hatao Unlad by Tao Commodity Trader, Inc.

This hybrid rice derby site was only one among the



This woman farmer creates a tapestry of food crops, ornamentals and herbs in her farm

by Emily B. Bordado

Mhina Peñaflorida, who hails from barangay Hibao, Ocampo in Camarines Sur is ingenious, versatile, resilient, industrious and passionate in everything that she does. She could easily adapt to many situations and have varied inherent and acquired skills which she has found practical applications to a variety of situations even amidst odds and difficulties she has encountered in life.

Like many other farmers she is still coping with the adverse effects of COVID-19 and the devastation wrought by the successive typhoons last year. On the personal side she is still grieving over the demise of her husband who succumbed to cardiac arrest also last year. *“Nag pondo muna ako magtrabaho digdi sa farm for about two months after the death of my husband. Pero sabi ngani dapat tuloy and buhay kahit ano mang dumating na bagyo sa buhay.”* she shared.

Today, Mhina is moving on and is ready to face whatever challenges may still come her way. Living up to the meaning of her name Mhina, she is a delightful person and pleasant to talk with. She is again in her usual self –bubbly, full of energy and bright ideas for her farm. She was among the first to avail of the loan from the DA-ACPC under the Financial Assistance for Women in Agriculture & Fisheries or Agripinay whose

livelihood had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Just a few months after the devastating typhoons and the storm in her personal life Mhina’s farm is again vibrant, colorful and teeming with various crops.

The 2.5 hectare farm she is tending with the help of her son is located on the slopes of Mt. Isarog in the upland barangay of Gatbo owned by a friend but which she has developed into a diversified farm. The farm which is now attracting visitors is a sight to behold—a patchwork of ornamental and flowering plants, herbs in myriad colors interspersed with vegetables, root crops, spices and other edibles in rows and in tiers or terraced like fashion. She has a little of almost any crop planted in clusters. Some plots of



lettuce, strawberries, radish, spring onions, okra, basil, sweet potato, cassava, squash, peanuts, cucumber, upland kangkong, tomatoes, red cardinal grapes.

The farm is also abloom with flowering plants and other ornamentals which not only give color to the farm but also serve as pests repellent such as marigold, zenia, Malaysian mumps, mayanas, celosia, red violet balls and herbs such as artamisa, malvarosa and aloe vera, blue ternate and many others. There was a time when it was also teeming with sunflowers.

On the upper tier of the farm she planted corn while on the uppermost tier over a hundred dragon fruits are likewise planted in rows intercropped with eggplants and queen pineapple along the borders.

Farther up she also planted cacao. Before the typhoons she has about 800 cacao plants including the Criollo variety or white cocoa beans but only about 500 were left which are



now beginning to bear fruits. An active member of the Bicol Cacao Growers Association, she is engaged in cacao beans processing and among her products are: tablea chocolate, choco peanut spread, cacao sandwich spread, cacao nibs, and chocolate bitter sweet. She has also processed

malunggay powder and rice brew. These products which carries the brand Mhina, she sells to friends and acquaintances by order through on-line or she personally goes around government and private offices to sell them. Before the pandemic she also actively participated in agri-fairs and special events not only in their municipality but also in Naga City and other

places where she promotes and sells her products and also establishes linkage with fellow entrepreneurs and clients.

Not only Mhina has a green thumb. She is endowed with a great sense of inventiveness. She loves to experiment and try things out. Although she had no formal training in agriculture she has been keenly observing the peculiarities and interrelationships of each plant including the behavior and cycle of the pests that threaten the crops. She for example observed that the pechay plants are prone to and attracting too many pests so she decided to forego planting this leafy vegetable.



She started developing the farm in 2019 planting strawberry made popular in their municipality by a young farmer Leo Libreja where she bought her first strawberry seedlings. But her first attempt was not successful as most of the strawberry seedling died despite all her efforts to save them. Not easily discouraged, she bought again planting materials and made her own experiment.

