

## DA to help typhoon Pedring-affected farmers

The Department of Agriculture will implement an initial set of interventions to help farm families recover from crop losses due to typhoon 'Pedring' (international name *Nesat*), which battered Luzon, September 27 and 28, damaging mostly palay (paddy rice) in Central and Northern Luzon, and Cagayan regions.

Unvalidated crop damage estimate as of September 30, 2011 has reached at least 450,000 metric tons (MT) of

palay, representing 6.9% of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter projected harvest of 6.5 million MT, or 4.5% of the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester projected harvest of 9.88 million MT.

In a memorandum to President Benigno S. Aquino III, Agriculture

Secretary Proceso J. Alcala recommended that the DA through the National Food Authority (NFA) buy storm-damaged palay to provide farmers enough money for their subsistence.

The DA will also assist them

to replant as soon as possible by providing them free certified seeds from the DA seed buffer stock.

Likewise, the DA will implement a 'Quick-Turn-Around' *(Pls turn to p2)*

### PCIC to pay P334-M crop insurance

The Department of Agriculture through the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (DA-PCIC) will expedite the release of P334 million to Luzon farmers whose crops were damaged by typhoon 'Pedring.'

In a report to Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala, PCIC President Jovy C. Bernabe said the amount will be paid to 26,794 farmers in 30 Luzon provinces, who insured their crops planted to a combined area of 40,138 hectares.

Bernabe assures farmers that the PCIC will process and pay their crop insurance claims in a speedy and efficient manner.

He said it is the biggest indemnity the PCIC has made to date, as the agency has expanded its insurance coverage during the last 12 months.

He said the PCIC will also reactivate its partners, particularly the 'adjusters' in the private sector, to help the agency cope with the huge task of verifying the crop insurance claims of farmers.

Fast-tracking the indemnity payments will enable rice and corn farmers to recover their losses and re-plant again, Bernabe said.



**DA-NIA allots P144-M to repair Ala River Irrigation System in Mindanao.** *The DA through the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) is allotting P144 million (P6-M this year and P138-M for 2012) to repair and upgrade the Ala River Irrigation System (ARIS) that serves more than 12,000 hectares in South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat, benefiting 8,850 farm families. Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala (inset, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left) made the announcement at the 13th annual gathering of the ALA Dam 2 Federation of Irrigators' Associations (IAs) in Isulan, Kudarat, September 30, 2011, attended by 2,000 IA officers and members, belonging to 83 IAs. Inset photo also shows (from left) Isulan Mayor Diosdado Pallasigue, NIA administrator Antonio Nangel, DA national rice program director Dante Delima, Maremco IA president Victoria Fernando and DA Region 12 director Amalia Datukan.*

### DA to pursue ACEF program under new rules

The Department of Agriculture resumes the implementation of the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (ACEF), following the recent approval of the revised guidelines by the Congressional Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization (COCAFAM), headed by Senator Francis Pangilinan and Representative Mark Mendoza.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala said "we are mandated by law to continue implementing the ACEF and to help farmers and

fishers' groups, cooperatives, and entrepreneurs to enable them to produce world-class agri-fishery products."

He said there are sufficient controls in place in the new ACEF guidelines, and that the national ACEF executive and technical committees have also been re-constituted to ensure that questionable transactions involving the funds are eliminated.

ACEF, funded by tariffs from agricultural products, is a mecha- *(Pls turn to p10)*

### Tuna, fish export fees reduced

The Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has reduced the export fees of tuna and other fish species caught in Philippine waters, from three percent (%) to 0.2 %.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala announced the reduction at the 13<sup>th</sup> National Tuna Congress, in General Santos City, where he approved to amend Fisheries *(Pls turn to p10)*

### Loco over coco

Magandang balita ang ipinasalubong ni P-Noy sa kanyang pagbalik mula sa kanyang ikalawang US trip. Ani ng Pangulo, handang mag-invest ng bilyong dolyar ang US business giants na Pepsi Co. at Vita Coco para sa buko juice natin.

Wow! Magandang balita nga.

Aabot sa \$15 milyong dolyar ang handang isugal ng mga investors para sa sabaw ng buko ng Pilipinas.

