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Aggie chief also aims self-sufficiency in corn

“Let’s forge stronger partnerships to make Central Visayas self-sufficient in food, particularly in white corn.”

This was the challenge tossed by Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala to about 650 participants at a

forum organized by the Cebu Coalition for Food Security (CCFS), held August 20, at the College of Technological Sciences, in Cebu City.

“If we could increase the harvest of white corn, the region’s major staple, to an average of three tons per hectare, then you would be more than sufficient,” Alcala said.

“When achieved, we could ease the pressure on rice supply, and lessen our imports,” he added.

The current average yield of

corn in Central Visayas is less than one ton per hectare, according to the DA Region 7 corn program group.

Some 164,770 hectares are planted to corn in Central Visayas, composed of the four provinces of Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental and Siquijor.

Ninety five percent (%) or 157,110 hectares are devoted to white corn for food, and the rest (5% or 7,660 hectares) is planted to yellow corn for feed.

Some of the corn areas are

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Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala (2nd from right) inspects a white corn open pollinated variety (OPV) from a 12-hectare foundation and registered seed production field at the DA-Cagayan Valley Integrated Agricultural Research Center (CVIARC), in Ilagan, Isabela, where an initial 20 tons will be harvested in September. These will be distributed to seed growers and DA regional research stations nationwide for reproduction into certified seeds, which in turn given to corn farmers for commercial production. Under the Aquino administration, the DA aims to achieve self-sufficiency both in rice and white corn. Sec. Alcala said increasing production and consumption of white corn will ease the pressure on rice supply. Some 14 million Filipinos mostly in the Visayas and Mindanao eat white corn as main staple. Shown with Sec. Alcala are (from left) DA-Region 2 dir. Andrew Villacorta, CVIARC chief Orlando Lorenzana (partly hidden) and CVIARC corn breeder Severino Tumamang.

DA, Cagayan forge counterparting

The Department of Agriculture and the Province of Cagayan have agreed to forge a counterparting arrangement before 1,000 farmers, local officials and other agri-fishery stakeholders, who attended a Farmers’ Congress in Tuguegarao City, August 30, 2010.

Heeding the challenge of Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala, Cagayan Governor Alvaro Antonio said the provincial government will match the DA funds peso for peso or one-to-one ratio, for any agri-fishery project.

In his speech, Sec. Alcala said “let’s start by pursuing vigorously the counterparting scheme with local government units so we can implement more agricultural and fishery projects.”

He also requested Gov. Antonio and more than a dozen municipal mayors present to lend to the DA their respective agriculture officers and extension workers so “we could effectively and efficiently implement more national agricultural and fishery projects.”

To which, Gov. Antonio and the municipal mayors responded positively.

Sec. Alcala said the DA will

re-train them, including small farmers and fishermen, to further upgrade their skills and knowledge.

During the dialogue, Sec. Alcala, who authored the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 (Republic Act 10068), said the DA under his watch will promote both conventional as well as organic system of farming.

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DA-ACPC allots add’l P100-M loans

The Department of Agriculture through the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) is allotting an additional P100 million for lending exclusively to small farmers and fisherfolk affected by drought, flooding and other natural and man-made calamities.

The ‘climate change-responsive’ credit program will be implemented through the People’s Credit and Finance Corporation (PCFC).

Meanwhile, the DA-ACPC will engage an independent group to review the effectiveness and viability of its pro-

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Australia okays import of Davao mangoes

Davao del Sur farmers can now export fresh mangoes to Australia.

In a report to Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala, Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) Director Clarito M. Barron said Biosecurity Australia has approved on August 13, 2010 the request of the Philippines to extend the export of fresh mangoes to said country, from the previously approved source, Guimaras Island in Central Visayas, and this time with the inclusion of Davao del Sur in Mindanao.

Biosecurity Australia said Davao del Sur successfully

passed the stringent requirements with regard to quality mango production in commercial scale, management and control of pests and diseases, and implementation of recommended quarantine measures.

Barron said the favorable development is due to the long-term cleanliness policy, strict quarantine practices and crop management measures the DA-BPI has been implementing for years in Davao del Sur.

Australia also imports fresh mangoes from India, Haiti, Mexico and Taiwan.

Berde

Organic farming. Ito'y matagal nang konsepto sa larangan ng sakahan, na ibig ding sabihin ay 'back to basics.'

Ito'y pumasok muli sa kamalayan ng mga pinuno at kawani ng Department of Agriculture kasabay ng pag-upo ni Secretary Proceso Alcala.

Siya ang pangunahing nag-akda ng Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 (Republic Act 10068), noong siya'y Congressman sa ikalawang Distrito ng Quezon.

Masasabing lumang ideya na, kaso wari ay nakaligtaan ng mga dating administrasyon sa kanilang layunin na mapataas ng malaki at mabilis ang ani ng palay, mais, gulay, prutas at iba pang mga pananim.

Nakagawian na natin ang paggamit ng teknolohiya para mapataas ang produksyon.

Ano nga ba magagawa natin kung ang mga sakahan ay unti-unti nang nauubos ng mga golf course, subdivision at condominium units?

Walang tayong 'choice,' ika nga, kun'di humanap ng paraan upang mapataas ang ani, sa kakarampot na lupang sakahan.

At 'di pa 'yun. Sa sobrang sipag sa pag-aanak, hindi na makaabot ang produksyon sa bilang ng kailangang pakainin sa araw-araw, at taun-taon.

Kaya masasabing malaking tulong ang high-yielding varieties, isa na rito ang hybrid rice.

Karaniwang nakakaabot ng 7 tonelada bawat ektarya ang inaani, 'di hamak na mataas sa karaniwang 5 tonelada ng certified seeds.

Kaso ang nakaligtaan natin, sa hybrid mas maraming kailangang fertilizor para maabot ang ninanais na produksyon.

At sa sobra o taun-taong paggamit ng kemikal na abono, umaasim ang lupa, ayon sa mga eksperto.

Kaya bakit 'di subukan

ang organic agriculture?

Sabi ng mga dalubhasa malaki ang benepisyo, o sa wika ni Ms. Universe runner-up Venus Raj: 'major, major' benefits.

Kabilang na ang maiibsan ang pagkasira ng kapaligiran at kalikasan.

Ayon sa report na 'Cool Farming' ng grupong GreenPeace, ang paggamit ng chemical fertilizers ay nakakadagdag sa pagtaas ng greenhouse gas emissions.

Ito raw ay resulta ng sobrang paggamit ng fertilizor, land clearance, soil degradation, at intensive animal farming.

Sinabi rin nila na mula 8.5 hanggang 16.5 billion tonelada ng carbon dioxide ang nagmumula sa agricultural activities sa buong mundo.

Suma-total, mas makakatipid kung gagamit ng organic fertilizer, dahil karamihan sa chemical fertilizer sa bansa ay ating inaangkat.

Ngayon, mas 'in' kung tayo'y kumakain ng organic products, at ang mga ito'y mas mahal, kagaya ng 'organic rice.'

Kaya naman, mas malaki ang kikitain ng mga magsasaka at nag-aalaga ng organic pigs o chicken.