To ensure she has a fall back in case the strawberry production would fail again she intercropped lettuce. She planted the Sylvia green and red rapids lettuce varieties which are fast growing and are not too delicate or sensitive to too much sunlight. She harvests about 15 kilos weekly which she sells at P300 per kilo.



Photo from Mhina Peñaflorida

Her second try in strawberry production was a success. Initially she was able to sell 2,000 bags of seedlings from runners which she sold at P50 per bag thus, giving her a gross income of P100,000. The strawberry fruits she harvested she processed into jams which also gave her additional income.

Mhina is also an active member of the Gender-Responsive Economic Action for the Transformation of Women or GREAT Women Project funded by the Canadian government which seeks to improve the economic empowerment of rural women and their microenterprises. The Department of Agriculture (DA) is one of the partner implementing agencies of the Philippine Commission on Women which oversees the GREAT women project. Through mentoring by experts from PCW and GAD and other institutions facilitated by DA-Bicol GAD program headed by Aloha Gigi Bañaria, Mhina has learned new technologies and best practices in improving her products, including the packaging labeling and marketing of her products.

She is also a member of the Multi-Agriforest Community Development (MAF) Cooperative which supports women small entrepreneurs. She recently enlisted as member of the Omasenso sa Kabuhayan, a project of Vice President Leni Robredo to uplift farmers by making them agri-entrepreneurs. She is also a member of the Camarines Sur Multipurpose Coop.

Her attendance to various training conducted by the DA, the Agricultural Training Institute, TESDA and other agencies has also enhanced her skills and opened up new opportunities for her. Mhina herself is now being tapped as resource person by the DA and other agencies. Her farm was recently evaluated by the Technical Committee for accreditation as an ATI Learning Site for Agriculture.

Mhina herself is now being tapped as resource person by the DA.

Aware of the health benefits and income potentials of oyster mushroom she also trained on mushroom production at the DA and established her own mushroom house inside their

residential compound in Barangay Hibao. She has produced over 800 fruiting bags of oyster mushrooms and has earned an income of about P300 thousand.

She recently started culturing stingless bees right in the farm. She also has some rabbits and several native chicken provided by the DA as assistance during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mhina is proud to be called a farmer—because farming has been her passion since she was a child. But she has also varied interests and skills.

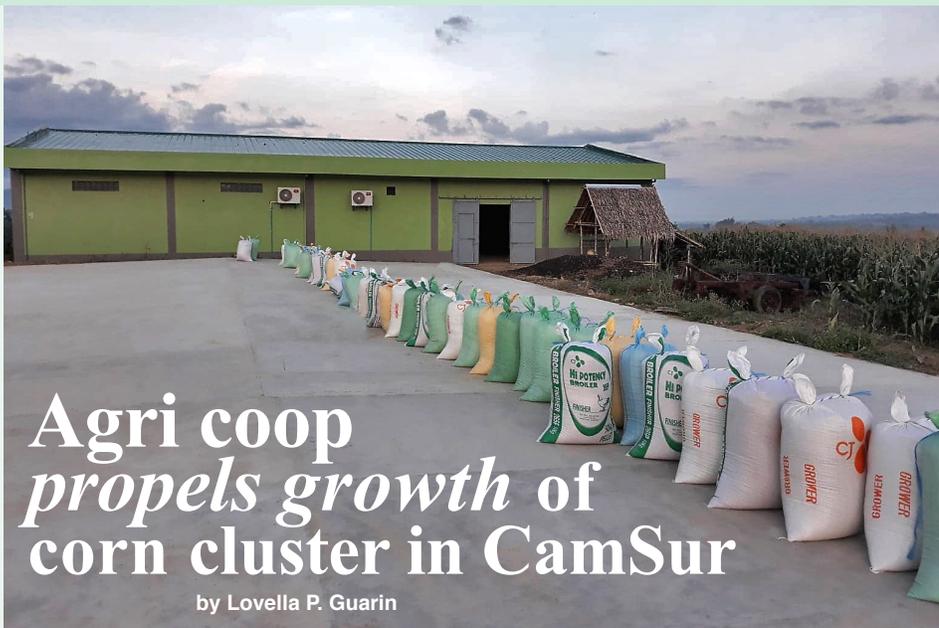
One of her skills is sewing, the trade which had given her income to send her four children to school. She also processes farm products into various stuff. There was a time when she had brief stint in the Middle East as a domestic helper. But the longing for her family made her decide to return home and go back to farming. And she has no regrets that she has returned to her roots and first love. *“Maski mayo akong natapos na college degree content na ako kung ano igua ako ngonian. Kaipuhan lang mahigos, madiskarte asin may direksiyon. Kung may pangarap ka sa buhay, mag pupursige ka”*, Mhina imparts.