Ang halagang ito ay ilalaan para sa pagtatayo ng processing facility ng coco water na siya namang iluluwas sa Estados Unidos at Europa kung saan hit na hit itong pamalit sa mamahaling sports drink.

Di ba nga't mismong ang Pop Icon na si Madonna ang kasalukuyang nagsusulong ng pag-inom nito. At di lamang basta-basta endorser si Madonna, dahil investor din sya.

Nitong nagdaang buwan lamang, idinaos ang groundbreaking para sa \$5-milyong packaging facility sa Pili, Camarines Sur. Kasunod nito, tiyak na darami ang oportunidad, trabaho at kabuhayan para sa mga Bicolanong coconut farmer.

Ngunit bagamat maganda ang balita, hindi ibig sabihin na madali itong kamtin.

Sa kasalukuyan, nasa labinlimang porsyento ng

mga nakatanim na puno ang retired na. Ibig sabihin mahigit sa apatnapung milyong coconut trees ang hindi na kayang mag-prodyus ng bunga.

Tiyak din na magiging usapin ang kasapatan sa suplay nito.

Dahil bukod sa masarap na inumin, ginagamit din ang buko juice na sangkap sa pagkain at panggatong.

At sakali ngang handa na tayong magsuplay sa ibang bansa, may matitira pa ba sa atin?

Marahil kailangan nang seryosohin ang replanting program ng Philippine Coconut Authority upang mapalitan ang mga magulang at matatandang puno.

Panahon na rin siguro para isakatuparan ang nabinbing Philippine Coconut Development Act na maglalaan ng regular na pondo para sa industriyang

nagkakahalaga ng P65 milyon at inaaasahan ng libo-libong Pilipino.

Higit sa kahit na anupamang investment ng ibang bansa, kinakailangan sigurong tayo mismo ang maglaan ng pondo at malasakit para sa pagpapaunlad ng ating mga coconut farms.

Upang sa hinaharap, handa tayo sa kahit na anong malakihang agribusiness venture na papasukin natin.



**DA invests P29.4-M to expand northern Iloilo fish port.** The DA through the Philippine Fisheries Dev't. Authority (PFDA) is developing another major fish trading hub in Panay, as it recently expanded the Bancal fish port, in Carles, Iloilo, worth P13-M. The DA through the National Agribusiness Corp. (NABCOR) also installed a P6.4-M liquid quick freezing facility, where fish catch from Iloilo, other Panay provinces, Masbate and Romblon are unloaded daily. To complete the package, a P10-M farm-to-market road leading to Bancal will be constructed, while the DA through the Bureau of Agricultural Research will train rural women how to make sardines. Photo shows Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala (4<sup>th</sup> from left) witnessing the inauguration, with Iloilo 5<sup>th</sup> District Rep. Neil Tupas, Jr (2<sup>nd</sup> from right), PFDA general manager Rodrigo Paz, Jr. (left), DA Region 6 director Larry Nacionales (2<sup>nd</sup> from left), and Carles Mayor Arnold Betita (right). Others shown (from left) are Mrs. Jenelin Tan Betita, Batad town mayor Pedro Alarcon and Carles vice mayor Edsel Betita.

### DA to help ... (from p1)

(QTA) palay production program to recover the losses due to typhoons.

The DA will also link up with agribusiness enterprises, particularly fertilizer and seed companies, to encourage them to implement a plant-now, pay-later scheme, coupled with a rice marketing tie-up with the NFA.

The DA will also implement a

credit program through cooperative rural banks (CRBs) in typhoon-affected provinces to provide farmers crop production loans. The DA through the Agricultural Credit and Policy Council (ACPC) has initially allotted P400 million for said credit program.