Sa mga puntong ito, malakas nga ang appeal ng organic farming.

Ayon kay Kalihim Alcala, hahayaan ng DA na mamili ang mga magsasaka kung anong sistema ang nais nila.

Ang importante, aniya niya, ay maisulong ang konseptong 'sustainable agriculture' sa kaisipan at gawain ng lahat na may kinalaman at taya sa pambansang sektor ng sakahan at pangisdaan.

Ang malinaw sa ngayon ay kung saan makikinabang ng pang-matagalan ang bansa at mga magsasaka at mangingisda, doon tayo!

Isang kulay at isang layon: berde!



Sec. Alcala (2nd from left) hands over vegetable seeds, among other farm and fishery inputs and equipment, to Quezon Gov. David Suarez, during an agri-aqua fair, August 19, in Lucena City. The DA's package of assistance also included 3 hand tractors, 10 sets each of engine pumps and drum seeders, 300 bags certified rice seeds, 100 bags corn seeds, 100 kilos of assorted vegetable seeds, 60 piglets, 500 chicks, 100 bottom fish gill nets, 20 squid jiggers, and two million bangus fry. Also in photo (from left) are Quezon provincial agriculturist Roberto Gajo, Rep. Danilo Suarez and DA ass't. sec. Dennis Araullo.

DA wants stronger ties with LGUs

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala wants to forge stronger partnerships between the Department of Agriculture and local government units to bankroll and implement more agri-fishery projects through counterparting.

In a speech during the Agri-Aqua Trade Fair, in Lucena City, August 19, 2010--as part of the 132 birth anniversary of President Manuel L. Quezon--he said he will personally convince Provincial Governors, City and Municipal Mayors, including

Congressmen, to share their respective counterparts with the DA so together they could construct more infrastructure projects such as farm-to-market roads, multi-purpose drying pavements or 'solar dryers,' irrigation systems, postharvest facilities, and implement more agri-fishery livelihood projects, among other joint initiatives.

For its part, the DA will provide appropriate farm and fishery equipment and inputs to legitimate and accredited

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AggieTrends

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Filipino children to benefit from DSWD-NFA rice feeding program

Tens of thousands of Filipino pre-schoolers from about 48,000 day-care centers will benefit from a rice feeding program nationwide to be implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the National Food Authority (NFA).

The feeding program will entail 50,000 tons of rice which would be made into porridge.

"We will be using overstocked rice for the program. All our warehouses are full and we cannot sell rice to the market. This is one strategy to declog the 480 government warehouses," said NFA spokesman Rex Estoperez.

About one million sacks (50 kilograms each) of rice will be used in the feeding program.

NFA Administrator Angelito T. Banayo said some of the overstocked rice were rotting, as import orders by the Arroyo administration had been extremely excessive. He hinted that corrupt officials may have been responsible.

"I don't want to judge my predecessors. Whether culpability lies in incompetence or something worse, which is corruption, the figures speak for themselves," he said.

He said part of the 2.4 million tons of the grain bought by Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's government last year were due for delivery in September, but there was no more space to store them. (*Business World*)

DA chief urges rice millers to share reliable inventory

Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala urges rice millers for sustained cooperation, particularly in sharing credible data, to ensure stable supply of rice in the country.

In a meeting with rice millers at the DA's Bureau of Soils and Water Management auditorium in Quezon City, he said: "Let's help each other to address the problems of the rice industry. We enjoin you to streamline your data, as it will help to efficiently manage the rice industry."

He called on the rice millers to assist the DA particularly in arriving at a more credible estimate of the country's total rice inventory, and thus come up with a better picture of the national rice supply situation, and thus avoid over-importation and hoarding.

"Bear in mind that if you would



DA Secretary Proceso J. Alcala (left) explains to United States Ambassador to the Philippines Harry K. Thomas, Jr. the major initiatives the Aquino Administration will undertake to attain rice self-sufficiency by 2013, during the latter's courtesy call August 12, at the DA, Quezon City. Alcala took the opportunity to thank Ambassador Thomas for the sustained mutual cooperation and trade between the two countries, particularly in the area of agriculture, fisheries, and agribusiness. The country's major agricultural export products to the US are coconut, sugar and seaweeds, while our leading US agricultural imports are wheat, soybean meal and dairy products. They both expressed confidence that the centuries-old RP-US partnership will be further enhanced during the respective terms of Philippine President Benigno Aquino III and US President Barack Obama.



Sec. Alcala (inset, top left) enjoins provincial governors to counterpart with the DA so they could implement more agri-fishery infrastructure and livelihood projects, during the 2nd general assembly of the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP), August 27, in Manila. Shown at the head table are LPP chairman and Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis Chavit Singson, LPP President and Oriental Mindoro Gov. Alfonso Umali, Occidental Mindoro Gov. Josephine Sato, and DA undersecretaries Joel Rudinas and Bernadette Romulo-Puyat.

report less, we would be forced to import, and such would adversely affect you. Hence, we have to get accurate figures on the current rice inventory," he noted.

The rice millers, for their part, commended Alcala's initiative to consult with them.

They also raised concerns on the availability of credit for farmers. They said government should provide farmers accessible and affordable loans, in a more sustainable basis, to enable them to buy quality seeds and fertilizers, among other production and postharvest inputs, and thus increase their yields and

income. With more palay harvests, rice milling and trading activities pick up, they reasoned.

During the dialogue, he reiterated the DA's major thrust to attain rice self-sufficiency by 2013 by expanding areas planted to high-yielding varieties.

"We have already crafted a plan to achieve rice self-sufficiency by 2013. Part of it involves gradually expanding rice farms planted to certified seeds.

From the current 20 percent of total rice areas, we aim to push it to 45% by 2011, and further to 65% by 2012," Alcala said.

RP must prepare for climate change

The Philippines must brace up for climate change, as natural calamities would adversely affect a total of 22 million hectares of the country's farmlands and fishing grounds, and exact a heavy toll on food production.

This was the grim scenario painted by a technical expert from the Department of Agriculture (DA) who presented a technical paper during a recent forum--'Are we prepared for La Niña?'--at the DA-BSWM.

Dr. Esteban C. Godilano, a DA adviser on remote sensing and GIS technology, said of the 22

million hectares, about 13 million hectares of farmland could be hit by a prolonged dry spell, 5.53 million hectares run the risk of being inundated by heavy rains brought by La Niña, and landslides may affect as much as 3.4 million hectares of farming areas.

For his part, DA Undersecretary Joel Rudinas said that is why "we have already set in motion the establishment of water impounding facilities, and Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala has

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Sugar stakeholders air concerns on mechanization, ethanol prod'n

Mechanization and ethanol production are the key to a more sustainable and globally-competitive sugarcane industry.

This was the general sentiment put forward by dozens of sugarcane farmers, millers and industry stakeholders during an August 5 forum, at the DA-Sugar Regulatory Administration in Quezon City.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala initiated the dialogue—a follow-up to an earlier meeting held in July at the DA—to address the major concerns of the stakeholders and map out industry directions.