“Kung may gusto kang makamit, kadakul na paagi ang pwede. Kadakul ang asistensiyang itinatao kan gobyerno



pero dapat may sadiri man kitang initiative. Dai dapat i-asa gabos sa gobyerno o sa iba ang satong pag asenso”, Mhina advises her fellow rural women small entrepreneurs.

Mhina is indeed one of the great rural women who inspires because she creates not only beautiful and colorful patchwork quilt from pieces of discarded fabrics as a sewer but also a patchwork of various edible, nutritious crops and multicolored ornamentals, bees and small farm animals in idyllic setting which feed the body and refresh the weary spirits especially in this time of pandemic.



Agri coop propels growth of corn cluster in CamSur

by Lovella P. Guarin

GOA, CAMARINES SUR—*“Malaking tulong po ang consolidation ng farms at produce ng ating mga farmer members dahil nakaka-attain tayo ng economies of scale, at naibibigay ng farmers ang demand na volume of produce sa kanila. We can also negotiate high price for our produce.”* Jerry M. Mercado, General Manager of the Maymatan Farmers Multi-purpose Cooperative (MFMC) and Municipal Agriculturist of Goa expressed his views on the status of corn production in Goa.

Organized in 1992, the MFMC which is composed of 673 members who are corn, cassava and rice farmers from the municipalities of Goa, Tigaon, and nearby towns of Tinambac and Sagnay, is now a successful consolidator/assembler of corn and cassava in the Partido Area in Camarines Sur.

The coop has been accredited by the San Miguel Corporation (SMC) as assembler and supplier of corn and cassava since August 2014 for the former’s requirement of raw materials for animal feed production.

The MFMC with over 90 members engaged in corn production covers a total of 300 hectares. The coop belongs to the Goa Corn Cluster with a total physical are of 1,631.50 hectares.

Mercado enumerated the impact of corn cluster in their town: 1) Maraming naging support ang DA at other financing institutions like Land Bank of the Philippines and Agricultural Credit Policy Council; 2) Nai-angat ang status ng coop; 3) Nagkaroon ng regular assistance to all members from inputs to marketing; 4) Walang fluctuation ang pricing—stable ang presyo ng mais dahil sa purchase agreement namin sa SMC;

5) Naalis din ang ibang layers sa marketing dahil direkta na ang produkto sa feedmills.

“Our members can avail of up to P40,000.00/hectare production loan from the coop payable after harvest. In 2020, the Land Bank of the Philippines has financed a total of 285 hectares of corn areas of our members,” Mercado added.

“Naalis na ang ibang layers sa marketing dahil direkta na ang produkto sa feedmills sa pamamagitan ng coop, kaya maganda ang presyo na naibibigay sa mga member. In fact, ang Maymatan FMPC ang benchmark ng Goa and other nearby municipalities, pag dating sa presyo.

Ang coop na ang pinagbabasehan ng presyo dahil nakadirekta kami sa feedmills”.

The coop buys yellow corn at P13.25 to P13.50. According to the DA Bicol daily price monitoring report, farmgate price of yellow corn in Camarines Sur is P13.50. The coop has also established strong linkage with input suppliers and seed companies for rice and corn.

“Pinipili namin ang mga high yielding varieties na binhi, genetically modified or hybrid para ibigay sa members namin para mapataas ang ani”. The members were provided with needed farm inputs through production loan and are expected to sell their produce to the coop.