Despite the damage, Sec. Alcala said in his memo to President Aquino there is no need to

(Pls turn to p12)

### AggieTrends

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**DA Proposes P61.7-billion budget in 2012.** Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile (left) asks Sec. Alcala (right) details of the DA's budget during the September 8, 2011 deliberation of the proposed 2012 budget of the Department of Agriculture at the Senate Committee on Finance chaired by Senator Franklin M. Drilon (3<sup>rd</sup> from right). The DA is proposing a budget of P61.73 billion, 60 percent more than this year's allotment, as it will 'frontload' investments in irrigation (P27.1B), postharvest and other agri-fishery infrastructure (P11.28B), production support (P4.86B), and research and extension (P4.75B). Secretary Alcala said with the budget, the Aquino administration will be on track in attaining food security and sufficiency in rice and major staples by end of 2013, increasing rural incomes, and achieving other major agri-fishery sector goals. Also in photo (from left) are Senators Panfilo Lacson, Francisco Pangilinan and Sergio Osmeña III, National Food Authority administrator Lito Banayo, DA assistant secretary Romeo Recide, and DA undersecretaries Claron Alcantara and Antonio Fleta.



## Tobacco floor prices up

Tobacco farmers will earn more income starting crop year 2012 as minimum prices of their products were increased.

National Tobacco Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza said prices of Virginia, burley, and native tobaccos will increase effective crop years 2012 to 2013.

It was a result of a successful tripartite conference among farmers, buyer-firms and NTA.

Minimum price of AA-grade Virginia tobacco is pegged at P72 per kilo, up from P66 in 2010-2011 season.

Prices for grades B, C, D, and E were all increased by P5 per kilo, while grades E, F1, and F2 were increased by P3.

Usable R tobacco was priced at P40 per kilo, up by P12 from the previous price of P28.

Prices of burley grades A, B, C, D, E, F and R, and native high grade/morado, liso high, liso medium, and short sapod were increased by an average of P7 per kilo.

Native sexta or reject sapod was hiked at P22, from P14.50.

Zaragoza said the new tobacco rates were a result of successful negotiations held separately with farmers and buyer-firms.

"We came up with floor prices that are acceptable to both parties based on calculations that will ensure 25 percent income for the farmers," he said.

Meanwhile, he said total tobacco production this year has reached 78.5 million kilos (green weight), 4.5 M kilos more than in 2010.

Total exports could reach 35.1 million kilos, up by 5% from last year's 33.45 M kilos.

"Total import of unmanufactured tobacco was pegged at 80 M kilos dry weight, equivalent to 133 M kilos in green weight," Zaragoza said.

NTA estimated that total demand for tobacco leaves was at

127 M kilos dried weight, or 211 M kilos green weight.

The Philippines exports unmanufactured tobacco to the United States, Belgium, South Africa, Korea and Malaysia, while the country exports manufactured tobacco to Thailand, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam. (NTA)



*To further boost farm productivity and income, and contribute to attaining self-sufficiency in rice and major staples, DA is promoting the use of modern farm machines and equipment via a national agricultural farm machinery and equipment exhibit and roadshow, dubbed as 'AgriMach 2011,' held consecutively in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija for Luzon, Iloilo for Visayas, and General Santos City for Mindanao. The three-leg event held in September showcased various machines and equipment that farmers' groups, irrigators' associations, and local government units can avail under the Aquino administration's farm mechanization program, where qualified beneficiaries need only counterpart 15 percent of the cost of the farm machine or equipment of their choice, instead of the previous 30%. Photo shows Sec. Alcala (extreme right) inspecting a power tiller (foreground) and a shredder (left) at AgriMach in Iloilo. With him are Dir. Ricardo Cachuela of the DA's Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (2nd from right) and DA's National Irrigation Admin. Antonio Nangel (3rd from right).*

## Phl mango industry gets backing

Agriculture Secretary Procy Alcala assured Philippine mango growers with his department's support as he graced the 13th National Mango Congress at Isla Jardin del Mar resort in Gumasa.

"Rest assured that the DA will continue with support programs including the establishment and rehabilitation of nurseries and foundation scion grove, household and village processing assistance and crop improvement especially for climate change adaptability," Alcala told 322 delegates at the closing of the three-day mango congress.

Alcala reported a seven percent growth in the annual production of mangoes in 2010 which was reportedly "prompted by the continuous flower induction in Central Luzon, CALABARZON, Bicol Region and all the Visayas regions."

However, a decline of 5.3 percent during the early months this year was noted.