He said under his watch, the DA-SRA aims to attain three major goals, namely: increase production of sugarcane and ethanol; achieve stable domestic supply of sugar and stabilize prices; and raise farmers' incomes.

These goals, he said, are all geared toward making the country's sugar industry globally competitive in the light of the enforcement of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA).

As per the AFTA, tariff rates on imported sugar from competing ASEAN countries will be gradually reduced from the current 38% to only 5% by 2015.

By 2012, the tariff rate will go down to 28%, 18% by 2013, and 10% by 2014.

Foreseeing the impact of the tariff reductions on the local sugar industry, Alcala said: "We have to prepare the country, sugarcane farmers, and everyone."

"We, therefore have to increase the production of sugarcane for both sugar and ethanol."

For their part, sugarcane farmers, particularly the members of the Mill District Development Committees (MDDCs), said government should extend help by providing necessary equipment such as tractors, irrigation system and trucks to be able to catch up.

Other farmers also clamored for more farm-to-market roads in major sugar producing provinces for faster and more efficient transport of canes to the mills.

To fast track such imperatives, the MDDCs proposed that the performance bond and service fees from sugar imports be

turned over to the SRA and used as fund to bankroll the equipment needed.

Currently, sugar imports are coursed through the NFA, which collects and subsequently benefits from the collected fees.

Meanwhile, the MDDCs are optimistic that the country's production of ethanol could be increased.

Under the Biofuels Act of 2006, fuel companies are required to blend ethanol with gasoline at 5% this year and 10% next year.

Current ethanol demand is estimated at about 219 million liters (ML) versus domestic production of a mere 80 ML, derived from sugarcane and molasses.

Ethanol demand next year is estimated to more than double, at 460 ML.

During the dialogue, members of the Ethanol Producers Association of the Philippines complained that the current tariff on imported ethanol is too low, at only 1%, hence pricing out locally-



Sec. Alcala (middle) meets with the Board of Directors (inset) of the Phil. Sugar Technologists Ass'n. prior to the 57th Philsutech Convention, August 18, at the Waterfront Hotel, Cebu, where he outlined joint initiatives to strengthen the industry and make it globally competitive. With him are Cebu Governor Gwendolyn Garcia (right) and Philsutech president Democrito Oppus.

produced ethanol.

They proposed an increase of up to 20% to protect the local ethanol industry, and attract more investors into the country.

Likewise, ethanol producers asked for the immediate issuance by the DOE of a Department Circular for a new set of guidelines to import ethanol.

They said the DOE has conducted several consultations on the matter, but has not yet issued the much-needed circular.

Importers are thus enjoying the 1% tariff, based on the old DOE guidelines prior to the enactment of the Biofuels Act of 2006.

Seaweed industry to get R&D, technical support

The seaweed industry will receive research and development (R&D) and technology support from the DA-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), following a dialogue between industry stakeholders and Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala in Cebu City, August 18.

"We will provide the seaweed industry with research and development support, as well as

technology support to help realize the potential of the industry," said Secretary Alcala.

Industry stakeholders led by the Seaweed Industry Association of the Philippines (SIAP) relayed industry problems that hinder growth such as lack of financial aid and high tariffs on seaweed exports.

SIAP president Benson Dakay seaweed farmers need accessible and affordable loans.

Although the Land Bank of the Philippines and other rural banks have specialized loan facilities for the fisheries industry, financing has always been a problem of most farmers, Dakay said.

Dakay also urged the DA to initiate talks and convince China to lower its tariffs on Philippine carrageenan.

He said China is a big market for seaweeds, but it imposes a high 35% tariff on carrageenan from the Philippines and other countries.

At present, China imports about 50,000 metric tons (MT) of raw seaweed from Indonesia and 10,000 MT of cottonii seaweed from the Philippines. Both commodities are tariff-free.

Dakay said they are optimistic the Philippines can export 35,000 MT of carrageenan to China in a year, if the tariffs were lowered.

Alcala vowed to help the seaweed industry, as he acknowledged its potential in providing rural folk more jobs and farmers with higher income. (*Philippine Star*)



DA-BFAR Director Malcolm Sarmiento (2nd from left) answers a query from a seaweed stakeholder during a dialogue with the officers and members of the Seaweed Industry Association of the Philippines (SIAP), Aug. 18 in Cebu, which was also attended by Sec. Proceso J. Alcala. In photo with Dir. Sarmiento are SIAP vice president Andy Wee (left), and SIAP president Benson Dakay.

DA Chief swears in, designates new officials

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala swore in three new DA officials, who were recently appointed by President Benigno S. Aquino III. They are:

- Dr. Davinio Catbagan as assistant secretary for livestock, and designated as the Philippines' Chief Veterinary Officer and official delegate to the World Organization for Animal Health or Office International des Epizooties (OIE). He previously served as officer-in-charge of the DA-Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), from August 2005 to June 2010;

- Edilberto M. De Luna as assistant secretary for field operations. Prior to his appointment, he served as regional manager of the DA's Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) in Region 4-A, from September 2005 to August 2010; and

- Engr. Antonio S. Nangel as administrator of the DA's National Irrigation Administration (NIA). Prior to his new post, he served as project manager of the NIA's Upper Pampanga River Integrated Irrigation Systems (UPRIIS), the country's largest national irrigation system, which operates Pantabangan Dam, serving over 100,000 hectares of farmlands in Central Luzon.

Sec. Alcala has also designated several DA officials to perform other tasks in addition to their current assignments and responsibilities, namely:



Sec. Alcala (left) swears in Dr. Davinio Catbagan and Edilberto de Luna as Assistant Secretary for Livestock, and Field Operations, respectively; and Engr. Antonio Nangel as Administrator of the National Irrigation Administration.

- Ass't. Sec. Dennis Araullo as national program coordinator for rice and corn;

- Ass't. Sec. Salvador Salacup as Ass't. Sec. for fisheries, in addition to his current designation as A/Sec for agribusiness and marketing, and DA spokesperson;

- Dir. Romeo Recide of the DA-Bureau of Agricultural Statistics as Officer-in-Charge of the Office of the Ass't. Sec. for policy and planning;

- DA-OSEC Head Executive Ass't. Arnulfo Mañalac as program director of Agri Pinoy Trading Center project management office; and

- Dr. Henry T. Carpiso as OIC Ass't Director of the DA-Bureau of Plant Industry.

'Agri-Pinoy' trading centers soon to rise

To provide farmers and fisherfolk direct market for their products, and enable them to earn more profit, the Department Agriculture will set up 'Agri Pinoy' trading centers in strategic areas nationwide.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala said this initiative will in part realize President Aquino's commitment to establish more trading centers, grains terminals, and post harvest facilities to directly benefit farmers, fishers, ruralfolk and consumers in general.

With the establishment of Agri Pinoy trading centers, Sec. Alcala said farmers and fishers will be able to sell their products directly and regularly to consumers and institutional buyers, and hence earn more money.

In this regard, he recently created an Agri-Pinoy Trading Center Program Management Committee (ATC-PMC), with DA head executive assistant Arnulfo Mañalac as director of the pro-

gram management office (PMO).