One member of MFMC has harvested more than 9 tons of yellow corn per hectare in 2020. Based on LGU report, the average yield of corn in Goa is 5.5 MT/hectare and 6 MT/ hectare in Camarines Sur.

Felina Sanoy, Chairperson of the MFMC said that the coop

buys dry corn grains at 14% MC, either shelled or in corn cobs. Their latest contract with San Miguel Corporation was in the last quarter of 2020 until January 2021 where they were able to deliver 1,500 metric tons yellow corn amounting to P23.3M.

In 2019, the MPC sold a total of 819,690 kilos corn and in 2020, 815,430 kilos corn were sold to Vast and JL Trading. Likewise, 431,684 kilos corn were delivered to SMC in early 2020.

The coop earned P13.3 Million in 2019 from the trading of yellow corn alone which was much higher than their sales in 2018 amounting to P11 Million.

The coop also earned a sizeable amount from cassava processing and marketing—P2.2 million in 2019 and P275,781 in 2018. In 2019, they earned P564,000 from farm tractor hire; drying services—P24,000; combine harvester services—P683,472; and hauling services—P139,908.

They have a 2.9-ha. area in barangay Digdigon which serves as production area for corn and other crops and where the corn seed warehouse and other interventions of the DA were located.

Mercado underscored the importance of postharvest facility and he advised corn farmers to aim for the best quality of corn to meet the requirement of the feed millers, because low quality means low price.

The coop has received 4-Wheel Drive Tractor, combine harvester/grain harvester, recirculating dryer, warehouse, granulator, cassava chipper and moisture meter from the Department of Agriculture. The corn storage facility also helped in buying and storing the members’ produce. He lauded the corn seed subsidy project of the Corn Program which he said motivates more farmers to plant corn and increase yield.

Recently, the Maymatan FMC’s proposal for an integrated swine enterprise project has been approved where the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) will provide warehouse, feedmill and 50-heads sow for distribution to the members. The project will enable the coop to manufacture their own feeds which will be supplied to the members.

Lorenzo Alvina, DA RFO 5 regional coordinator of Corn Program said that Maymatan FMC is a very active corn-based coop included in the 57 corn cluster areas in Bicol covering a total of 48,030 hectares. They contributed a lot to Bicol region’s 103% sufficiency in white corn and 83.9% sufficiency in yellow corn in 2020.

A young Coop shows much promise and bright prospects

by Emily B. Bordado

The Calabanga Organic Producers Cooperative (COPC) has been in existence for only six years and has to date only 29 members but it is one of the most viable, well-knit and promising cooperatives in the municipality. It is composed of

members engaged in small to medium agribusiness enterprise, professionals who are still employed or active in service, retirees, farmers and other agri producers and small entrepreneurs.

The coop is chaired by Elsie Tible-Masalunga a business woman and agri-entrepreneur who is a staunch advocate of organic farming and imbued with a high sense of social responsibility for the community. The coop is currently engaged in palay trading, rice milling and rental of farm machineries and equipment after being a recipient of the Department of Agriculture's various farm equipment and postharvest facilities including the Rice Processing Center (RPC) I Project in 2018. This project worth over ₱5.4 million provides post-harvest package which includes the construction of a 300sq. meter warehouse building; a multi-pass rice-mill (double pass) with a milling capacity of 1 ton per hour; plus a capitalization fund worth ₱1 million which was released to them the following year.

The RPC is constructed inside the 1,500 square meter area purchased by the coop in Barangay Sto. Domingo of the same town. Isagani Bechayda, former Farm Operations

can collect 70 cavans per day per batch; a 420-square meter multipurpose drying pavement and multi-crop closed bagging machine.

According to RPC manager Bechayda the current asset of the coop is over ₱11 million for its equipment and machineries alone. On the first year of operation alone the coop earned over ₱150,000. He said that the COPC earns a revenue of about ₱2 million from the rentals of these equipment and from palay trading since its full operation in 2017.