He said this was caused by the changing weather conditions and the early rainy season which may have been triggered by climate change.

Last year, fresh mango exports reached 20,115 tons worth US\$15.2-M.

The country also exported dried and processed mangoes at 3,600 tons and 9,328

(Pls turn to p10)

## DA links veggie farmers with Singaporean buyers

The Department of Agriculture is linking vegetable farmers in the provinces of Benguet and Quezon with prospective buyers from Singapore.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala said a three-man Singaporean team recently visited the provinces of Quezon and Benguet to see for themselves the various vegetables that their fellow Singaporeans prefer.

"Their visit is an indication that Filipino farmers are now ready to export their quality, organically-grown vegetables to Singapore, Japan and other neighboring countries," said Sec. Alcala.

The Singaporean team is composed of Dr. Michael Lau, CEO of Green and Fresh Pte. Ltd., and its directors Ong Hock Beng and Ang Yong Beng. They arrived September 9 and proceeded to Quezon, where they toured several organic vegetable farms. On September 11, they motored to Benguet and visited vegetable farms in the towns of Mankayan, Buguias, and Madaymen.

They were accompanied by Filipino entrepreneur Agripino Ferrer, Jr., and Singaporean Max Teo Chin Huat, project leader of the Philippine-Singapore vegetable mission.

Sec. Alcala said the group took interest in semi-temperate Chinese-type vegetables that are widely grown in Quezon and Benguet that include bell pepper, tomatoes, cabbage, pechay, several types of lettuce, and coriander. They are also interested to import fresh banana leaves as plate liner.

The Singaporeans brought with them seeds of vegetables preferred in Singapore and see if these would adapt well for propagation in various parts of the Philippines.

Sec. Alcala said the Department of Agriculture through its High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) directorate is ready to organize farmers' groups in Quezon and Benguet to meet the demand and preferences of Singaporeans through Green and Fresh.

"We will talk with our farmers and seed growers and we will tell them what varieties you prefer. We can also supply you with banana leaves. We are also willing to expand our production areas to satisfy your quantity requirements," Sec. Alcala told the Singaporeans during a courtesy call on September 12 before they flew back to their country.

The group will be back soon to accomplish needed documenta-

tion and procedures and follow up initial orders of vegetables from Quezon and Benguet.

Alcala said the DA on behalf of qualified farmers' groups is prepared to enter into a growing contract arrangement with the Singaporeans and other interested foreign and Filipino businessmen.

"We should have a timeline and we must consider factors such as production cost, logistics and freight requirements. The bottomline is still the farmers' income," he said.

While in Benguet, the Singaporeans visited the farm of Francis Ching in Mankayan, which is planted to bell pepper, cabbage, romain and iceberg lettuces and coriander.

DA's HVCDP director Jennifer Remoquillo said the Singaporeans were impressed with the vegetables.

She added that the group has made an initial order of Benguet vegetables as part of a preliminary contract that would include contract growing with farmers like Ching.



**Singaporeans to Import Phi Veggies.** Officials of the Green and Fresh Pte. Ltd., recently visited the country to look into the possibility of importing quality vegetables from the Philippines. Inset photo shows (from left) Green and Fresh directors Ong Hock Beng and Ang Yong Beng and their CEO Dr. Michael Lau with Benguet vegetable farmer Francis Ching (2nd from right), as he ushers them into his lettuce farm in Mankayan. Sec. Alcala said the Singaporean's visit is an indication that Filipino farmers are now ready to export their quality, organically-grown vegetables to Singapore, Japan and other neighboring countries. The group has an initial order of lettuce, kamote (sweet potato) and onion. They are also interested to buy fresh banana leaves as plate liner. For their next visit to the Philippines, they will also look into possibility of buying more vegetables from Mindanao. (Photo by DA-RFU-CAR)

## Phi, China firm up agri cooperation, trade

The Philippines through the Department of Agriculture and China, particularly Jilin province, recently committed to further strengthen bilateral cooperation and trade in agriculture and fisheries.

This was bared by Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala after meeting with former Chinese minister of agriculture Sun Zhengcai, September 22, 2011, in Manila.