The ATC-PMC is tasked to devise specific production, marketing and post harvest infrastructure projects, which the PMO will undertake in coordination with concerned DA commodity program directorates and agencies.

Dir. Mañalac said one site being considering is La Trinidad, Benguet, particularly at the Benguet State University (BSU) compound near the 'strawberry field.'

To immediately pursue the plan, Sec. Alcala has instructed Dir. Mañalac and Dir. Leandro Gazmin of the DA-Agribusiness Marketing and Assistance Service to coordinate with BSU President Rogelio Colting, Benguet Governor Nestor Fongwan, La Trinidad Mayor Artemio Galwan, vegetable farmers' groups and DA-Cordillera Dir. Pedro Jerry Baliang.

Students pledge to save rice

Close to a thousand college and high school students in Central Luzon recently pledged to start conserving rice, in support to the 'Save Rice, Save Lives' movement of the DA-Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice).

They recited their mass pledge during the 'weRice' forum, August 19, at the Central Luzon University (CLSU), Science City of Munoz, Nueva Ecija.

The affair is one of the activities leading to the 25th anniversary celebration of PhilRice in November, which also coincides with the National Rice Awareness Month.

With the celebration, the DA-PhilRice aims to massively promote rice conservation tips and increased consumption of brown rice, as well as inform farmers that they can continuously ben-

efit from DA-PhilRice, as it continues to develop modern, cost-effective, high-yielding, income-boosting, and sustainable rice farming technologies and systems.

Said initiatives are congruent with President Aquino goal to attaining and sustaining rice self-sufficiency, and at the same time reducing incidence of poverty and malnutrition.

The 'weRice' forum was organized in collaboration with CLSU's Communicators for Development, focusing on students' role in helping the country become rice self-sufficient, and encouraging them to avoid rice wastage, which averages three tablespoons of cooked rice everyday.

In his report to Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala, PhilRice executive director

Ronilo A. Beronio said if rice wastage could be totally avoided, the country could save about P10 billion in rice imports. Such an amount could feed 3.8 million hungry Filipinos in a day.

"I'm surprised that wastage can have these disturbing consequences.

"I don't waste cooked rice, but because of what I've learned from the forum, I'm more committed now to finish the rice I put on my plate," said CLSU agriculture student Lyra Marie Meneses.

Another agriculture student, Mc Neil Mendoza, supports Meneses, adding that he will be more cautious in eating rice so as "not to waste even a single crumb."

Meanwhile, 18-year-old Ryan Tolentino has an entrepreneurial way of saving rice, saying left over rice could be dried and then used as main ingredient in making *burong isda*, one of Nueva Ecija's famous products of fermented fish and rice.

Simultaneously on August 19,

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Irrigation boosts rice production in Davao del Sur

Rice farmers in Sulop, Davao del Sur will soon enjoy better and bigger harvests, as their communal irrigation system (CIS) is nearing completion.

The Sulop CIS is among the several irrigation systems that the Department of Agriculture, through the Mindanao Rural Development Program (DA-MRDP), will rehabilitate this year.

In her report to Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala, MRDP director Lealyn Ramos said they target to repair and rehabilitate several CIS and community-owned and irrigation systems, with a combined service area of 8,300 hectares of rice lands.

The MRDP is also supporting the construction of a couple of communal irrigation projects (CIPs), with a total service area of 800 hectares, added Ramos, who is concurrently DA-Region 10 (Northern Mindanao) director.

For his part, Oscar Mandalope, president of Sulop Irrigators' Association Inc., said they badly need an irrigation system, as their farms are mostly rainfed.

To sustain their rice farming activities, Mandalope said some farmers have therefore resorted to constructing shallow tube wells (STWs), which are dug in 120 to 150 feet, to pump out groundwater to irrigate their fields.

The STW system, however, makes rice farming more expensive and laborious, added Mandalope.

"With STW, we spend more on fuel. It also demands extra time, as we have to irrigate our fields not only during the day but also at night," he said.

"The high input and labor costs have prompted us and other farmers to shift to other crops, such as banana, sugarcane and *kangkong*, which give them better yield and more income."

Such is the current major problem in Davao region, according to DA-Davao region Director Carlos Mendoza.

In fact, he noted that crop shifting is one of the major reasons why rice production has declined in Davao region.

"Although it would be difficult to stop farmers from shifting to other crops, we



Oscar Mandalope, president of the Sulop Irrigators' Ass'n. in Davao del Sur, inspects a section of the Sulop communal irrigation system, which serves 200 hectares of riceland. (Sherwin Manual, DA-MRDP)

need to address this growing concern," Mendoza said.

Farmers resort to crop shifting simply because it is their farm and therefore their personal choice and decision, and more importantly they want bigger income from their land.

Mendoza added that one of the measures that should be undertaken to improve the productivity of rice farmers is for government to provide sufficient investment in irrigation facilities.

"We are glad that our town officials, as well as the provincial government have teamed up with the DA-MRDP to establish the communal irrigation project in our community," said Mandalope.

The Sulop CIS, the first irrigation project constructed by the DA-MRDP in said town, will serve at least 200 hectares of farmland.

In all, MRDP Dir. Ramos lauded the initiatives of the Davao del Sur provincial government led by Gov. Douglas Cagas, as well as the municipal officials of Sulop, for partnering with the DA-MRDP to help farmers improve their crop production, and earn more income.

She also urged other local officials in Mindanao to avail themselves of the DA-MRDP irrigation program, where a total of P112 million is allotted

for CIPs and P747 million for CIS.

Unfortunately, Ramos said, said funds remain mostly untapped.

"MRDP is implementing irrigation and other rural infrastructure through a 50:50 cost-sharing scheme, where 50 percent of the total project cost is shouldered by the program and the other half by the local government unit," Ramos said.

The MRDP is a long term poverty reducing intervention program in Mindanao funded by the World Bank with additional financial assistance from the national government, and a counterpart fund from the local government unit where the project is being developed.

The program includes infrastructure projects such as irrigation systems and farm-to-market roads that support agricultural productivity, livelihood programs, governance reforms and environmental conservation.

FMR Project

Dir. Ramos also reported that a P3.5-million three-kilometer farm-to-market road (FMR) will be constructed in Sitio Loay, Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur.

Once completed, the road will serve at least 428 farm

households, and help farmers save at least P25 per sack of any produce transported. It will also increase their income by at least 20%.

Over the years, due to the poor condition of the road, going to and from the poblacion or town center takes a lot of effort, sacrifice and costly transport fare.

Firstly, farmers and ruralfolk have difficulty bringing their various products to the market.

Schoolchildren are also been exposed to lot of danger, going to and from school.

Public service is also slow, as employees of the municipal government have difficulty in bringing needed social and medical services to their constituents.

Worse, during the rainy season the road becomes muddy and only horses could traverse it.

Thus, farmers had to shell out P60 per sack of rice or corn just to transport products to the market.

The FMR project is therefore a welcome development for all residents in Sitio Loay.