An important component of the RPC I program and other DA interventions is the training for the coop representative on Farm Mechanization which included



ang makikinabang nito pati na rin ang magsasaka dito sa Calabanga pati na rin sa karatig bayan", Sistena continues.

The coop started as a small close group advocating natural farming for health reasons. They wanted to produce their own organic inputs, products and have

their own market niche. The chairperson Elsie recalls that it was the DA which encouraged them to become a formal organization and be officially registered when they went to the agency to request for a shredding machine they needed for their vermicomposting.

Heeding the advice of the DA and united by a common goal and interest the group decided to formally organize themselves into a cooperative.

Today, they are bound not only by their common interest to produce organic products and promote this to the community they have also realized that through the cooperative they can increase their income, savings, investments, productivity and purchasing power and they can serve the farmers in availing farm equipment and postharvest facilities at a reasonable rental fee and buy their palay and other farm produce at a fair price thereby offering a better option for the small farmers who have been at the mercy of some exploitive traders.

During the turn over of the equipment to the COPC, Mayor Eduardo Severo graced the occasion. He also thanked DA for its various assistance to the farmers of his municipality. *"Ang role ng LGU dito ay suportahan at patatagin lalu ang ating mga cooperatiba at mga asosyon at ensure din namin na natutupad nila ang kanilang commitment at obligasyon din sa mga proyektong binababa ng iba't ibang ahensiya ng pamahalaan para di masayang ang ano mang investment ng gobyerno para sa kanila at masiguro na ang mga benipisyo ay nag trickle down sa mga dapat makinabang at sa mas marami hindi lang sa iilan"* the mayor explained.



operation and maintenance of the machineries equipment and facilities. The COPC has complied with this requirement. According to its general manager, Reynelia (Dayday) Sistena they make sure that all their equipment are cleaned and properly stored after every use.

"Para mas matagal na magamit at mapakinabangan ang mga ito", she explains. *"The coop has also set aside a specific budget for the maintenance and repair of these equipment",* says Teresita T. Viola, the coop secretary.

"May nakalaan talaga kaming budget para sa repair and maintenance of our equipment. Hindi naman dapat iasa na lang sa gobyerno. Libre na nga ang mga gamit na ito pati kapital" enthuses Sistena.

And that is usually the bane of some recipients of similar projects of the DA. When their equipment bog down they blame the DA for the poor quality of the equipment given them or rely on the DA to provide funds for the repair of their equipment. But it is clear in the MOA that maintenance and repair of the equipment should be borne by the coop or association.

The coop has recently applied for the DA's Enhanced Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita with a proposed amount of ₱150,000 to be used for the purchase of store

Supervisor of Pilipinas Shell Foundation, Inc. in the adjacent town of Bombon has been hired as the manager for its RPC I operations.

Aside from the postharvest facilities and equipment included in the RPC I Project the coop has also received from the DA under the Farm Mechanization program other interventions as follows: one unit recirculating mechanical dryer (biomass-fed) one unit of 4-wheel drive tractor which can till 3 hectares per day; one unit flatbed dryer which can dry 6 tons of palay; a combine harvester thresher with 35 horse power capable of harvesting 0.3 hectare per day; a walk-behind transplanter capable of transplanting 1.2 hectare per day; a grain collector which



World Bank *lauds* PRDP-funded enterprise for making ‘transformational impact’ amid COVID-19 pandemic

Over a year after the national government imposed strict quarantine measures to curb the rising cases of COVID-19 in the country, a report from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) dated March 30, 2021 shows that about 4.2 million Filipinos, aged 15 and up are unemployed as of February 2021.

In Daraga, Albay, an enterprise funded by the Department of Agriculture Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP) is making a difference in the lives of communities affected by the pandemic by generating jobs for out-of-school youths (OSYs), rural women and breadwinners who lost their sources of income because of the economic shutdown brought by the COVID-19 crisis.