Mr. Sun is currently the Party

Secretary of Jilin, a major agro-forest-mineral province in northeast China, with a gross domestic product of more than \$120 billion. He heads a 15-man delegation to explore investment and trade opportunities in the Philippines.

Sec. Alcala said they discussed possible agricultural and fishery technical cooperation and trade opportunities that will contribute to increasing trade between the two countries to US\$

60 billion in the next five years.

Agriculture is one of the priority areas that President Benigno S. Aquino III has discussed with Chinese President Hu Jintao during his China state visit last month.

For his part, Mr. Sun acknowledged that China and the Philippines have huge potentials for cooperation in the agricultural and fishery sector.

He expressed particular interest in plantations, fisheries, and tropical plants. He said China particularly Jilin, can further extend technical assistance and investments in the area of agri-fishery and countryside infrastructure such as irrigation and post harvest facilities.

Situated in northeast China near the Russian and North Korean border, Jilin is a major agro-forest-mineral province.

Its main products are rice, corn, sorghum, sheep, deer, timber, ginseng, ethanol, biochemicals, and industrial products like cars, train carriages and steel alloys.

Secretary Alcala said Jilin-based companies are welcome to invest in the country.

"With Jilin's strength in agriculture, I am certain that both sides can find mutually beneficial cooperation, especially in

(Pls turn to p10)



**Sec. Alcala (left) discusses with Mr. Sun Zhengcai (2nd from left), former agriculture minister of China, possible agricultural and fishery technical cooperation and trade opportunities that will contribute to increasing trade between the two countries to US\$ 60 billion in the next five years. Mr. Sun is currently the Party Secretary of Jilin, a major agro-forest-mineral province in northeast China, with a gross domestic product of more than \$120 billion. He heads a 15-man delegation to explore investment and trade opportunities in the Philippines. Also with them are Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Liu Jianchao and DA Undersecretary for special concerns Bernadette Romulo-Puyat.**

## Phl may produce sweet sorghum bioethanol in Negros by 2013

The Philippines may be able to produce its first commercial scale sweet sorghum-based ethanol as the Philippine National Oil Co.-Alternative Fuels Corp. (PNOC-AFC) is in exploratory talks to establish a 1,000-hectare sweet sorghum plantation in Negros Occidental.

A foreseen milestone not only in the Philippines but globally, the sweet sorghum production will require P45-P75 million investment at a P30,000-50,000 per hectare production cost. The cane will be used to produce sweet sorghum syrup for ethanol production at the San Carlos Bioenergy Inc.'s (SCBI) plant in San Carlos City in Negros Occidental.

At a yield of 2,500 liters per hectare, 1,000 hectares can produce as much as 2.5 million liters of ethanol per year.

The likelihood of PNOC's supporting the plantation program anchors on the fact that sweet sorghum is very competitive as bioethanol feedstock as studied by UPLB and Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU) team, according to Prof. Rex B. Demafelis, University of the Philippines Los Banos (UPLB) Alternative En-

ergy Research, Development, and Extension (RDE) Convenor and Chairman of UPLB Energy Systems Committee.

The commercial production is expected to come after several years of agronomic research and inter-agency coordination funded by the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR).

Prof. Demafelis emphasized the need for PNOC-AFC to conduct first a feasibility study (FS) to validate previous studies done and the site specificity analysis before any engagement is made. All these require PNOC-AFC's board approval and that of the PNOC mother board.

Given an FS that proves economic viability for the plantation, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) may subsequently be signed. The MOA will be between PNOC-AFC and SCBI.

When realized, the plantation will generate jobs either in an available upland in San Carlos City or in adjacent municipalities.

"The challenge to farmers is to plant sweet sorghum as against sugarcane. This is a perfect complement crop to sugarcane because the identified uplands have not been planted at all with sugarcane, so now people will start earning from them," said

Demafelis.

At an estimated 50 per MT of stalk yield plus three MT of grain yield per hectare per cropping, this will give farmers an estimated additional P60,000- 80,000 net earnings per year.