"We have set this road rehabilitation on top of our priorities for the barangay since we have been isolated from most areas in Sta. Cruz mainly due to our poor road condition," said a barangay official. (DA-MRDP)

Dairy farming empowers households, transforms lives in Davao City

Dairy farming has successfully transformed the lives of rural folk in Brgy. Tacunan, Tugbok District, Davao City.

Majority of the households are now earning more income, thanks to their dairy cows that provide them fresh milk for home consumption and for sale.

To sustain their operation, the Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) is helping them produce animal feed for their dairy cows.

The initiative is funded under the DA-BAR community-based participatory action research (CPAR) project, entitled "Dairy Cow Feeds Processing."

With the increasing cost of commercial feeds, many dairy farmers have shied away from engaging in said enterprise.

Feeds are crucial in dairy farming. The kind and quality of feeds given to cows determines the amount and quality of milk that they will produce.

Commercial feeds are still the best choice, but they are expensive.

Hence, the DA-BAR has approved and funded the

project to help dairy farmers in Tacunan.

It is implemented in coordination with the DA-Southern Mindanao Integrated Agricultural Research Center (DA-SMIARC) and the local government unit of Tugbok.

One of the beneficiaries of the CPAR project is the Tacunan Dairy Farmers Cooperative (TADAFCO), whose members previously received dairy cows through a loan granted by the DA's National Dairy Authority (NDA).

The TADAFCO started in 2003 with 22 members. Four of them took care of 11 dairy cows, which served as the initial investment of the cooperative.

Under the CPAR project, TADAFCO farmer-members will produce and formulate their own feeds, for their dairy cows and sell the excess to non-members, as additional income.

"As part of the project intervention, TADAFCO farmer-members underwent a 40-hour training and seminar on feed mixing and formulation conducted by the Technical



Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)," said Myrna S. Cantilla, SMIARC senior agriculturist and CPAR project leader.

Cantilla explained that in feed formulation, crude protein (CP) is an essential consideration.

Crude protein estimates the total protein content of feeds and usually, the higher the CP content in commercial feeds, the more expensive it is.

The lactating mash that TADAFCO formulated is essential to produce large volume of quality milk with 20 percent CP.

Javier Oliveros, a TADAFCO member, said that "in the feeds that we produce, the CP is higher but still cheaper. This is indeed good news for small dairy farmers like us.

"For members, we sell the feeds at P13.20 per kilo, while for non-members we sell it for P16.50 per kilo.

So, for every kilo sold, our Coop earns a net profit of P3.30."

TADAFCO Chairman Patricio S. Ultiano said the

project is a big help for small dairy farmers in Tacunan.

"There was a big increase in our milk production. And we earnestly hope that with the good results of this project, we will be able to encourage more farmers to go into dairy farming, and contribute more to the national production of milk in the country," he said.

"Prior to the CPAR project, our average daily milk production is 104 liters which amounts to P14,560.

"After we started formulating our own feeds, our average daily milk production has increased to 117 liters worth P16,380. On a daily production basis, we get a net profit of P1,820 or a total of P7,280 monthly," Ultiano added.

Cantilla, said that although the CPAR project is still in its early stage, they are getting good results and benefits.

"We hope more dairy farmers will adopt the technology, so too they will be benefit, not just the Tacunan farmers," Cantilla concluded. (DA-BAR)

DA repairs P2-M irrig'n system in Ipil

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has completed repair of the P2-million irrigation system in Upper Pangli, Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay.

Dr. Oscar O. Parawan, DA Regional Executive Director recently turned-over the project to the Municipality of Ipil, which was then handed to members of the Ipil Irrigators Multi Purpose Cooperative (IIMPC).

The project was funded under the DA's Zamboanga Peninsula Integrated Agricultural Development Program (ZIADP), which entailed the concreting of the 450-meter irrigation canals of the Upper Pangli irrigation system.

The irrigation system, spanning 7.5 kilometers, was

constructed in 1979, and then later rehabilitated under the DA's Rural Infrastructure Development Program (RIDP).

"With the climate change that we are experiencing, I suggest that the LGU together with the farmers should redesign their cropping schedule to make the most of the rains for rice farming," he said.

Parawan said repair and construction of irrigation systems should be prioritized to increase rice production, and thus lessen and eventually stop importation,

The irrigation canal is expected to serve 180 hectares of farmland. (DA9)

Bicol launches 'Bantay Peste'

To effectively control crop pests and diseases in Bicol, the Department of Agriculture, Region 5 Crop Protection Center (RCPC) will launch *Bantay Peste Brigade*, a village-level crop protection strategy.

It will be spearheaded by volunteer farmer-graduates of the Integrated Pest Management-Farmers' Field Schools (IPM-FFS).

The *Bantay Peste* will employ the most appropriate pest management strategy in their farms through the agroecosystem analysis (AESA), and will determine the population of pests and natural enemies on a weekly basis.

Twelve barangays in the province of Camarines Sur, Albay, Sorsogon and Camarines Norte are initially involved in the project.

The project is jointly sponsored by the DA, concerned LGUs and the Southeast Asia Regional Initiative for Community Empowerment.

After orienting the volunteers, they will undergo a refresher course on IPM and AESA, and will be briefed on pest management options.

A standard data interpretation shall be used and practical tools and techniques will be introduced in order to come up with the desired result from the pilot municipalities.

In addition, an FFS will be conducted for participatory plant breeding, seed varietal testing,

seed rehabilitation/purification, segregating line selection, and breeding resistant and high yielding rice varieties.

According to Dr. Evangeline de la Trinidad of RCPC, strengthening the linkages of the DA with the LGU and the farmers through the Bantay Peste brigade would mean easy, fast pest monitoring.

She added that the volunteer farmers are very effective in pest monitoring because they are in the field most of the time. (Mabelle Roa-Ilan)

ARMM holds agri-fair

All line agencies in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), including the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), successfully launched an agricultural trade fair, August 18, at the ORG Compound, Cotabato City, in line with the Holy Month of Ramadhan.

DAF-ARMM Research & Development Extension Director Jalika D. Mangacop said the fair featured various agricultural and fishery products such as fruits, vegetables, planting materials and seedlings that were sold at reasonable prices.

Reading materials and handouts on agri-fishery commodities and technologies were distributed free to visitors.

Mangacop said the fair has opened doors for business opportunities, as it attracted hundreds of ruralfolk and visitors from nearby communities. (DA-ARMM RAFID)



DA Region 9 Director Oscar O. Parawan (3rd from left) leads the inauguration of the P2-M canal concreting of the irrigation system in Upper Pangli, Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay.

DA, ATI launch greenhouse project

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) in Region VIII have launched a greenhouse and techno-demo project, respectively, on high value commercial crops, benefiting farmer-leaders and agricultural extension workers.

FAO project to benefit conflict-affected ruralfolk

More than 7,000 farm families in Maguindanao, displaced due to internal conflicts, will soon benefit from a livelihood project by the ARMM Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Food and Agriculture and Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

The project is called "Livelihood restoration and improved food security of internally displaced people (IDPs) in conflict-affected areas in Maguindanao."

The project's inception report was recently presented by FAO team leader Suharto Abas, which was approved by the members of the Project Coordinating Committee (PCC), August 17 at the DAF, in Cotabato City.