The P12.30 million-worth Sweet Potato-Based Products Processing Enterprise in Brgy. Anislag, this municipality, being implemented by the Camote Creations Farmers and Entrepreneurs Producers Cooperative (CCFEPC) is an upgrade of the existing Camote Creations enterprise engaged in processing of sweet potato-enriched products including cakes, cake sticks, chips, cookies, noodles, crispy fries, and muffins. During the Feedbacking Session on Site Visits as part of the 12th World Bank Implementation Support Mission (ISM) to the PRDP South Luzon Cluster held virtually on May 27, 2021, Nolan G. Belaro, chairperson of the CCFEPC shared the success story of the cooperative, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the series of typhoons that hit Bicol Region to the enterprise’s operation, the strategies it adopted to bounce back as well as its sustainability plan.

Among the interventions provided by the DA-PRDP to the I-REAP subproject were the construction of a P3.95 million-worth processing center, upgraded processing equipment including an industrial oven with LPG tank, sweet potato washer, heavy duty weighing scale, and stainless working tables as well as a hauling truck and delivery van

for the hauling of raw materials and delivery of finished products.

Belaro noted that through the interventions provided by the DA-PRDP, the enterprise’s current production capacity increased by up to 200 kilograms of sweet potatoes per week or 800 to 1,000 kilograms per month. Previously, the cooperative’s kitchen-type operation took a month to process 200 kilograms of sweet potatoes. From 48 members during the start of business planning in 2017, the Cooperative’s membership grew to 95 as of 2021. These include 54 farmer-members, 20 retailers, 15 on-call and regular employees and 6 processors.

On the other hand, the I-REAP subproject has a total of 2,944 direct and indirect beneficiaries, 2,849 of which are non-member farmer-suppliers. Moreover, from having an annual income of P5,028 in 2018, the enterprise has already gained an income worth P80,000 for the first quarter of 2021 only. *“We really want to congratulate the proponent group (PG) for your incredible work. It looks like you made really a transformational impact within the last two years. You had a very tiny income just two years ago and now you already just went border. You really have increased your sales and you have been able to also create jobs just at the right moment when it’s most needed. It’s really nice to see all of the great work you have been doing and the impact that it has had so far,”* Eli Weiss, World Bank Senior Agriculture Economist and Task Team Leader, said.

Agnes Deshormes, WB Agriculture Policy, Planning and Business Specialist agreed saying *“You have a very ambitious business plan covering a lot of areas, introducing a lot of innovations, and really upgrading not only the process for your sweet potato products but also farm production and it’s also very good. I also noticed the partnerships that you have. You’ve been able to quickly adapt to the new situation, the pandemic and that has forced you to actually reorient part*

of your marketing strategy.” Belaro mentioned that the I-REAP subproject is located in a resettlement area where there are limited livelihood opportunities.

The pandemic resulted to job displacement of many residents working in the cities. *“Because of our Project there,*

the youth in agriculture.

“We are very appreciative of your efforts to include the youth and the young farmers. We are very happy to note that this is a feature of your cooperative and in fact a lot of your original members are from the youth sector. Hearing from you all those plans, we really look forward to hearing more on how you prosper with all those plans.” Maria Theresa G. Quinones, World Bank Senior Rural Development Specialist and Co-Task Team Leader said.



they have an opportunity to work with us. That is why we are very ambitious to respond because aside from helping the farmers, we also provide employment to the area,” he added.

One of the employees of the Sweet Potato-Based Products Processing Enterprise is Jocelyn Flores, a housewife and mother of two whose husband was displaced from his job as a construction worker in Metro Manila. *“It’s hard when one’s husband is jobless. I applied for a job here to help my family. My children are still studying so I need extra income. The income I earn here is a big help because it supports my eldest child’s online classes, he needs Internet connection and prepaid load almost daily. It’s hard when one’s budget is scarce, the child is pitiful because he could hardly study. I am thankful because this helps sustain our family’s daily needs,”* Flores said in Filipino.