There is a need to introduce an alternative feedstock to sugarcane for ethanol production due to the erratic changes in the price of sugar, consequently sugarcane.

"We're mainstreaming sweet sorghum for bioethanol," Eleazar. "The commercial plantation in Negros will stabilize feed supply for the plant. We're trying to do this because the price of sugar in the market is very volatile, and we need to help produce the feedstock."

Because of the high price of sugar in the world market before, farmers in northern Negros would rather sell their cane for sugar production rather than for ethanol, said Demafelis. Cane price for sugar production had reached as high as P2,200 per metric ton (MT), while an ethanol distillery can only offer P1,550 per MT.

A sweet sorghum business summit was conducted last June in Bacolod to link various bioethanol stakeholders for potential financing from Development Bank of the Philippines, Land

Bank and Philippine National Bank.

With sweet sorghum ethanol, the Philippines may be able to become competitive with imported ethanol whose price was reported before to have reached P38 per liter from Brazil.

At present, the country has 69 million liters per year (MLPY) of plant ethanol combined capacities which is fed by sugarcane-based material (syrup or molasses) by 100 percent.

It includes 30 MLPY each from SCBI Inc. and Roxol Bioenergy Corp. (RBC), both in Negros Occidental, and Leyte Agro-Industrial Corp. has a nine MLPY plant in Leyte.

Sweet sorghum is considered to be an ideal ethanol feedstock since it is more resilient to drought. Growing it requires less water compared to sugarcane. It needs lower fertilizer requirement and has a shorter crop cycle of 110 to 115 days enabling planting of two to three times a year compared to sugarcane's once a year. It is a multi-purpose crop as stalk and grains are used for ethanol, and the grains may be used as livestock feed ma-

*(Pls turn to p11)*

## DA-BAI celebrates World Rabies Day at SM MOA

The Philippines through the National Rabies Committee (NRC) spearheaded by the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Industry (DA-BAI), in cooperation with other government agencies, the Animal Welfare Coalition, Merial, Novartis, Sanofi and Nestle Philippines, Inc. celebrated World Rabies Day on September 29, 2011 at the SM Mall of Asia (MOA) Music Hall in Pasay City.

NRC is an inter-agency committee composed of Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Animal Industry (DA-BAI), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), private sector and non-government organizations.

World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in the Philippines Dr. Soe Nyunt-U highlighted in his message during the opening ceremony the importance of cooperation and coordinated efforts among government, private sector, non-government

organizations and the public towards rabies prevention and control.

DA-BAI Director Efren C. Nuestro said that the celebration will serve as a wake-up call to the people especially the animal owners to protect themselves and the community and be aware of rabies prevention.

World Rabies Day is celebrated all over the world every September 28 to increase public awareness on rabies prevention and control. This year's theme is "Working Together for a Rabies-Free Philippines".

DA-BAI assistant director and NRC chairman Dr. Victor Atienza said rabies is primarily a disease with about 2.8 deaths per million population, and of which 40% are children below 15 years old. "Children are particularly at risk from this terrible disease, due to their close contact with dogs, the major global source. They are more likely to suffer multiple bites and scratches to

*(Pls turn to p8)*



**NFA Anniversary Tree Planting.** National Food Authority deputy administrator Vic J. Jarina (in yellow shirt, top photo) and Miss Earth 2011 Athena Mae Imperial, lead the tree planting activity at Quezon Memorial circle in celebration of the 39th anniversary of NFA. The NFA employees duplicate the tree planting activity on a wider scale this time in Payatas (lower photo) as they lend their hand in rehabilitating and re-greening the former dumpsite. The NFA celebrates this year's anniversary with the theme "39 na Taon ng Paglilingkod sa Pilipino, Sapat na Pagkain, Itaguyod" emphasizing the continuous relevance of the agency in ensuring enough rice for the Filipinos and stabilizing the country's food security. (NFA Release)

# The man who used his coconut

Being born to a family of farmers, it was a *no brainer* that Benjamin R. Lao of Davao del Sur ended up tending a farm of his own. Even when his parents, who were both farmers, encouraged him to traverse a field different from land tilling and farm work, Mang Ben pursued what he loves the most.