Among those present were FAO Representative Kazuyuki Tsurumi, Maguindanao Prov'l. agriculture officer Daud Lagasi, and DAF Director for administration and finance Basher S. Noor.

The project entails training on rice, corn and vegetable production; training on making fish gears and implements; provision of rice, corn and vegetable seeds, garden tools, and materials for fishing implements to 7,250 IDPs. (DA-ARMM & DA-Maguindanao)

The greenhouse projects were launched in two sites--in Borongan, Eastern Samar; and Catarman, Northern Samar--by DA Region 8.

The ATI, for its part, conducted a technology demonstration program orientation at both sites for beneficiaries.

Both programs aim to promote improved technologies applicable to certain crops that will result to increased productivity.

"The greenhouse technology makes it possible for farmers to produce high quality vegetables even amidst adverse conditions," said DA-Region 8 Executive Director Leo P. Cañeda.

Complementing the greenhouse project is the HVCC techno-demo, which serves to showcase integrated approaches and matured technologies not only for vegetables but also for other market-driven crops such as banana and rootcrops.

"Those that cannot be accommodated in the greenhouse may as well grow prolifically in the open field using appropriate technologies. This will enable farmers to compare production outputs under the new technology and that of the conventional production practices," said ATI region 8 Director Paul T. Cabahit.

To date, there are already 18 greenhouses established in different vegetable-producing areas in the region.

Dr. Veronica J. Berenguer, DA 8 HVCC program coordinator, said the projects are part of their overall effort to increase the region's vegetable production by 4%, from last year's 212,554 metric tons.

Agri engineer develops faster way to analyze milled rice

A state-of-the-art but low cost computer vision system (CVS) to analyze the quality of milled rice was successfully developed by an agriculture engineer

The inventor is Manolito C. Bulaong, Director for Research and Development (R&D) of the DA's Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech), based in Munoz, Nueva Ecija.

Bulaong said the CVS uses an ordinary document scanner that serves as the "eye" of the system. The scanner replaces the expensive digital cameras being used in conventional CVS.

His novel equipment uses an image processing software that extracts the shape and color patterns from each grain being analyzed.

He said the artificial neural network (ANN) acts as the "brain" of the system. Just like a human brain, the ANN is trained to recognize the shape and color patterns from each grain, and determines its quality.

The CVS can compute the percentage by weight of good quality grains and defective grains such as broken grains, brewer's grain, damaged, chalky, discolored, immature, and red kernels present in a sample.

It can also count the number of *palay* grains, measure the grain length, and output of the grade of milled rice according to the specification of the National Grains Standard.

"As our country gears up for global competition, grains standardization is one of the strategies for modernizing the agriculture sector," Bulaong said.

The conventional milled rice quality analysis is a tedious and slow process, he added. It takes more than an hour per sample and costs P550 for a complete analysis.

Aside from being slow and expensive, the result is subjective, as it is affected by the skill and physical condition of the classifier, lighting, and other working conditions.

In comparison, the CVS, aside from being more objective and accurate, can do complete analysis of a 100-gram sample in less than 30 minutes compared to more than one hour using manual analysis.

"The development of the low-cost CVS for milled rice quality

analysis will therefore ensure objective, accurate, and fast results and will modernize the existing methods used by the grains industry," Bulaong said.

The PhilMech-implemented project was funded by the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD) in collaboration with the DA-National Food Authority.

For their accomplishment, Bulaong and fellow inventors were given due recognition by several bodies like the Central Luzon Agricultural Resources Research and Development Consortium (CLARRDEC) and the DA-Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR), to name a few.

Bulaong's team of inventors include Engr. Ruben E. Manalabe and Jayson T. Carbonel, both of PhilMech Postharvest Engineering Department, and Dr. Oliver C. Agustin of Vera Equinox Technologies. (DA-PhilMech)

DA-BAR promotes organic veggies

To promote proper food nutrition and healthier lifestyle among Filipinos, the Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR) will revitalize organic vegetable production in the country.

The DA-BAR will start it under a project called "Promotion of protective cultivation technology for high value organic vegetable production," in partnership with the Bataan Peninsula State University (BPSU).

The project aims to produce off-season nutritious high value organic vegetables, utilize animal waste and plant by-products as organic fertilizers, and determine the least-cost combination of farm inputs.

It will also serve as a showcase to encourage farmers in Bataan and nearby communities that high value and nutritious vegetables could be profitably grown using the so-called 'protective cultivation technology.'



DA-PADCC President Marris Agbon (right) shares the DA's pledge of commitment to the Nat'l. Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP).

DA-PADCC joins celebration of 'Int'l Day of Indigenous People'

The Department of Agriculture joins hands with the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) to attain food security and develop renewable sources of energy.

Such is the commitment shared by Marris B. Agbon, President of the DA-Philippine

Agricultural Development and Commercial Corporation (DA-PADCC), during the International Day of the World's Indigenous People celebration, August 10, at Ateneo de Manila University.

Agbon, who also heads the DA-DAR-DENR National Convergence Initiative Secretariat, also introduced before the participants the "ridge to reef" approach--a system which synergizes the marine, lowland, upland and forest ecosystem--to achieve sustainable rural development through the promotion of convergence agro-enterprise clusters.

With the full participation of the NCIP to develop ancestral lands of indigenous people, he said the DA-PADCC would be able to identify, evaluate, and assess potential areas for food production and development feedstock for bio-fuels such as ethanol and bio-diesel.

The 'International Day of the World's Indigenous People' celebration has for its theme: "Reaffirming the IP's Self-determined Development through Collective Action."

The affair was attended by representatives from different IP groups, officials from various government agencies, members of the Senate and House of Representatives, NGOs, and mediapersons.

Each of the agencies shared their respective pledges that would contribute to the IPs goal in pursuing their social, economic, and cultural development. (DA-PADCC)

Bangladesh keen on producing 'golden rice'

Bangladesh is set to complete experiments on 'golden rice,' a genetically modified variety, by 2012.

The Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) said its government is yet to approve field level experiments, as the institute is conducting laboratory tests in multiplying the seeds of the new rice variety.

The golden rice variety is said to contain 17 times the amount of Vitamin A present in other high-yielding varieties.

It is called 'golden rice' because of the inserted beta-carotene gene that gives the grain a bright yellow color.

It could supply enough beta-carotene to meet 10 per cent of man's daily requirement for Vitamin A.

Following a memorandum of understanding between Bangladesh and the International Rice Research Institute in 2003, the BRRI has developed a variety of golden rice through the transfer of a gene into the BR-29, the highest yielding BRRI variety. BRRI hopes that the yield of the new variety would be much more.

Dr. M Abdul Mannan, director general (DG) of BRRI, said "we have already produced the foundation seeds, and are now

working on how to go for a very limited production of the variety.

"Everything is confined to laboratory at the moment. But we hope that a new variety of golden rice is to be introduced for production by 2012," Mannan said.

Worldwide, 125 million children--particularly in developing countries--suffer from vitamin A deficiency, causing blindness (up to 500,000 per year) and death, according to the World Health Organization.