The WB experts also commended the Cooperative’s efforts to support the DA’s advocacy to engage

Aside from employing OSYs in the enterprise, CCFEPC plans to engage more youth in expanding its operations and in developing other agricultural enterprises such as sweet potato vine basket-making, catfish production, and organic farming to gain their interest and convince them that there is wealth in agriculture thereby, promoting the country’s food security in the future.

On the same activity, the WB experts also listened to the PRDP South Luzon and RPCO-Bicol I-BUILD team’s response to their comments and queries about the Sweet Potato-Based Products Processing Enterprise’s civil works as well as the implementation of the Upgrading/Concreting of Brgy. Poblacion Farm-to-Market Road in Occidental Mindoro.

Similarly, the activity highlighted the PRDP South Luzon cluster’s progress and status of project implementation as of May 20, 2021, sustainability efforts as well as innovations, recommendations, and strategies to adapt to the new normal.

(Annielyn L. Baleza)



SAAD director Myer Mula visits projects in Bicol

PILAR, SORSOGON – “Substantial food on their tables, and the farmers are already organized and some even started on their value adding enterprises.” This is how Dr. Myer G. Mula, National Program Director of the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) sums up his observations of his visit to Bicol to personally assess SAAD implementation.

Dr. Mula first met with the SAAD regional program implementers headed by DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla, SAAD focal person Luz R. Marcelino and SAAD Action Officer Dr. Mary Grace DP. Rodriguez at the DA regional office on June 15 before proceeding to Sorsogon province.

In the discussion, Dir. Mula opens up the possibility for SAAD beneficiaries who are organic practitioners to apply and be certified under the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) of RA 11511. Present during the meeting is the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) Organic Division Chief, Ms. Joeve Calleja. A briefing was also conducted to the Provincial SAAD Management Staff of Sorsogon headed by Mary Rose Detera (Provincial Coordinator) on June 16.

In Pilar, Sorsogon Dr. Mula turned over P275,000 worth of high value crops interventions to two organizations namely, Esperanza Farmers’ Association and Pochtol Backyard Farmers Association.

Randy Argote, president of Pochtol Backyard FA thanked Dir. Mula and the SAAD Bicol for the continued outpour of interventions to his group. “Halos kumpleto po ang ibinibigay ng SAAD, may pananim, abono, farm equipment at training. Kulang na lang nga po yun SAAD staff ang magbungkal ng lupa,” Argote quipped.

His group also received P221,000 worth of interventions from SAAD in 2020 which they planted in aggregate 15 hectares of vegetable areas. They harvested more than 200 kilos of siling haba which they made into pickles. The other vegetables they harvested were consumed by the members’ households. “Binubuhay po ng SAAD ang aming mga pamilya ngayong pandemic. Last year nang nag-ECQ napakalaking tulong po ng SAAD dahil naging food sufficient po ang mga pamilya namin,” Argote added.

The SAAD interventions also reached the nearby Pochtol Elementary School where the teachers were inspired to put up a vegetable garden with the help of the parents. “Ako mismo, nakita ko ang enthusiasm nila (Pochtol Backyard FA) at ang impact ng garden sa

community, Jane Tad-o, the school principal attested. Impressed by the principal’s dedication to vegetable gardening, Dr. Mary Grace Rodriguez committed to include the Pochtol Elementary School as recipient of Gulayan sa Paaralan Project under HVCDP.

In Donsol, Sorsogon he turned over P370,000 worth of livestock package composed

extension workers from the respective LGUs are serving as resource persons in various training conducted by SAAD.

Mary Rose Detera, SAAD provincial coordinator said that they have organized 89 groups of farmers in Sorsogon since 2018 and also helped them register with either SEC or DOLE.



of 400 heads mallard ducks, 450 bags feeds, nets and laminated sacks to Ogod Indigenous People Agta Agriculture Production Association.

Director Mula challenged the tribal group to multiply the ducks from 400 to 40,000 heads and come up with sustainable enterprises such as balot and salted egg making. He also urged the SAAD beneficiaries to integrate small ruminants in their farms and diversify their crops as he noticed that most of the areas in Bicol are coconut-based. He emphasized the importance of SAAD’s partnership with the LGUs as the agricultural

Director Mula said that SAAD will continue providing various assistance to deserving farmers’ associations in the provinces covered by the program. He is keeping his fingers crossed that SAAD will be extended beyond 2022.

SAAD is under the locally-funded projects of Department of Agriculture, serving as armor against poverty among the marginalized sectors in agriculture and fishery. It is currently being implemented in agriculture based 4th to 6th class municipalities in 11 regions identified based on poverty incidence.

(Lovella P. Guarin)

DA-5 distributes essential...(from page 20)

Ngayon naman itong mga pagkain na galing sa Kadiwa Community Pantry ay makakatawid sa gutom ang aking mga ka tribu kahit sa ilang araw” he narrated.

Children were also given assorted candies

to cheer them up. Some officials from the Local Government Unit of Tigaon Camarines Sur were also present during the activity.

According to Ma Cristina Campita Supervising Agriculturist, the commodities were donated

by private individuals, government officials, various organizations/Cooperatives such as: San Agustin San Ramon Farmers Cooperative; Magarao Multi Purpose Cooperative; San Antonio Farmers Irrigators MPC; Department of Agriculture Employees Association

Agri Pinoy Trading Center (APTC); Talino at Galing ng Pinoy Partylist; Capuy Basud; Bula Farmers Association; Nabua West MPC; Tau Gamma Phi; CamNorte Primary MPC; and BYC Egg Dealer.

(Blesilda A. Nuñez)

DA Bicol opens Kadiwa Community Pantry...

PILI, CAMARINES SUR - DA Bicol Regional Executive Director Rodel P. Tornilla leads the opening of the Kadiwa community pantry offering agricultural goods to residents of barangay San Agustin on April 23, 2021.

Over 250 persons mostly from Barangay San Agustin and neighboring barangays availed of agri commodities. Aside from vegetables, rice, eggs, sugar, canned goods, grocery items and feeds for chicken were also given.

Vegetable seeds & seedlings were also given as the recipients were encouraged to plant their own vegetables and other food crops as this is a more sustainable way of ensuring food sufficiency and security says RED Rodel.



...and rolls out Mobile Kadiwa Community Pantry to Indigenous Peoples

The Department of Agriculture Bicol thru the Agribusiness and Marketing Division rolled out a mobile Kadiwa community pantry to Indigenous People in barangay San Nicholas Iriga City and Barangay Cayaoyao, Tigaon Camarines Sur on May 6 and 10, 2021.

In coordination with the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP), the activity was initiated to reach out to marginalized group who are in dire need of assistance during this time of difficulty.

The DA Kadiwa Community Pantry is inspired by the Filipino values of sharing and Bayanihan. At least 150 residents of Barangay San Nicholas in Iriga City benefitted from the said pantry. Most of the residents belong to the Indigenous group.



Despite heavy rains, residents queued to avail of their most needed commodities. Among the commodities distributed were rice, vegetables, eggs, fruits and other agricultural

products. "When it rains, it really pours" said 37 years old Lailani Guevarra. The last time I recalled was the typhoon relief distributed to us last year; she added. She said that the goods from

pantry will last for 2 days and it means a lot to them.

The local Government Unit of Iriga city with officials from the Agriculture office assisted in the activity to ensure that safety protocols are being observed.

In a separate venue, 172 residents can't hide their delight upon receiving essential commodities during the roll out of the kadiwa community pantry in Barangay Cayaoyao, Tigaon, Camarines Sur. Most of the beneficiaries belong to the "Agta" tribe.

Tribe Chieftain Rico Flogo gladly extended his gratefulness to the DA. "Nararamdaman namin na hindi kami pinapabayaan ng ahensya lalo na sa ganitong panahon ng maraming pagsubok. Nung una, binigyan kami ng irigasyon ng DA at malaking tulong yun sa amin lalo na sa aming pagtatanim.

the DA-5 Kadiwa Community

(Please continue to page 19)





U Masenso

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