An additional one million people die annually due to vitamin A deficiency and malnutrition.

In many of these countries, rice is the staple food and provides 80 per cent or more of daily calories.

Polished, white rice--the most popularly-consumed form of rice--contains no beta-carotene or other forms of pro-vitamin A, and is also a very poor source of other micronutrients (iron and zinc).

The latest varieties of golden rice are expected to be a new tool - in addition to existing ones - in helping to overcome vitamin A deficiency among the poor. (SEARCA)



Japanese farmers use rice as feed

More and more Japanese poultry raisers are feeding their chicken with rice.

However, the yolk of an egg laid by a hen fed mainly with rice is paler than the yolk of an egg laid by one that ate mainly corn.

Eggs and meat from chicken fed with rice are drawing a great deal of attention in Japan, both as delicious cuisine and a way to help increase self-sufficiency in food.

In general, the color of an egg yolk changes according to what the chicken ate.

Most chicken are fed with imported corn, hence their egg yolks are vivid yellow. If they eat feed that consists mostly of rice, their yolks are paler in color.

Two years ago, when prices of imported corn soared, Japanese farmers began using local rice for feed.

The egg-laying rates on the farm have not changed, and consumers have praised the eggs as having a light, delicious flavour.

Using rice in feed ration meets the needs of consumers, who are highly conscious on food safety.

It can also help revitalize local communities.

Despite the high price of eggs from chicken fed with rice, there have been successful attempts to develop local brands--such as *Kometama* eggs, produced by a chicken farmers' cooperative in Aomori Prefecture; and *Toyo no Kometamago* eggs from Suzuki Poultry Farm Co. in Oita Prefecture.

Given their success, more chicken farms are likely to use feed rice in the future.

Its increasing use is expected to raise Japan's self-sufficiency in food.

Though 96 percent of chicken eggs are produced domestically, about 90 percent of the feed for chicken is imported. (worldpoultry.net)



Hotter nights reduce rice yield

As the daily minimum temperature increases, or as nights get hotter, rice yields drop.

This was the finding of a research team, noting that the net impact of projected temperature increases will be to slow the growth of rice

production in Asia.

Rising temperatures during the past 25 years have already cut the yield growth rate by 10-20% in several locations, the research team said.

The team's study was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) — a peer-reviewed, scientific journal from the United States. The study analyzed 6 years of data from 227 irrigated rice farms in six major rice-growing countries in Asia, which produces more than 90% of the world's rice.

This is the first study to assess the impact of both daily maximum and minimum temperatures on irrigated rice production in farmer-managed rice fields in tropical and subtropical regions of Asia.

"Our study is unique because it uses data collected in farmers' fields, under real-world

conditions," said Mr. Jarrod Welch, lead author of the report and graduate student of economics at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD). "This is an important addition to what we already know from controlled experiments."

"Farmers can be expected to adapt to changing conditions, so real-world circumstances, and therefore outcomes, might differ from those in controlled experimental settings," he added.

Around three billion people

eat rice every day, and more than 60% of the world's one billion poorest and undernourished people who live in Asia depend on rice as their staple food. A decline in rice production will mean more people will slip into poverty and hunger.

"Higher daytime temperatures can increase rice yield, but future yield losses caused by higher nighttime temperatures will likely outweigh any such gains because temperatures are rising faster at night," said Welch. (FAO)



Aggie chief aims ...

(from p1)

irrigated, and thus planted twice a year.

In 2009 the region's total corn area harvested reached 231,473 hectares, producing 186,479 tons of both white and yellow corn, for an average of 806 kilos per hectare.

On the demand side, Central Visayas has a total population of 6.61 million as of 2009, with a per capita consumption of 44.8 kilos of white corn, for a total demand of 296,128 tons.

With a three-ton average yield from 230,000 hectares, Central Visayas could produce at least 690,000 tons yearly, which is more than twice the current corn consumption. The region could then ship their surplus to other regions in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Secretary Alcala said the three-ton average harvest could be achieved by providing farmers the right farm inputs such as high-yielding and pest-resistant white corn varieties, adoption of modern technologies, combined with organic farming.

Among the top officials who attended the forum were Cebu Vice-Governor Vicente Sanchez, Jr., Msgr. Rommel Kintanar of the Archdiocese of Cebu, CCFS chair Francisco Fernandez, Cebu City Councillor Hilario Davide III, DA Reg. 7 Dir. Ricardo Oblena and DA-BFAR 7 Dir. Andres Bojos.

RP must ... (from p3)

asked local government units (LGUs) to pitch in on the campaign to mitigate the impact of climate change."

Rudinas said climate change has likewise affected neighboring rice-producing countries such as Vietnam's Mekong Delta, where seawater has reportedly seeped into thousands of hectares of rice farms.

In the Philippines, prolonged dry spells could hit a number of crops and lead to lower yields.

Godilano also warned that climate change would also lead to a higher incidence of infectious diseases due to heat stress, a large number of Filipinos in low-lying coastal areas becoming "climate refugees," disappearance of small islands, and coral bleaching.

For his part, Environment Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje said "La Niña phenomenon is a major challenge to both the urban and rural communities in the country as it affects properties, human lives and the economy. Super typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng left massive damage of around 2.7 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Products (GDP) in 2009. As such, we need to put our acts together as the worst may yet to come. And certainly we don't want to be caught unprepared." Paje added. (*Manila Bulletin*)



Sec. Alcala (2nd from right) join hands with provincial governors (from left) Douglas Cagas (Davao del Sur), Arturo Uy (Compostela Valley) and Rodolfo del Rosario (Davao del Norte)--as they renew partnership to implement President Aquino's food security and rice self-sufficiency program, during the special board meeting of the Davao Integrated Development Program (DIDP), in Davao City. Sec. Alcala sought their support to open up more rice areas, plant more upland organic and fancy rice, increase the production and consumption of white corn, and repair and rehabilitation of communal irrigation systems.

DA wants stronger ties with ... (from p2)

farmers' and fisherfolk's cooperatives and associations, through concerned LGU officials or Congressmen.

During the affair in Lucena City, Sec. Alcala took pride in citing successful operation of *Sentrong Pamilihan ng mga Produktong Agrikultura ng Quezon* (SPPAQ), which he spearheaded while he was a Representative of the 2nd district of Quezon.

To date, SPPAQ has become a major farm trading facility, where some 50 tons of various vegetables are sold and traded daily, benefiting hundreds of farm families, as well as thousands of consumers from Metro Manila, Bicol and other areas in Southern Luzon.

Under his watch, he said the DA will put up more agri-fishery trading centers similar to the SPPAQ.

In this regard, he has instructed Dir. Leandro Gazmin of the DA Agribusiness and Marketing Service and DA Head Exec. Ass't. Arnulfo Mañalac, who was designated as program director of the Agri-Pinoy Trading Center-Program Management Committee (ATC-PMC) to coordinate with the DA regional offices in establishing 'Agri Pinoy' trading centers in strategic areas in the country.

Students pledge ... (from p5)

another group of 1,000 students in the Visayas also made a similar pledge to save rice.

They are from the colleges of agriculture, arts and sciences, and economics at the Visayas State University.

In September, a similar forum will be conducted at the Mariano Marcos State University, in Batac, Ilocos Norte; Bicol University, in Legaspi City, Albay; and University of Southern Mindanao, in Kabacan, Cotabato.

Other *weRice* activities, which started in June, include tree planting, forum for seed growers and investors, concert, exhibits, book launch, and children's and nutrition month.

For more information, please contact DA-Philrice through Chona Suner-Narvadez, chairperson, National Rice Awareness Committee, tel. (044) 456-0285 local 706, or send inquiries via SMS, at 0920-911-1398.

(pls see related story on p5).

During the agri-aqua fair, Sec. Alcala also turned over several farm and fishery equipment and inputs to Governor David Suarez.

Other local officials present were Quezon Representatives Danilo Suarez (3rd District) and Irvin Alcala (2nd District), Vice Gov. Vicente Alcala, members of the Sangguniang Lalawigan, and municipal mayors.



DA Secretary Proceso J. Alcala (inset, top left) enjoins farmers and other participants at the Cebu Coalition for Food Security forum, August 20, Cebu City, to work together to attain self-sufficiency in corn in Central Visayas.

Creation of local task force vs. pests proposed

The Department of Agriculture will institutionalize efforts to prevent and control pest infestations in coordination with local government units (LGUs) to minimize crop damage and ensure harvest.

In his report to Agriculture Secretary Prospero J. Alcala, assistant secretary Dennis Araullo said partnerships between the DA and the LGUs should likewise consider crop pest monitoring and preventive and control measures.

Araullo, who is also the concurrent DA-Region 4-A Director, said the DA should implement a year-long program to monitor, control and conduct regular surveillance of all kinds of crop pests.

He said the DA should work closely LGUs through the creation of provincial task force on crop pest and disease control

and monitoring.

In fact, he has instructed the DA-4A agricultural production coordinating officers (APCOs) to coordinate with concerned local officials to establish said provincial task force. If said initiative works out well, he said it is possible to bring it down further to creating crop pest control task forces at the barangay level.

Araullo said there is a need to conduct continuing information campaign through farmers' meetings and LGU consultations

While armyworm infestation is diminishing, he said "we should remain vigilant, as crop pests may re-appear again. Hence, there is a need to institute long-term measures such as the creation of provincial task forces on pest control, monitoring and surveillance."

DA, Cagayan forge ... (from p1)

"We will give farmers the choice on what system to adopt. Or he may combine both to make his farm productive and sustainable," the DA chief said.

During the open forum, Sec. Alcala made the following pronouncements:

- Land Bank of the Phils. will increase its loan portfolio to agriculture and fishery sector, through accredited Cooperative Rural Banks and financial conduits;

- DA will promote massive use of good and certified rice seeds;

- DA in partnership with LGUs and organized farmers' groups will put up more major trading centers and grains terminals;

- DA-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources will set up more mariculture parks in appropriate coastal towns, and make available more rent-to-own fish cages for marginal fishermen. It will also implement a program to conserve "ludong," a rare species of mullet, which thrives only in Cagayan River. It is also called the 'President's fish,' and sells as much as P5,000 per kilo.

- DA will pursue renewed efforts to repair and rehabilitate irrigation systems, and construct more small water impounding projects.

Unprecedented 3-day trip

The trip to Tuguegarao served as the first leg of Sec. Alcala's

three-day 'immersion' in Cagayan Valley, touching base with small farmers, fishers, Governors, Congressmen, City and Municipal Mayors, including DA regional officials and staff, and provincial and municipal agriculture officers and extension workers.

DA-Region 2 Dir. Andrew Villacorta said Sec. Alcala's three-day visit was unprecedented: "I cannot recall any DA Secretary who have made such an effort to visit us for three straight days. And we enjoyed every minute of it."

Some 100 officials and staff of various DA agencies and bureaus in Region 2 welcomed Sec. Alcala at the Cagayan Valley Integrated Agricultural Research Center in Ilagan, Isabela.

Region 2 Dir. Jovita Ayson of the DA-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) welcomed the DA chief with a video presentation, complete with a gospel song ('Welcome to the Family') spiced with photographs during his visit in Tuguegarao and Isabela. It was an emotional moment for all, including Sec. Alcala.

During the dialogue with DA family officials and staff, Sec. Alcala shared his marching orders from President Benigno C. Aquino III to make the country attain self-sufficiency in rice, corn vegetables, fish and other basic food commodities.



DA Sec. Prospero J. Alcala (inset) answers a query of a farmer-leader (above) during a Farmers' Congress in Tuguegarao City, attended by more than 1,000 farmers, local officials, and agri-fishery stakeholders. Shown with Sec. Alcala are Cagayan Gov. Alvaro Antonio (right) and DA-Region 2 Dir. Andrew Villacorta (left). Also present were Rep. Randolph Ting (3rd District, Cagayan) and municipal mayors of Cagayan. The affair was the first leg of Sec. Alcala's three-day visit to Cagayan, Isabela and Nueva Vizcaya.

DA-ACPC allots ... (from p1)

grams. It will focus on four areas:

- Examine the design and operating guidelines and procedures of each program;

- Identify enabling/deterrent factors in the successful operation of the programs;

- Determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the programs in terms of outreach, financial performance including default ratios, among others; and

- Recommend ways to improve operations and enhance the viability of the programs.

The review will also include with analyses and recommendations to make lending more effective and viable under the DA-ACPC's Agro-Industry Modernization Credit and Financing Program (AMCFP), where eight programs are currently implemented, to wit:

- Agri-Fishery Microfinance;
- Fisheries Financing;
- Agricultural Microfinance for Small Farmers, Fisherfolk and Households;

- Cooperative Banks Agri-Lending;

- Direct Market Linkage Development;

- AMCFP with Quedancor;

- Tobacco-Rice Growing System with the DA-National Tobacco Administration; and

- Tomato production and paste processing with the Northern Foods Corp. (DA-ACPC)

Agri performance dips by 2.6% in H1

The prolonged dry spell due to *El Niño* phenomenon exacted its toll on the Philippine agriculture sector as it contracted by 2.6% during the first six months of 2010.

Of the four subsectors, crops suffered most as it dipped by 6.7%. It contributes roughly one-half (45%) to total agricultural production.

Production of palay (unmilled rice), the country's major staple, decreased by 10.2% to 6.62 million metric tons (MT) during the first six months of 2010 versus 7.37 million MT for the same six-month period in 2009.

Likewise, corn harvest dipped by 24.95% to 2.42 million MT, from 3.22 million MT in 2009. Sugarcane yield was also down by 21.86%.

The fisheries subsector — comprising 28% of total agricultural production — also barely grew, contracting by 0.11%.

The livestock and poultry subsectors served as the agriculture sector's saving grace, as they both posted positive growth, at 2.11% and 2.46%, respectively. The livestock and poultry industry contributes 27% to total agriculture production.

In all, the total value of agricultural production at current prices was P607.8 billion (B), 1.75% higher than last year's level.