This is a story of a man who used his coconut.

Surrounded by people who planted rice, corn and other crops for a living, Mang Ben fell in love with farming at a young age.

"My parents wanted for me to become a lawyer but I dreamt of doing nothing but toil the land to produce food to feed his family and give them a sustainable income regularly," he explained.

"*Maswerte ako dahil nabigyan ako ng lupa na matatamnan,*" he narrates. (I was fortunate that I was given a piece of land to manage.)

Thirteen years ago Mang Ben inherited a five-hectare farmland when his father died. It was then planted with 325 old coconut trees which produce 800 nuts every three months or 2-3 nuts per tree.

Mang Ben then sought the assistance from the Philippine Coconut Authority of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"I had to ask assistance from DA experts because even if I was exposed to the intricacies of agriculture for the longest time, I knew I need help," he said.

Aside from the technical assistance from agricultural technicians, he read various magazines and agri-books to educate himself.

"I started to re-learn the basics. I read a lot and attended seminars on effective farm management. Tapos lahat nung natutunan ko, sinunod ko," he said. (And all the things I learned I adopted.)

When he was ready to go on his own, he developed the hilly portion of his farmland using the Sloping Agricultural Land Technology to prevent soil erosion.

"When I was just starting my project, I decided to plant '**Malabatong**' (*Flemingia macrophylla*) and other leguminous deep-rooting shrubs around the farm as a soil

conservation technique," he said with a smile.

Luckily, the bushes were also good sources of nitrogen for his trees and soon enough the whole area was planted with various shrubs serving two purposes.

He made use of everything that was available to him.

Using natural ingredients such as goat's manure, *kakawate*, *makabuhay* and hot pepper, he concocted a special blend of organic pesticide he named EMAN-which stands for **Epektibo, Mura at Natural**. True enough, this inexpensive mixture is effective in repelling plant pests and diseases.

*Gusto ko ipaalam sa mga magsasaka natin na maaring magtanim at umani ng malaki kahit walang kemikal na ginagamit,*" he explained. (I wanted to teach the farmers that they can plant and earn big even without the use of chemical.)

Today his farm, planted to coconuts and hundreds of high value crops, validate his advocacy.

Aside from the 15,000 nuts

## Adora Dolores Rodriguez

he harvests four times a year, Mang Ben earns a sizable income from his lanzones, durian, rambutan and mangos-teen trees.

He also maintains a goat raising project.

"I diversified to maximize the land area and ventured into food processing to add value to my farm products," he added.

Under the name Donna Belle Delicacies, his product line includes coconut honey, coconut sugar, coconut syrup and coconut sap drink.

He also makes durian jam, candies and durian ice cream with goat's milk which is one of Donna Belle's best selling product.

Through the years, Mang Ben's little piece of heaven here on earth expanded to ten hectares providing employment to a number of residents of the barangay.

Aside from sharing his success, he also gives back to the community by launching well-meaning programs including free lectures on organic farming.



This year, Mang Ben's innovations, determination and hardwork will be recognized as he accepts the National Award for Outstanding Coconut Farmer via the 2011 Gawad Saka.

Good thing he used his coconut and followed his heart.

## Use of vegetable oil for farm machines seen

Amid fluctuating fuel prices, scientists at the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) here have started encouraging farmers to process used vegetable cooking oil for fuel to run their machines.

"[Biofuel processed from vegetable oil] is cheaper than the pumped diesel that farmers buy to operate their farm machines [such as tractors, threshers and hand pumps]," said Dr. Ricardo Jorge, supervising scientist of PhilRice's rice engineering and mechanization division.

All farmers need to do is mix potassium hydroxide, alcohol and used oil, allow the mixture to settle for 18 hours, and feed the liquid into the engine, based on a biofuel system developed by United States-based inventor, Rico Cruz, he said.

"We have tried it and it worked," Jorge said.

He said Cruz gave local farmers a three-hour lecture and demonstration on Aug. 12

and was successful in fueling an old jeepney with his "Cruzesterification" process.

A Boholano, Cruz is an agricultural engineering graduate of the Visayas State College of Agriculture (now Visayas State University).

He returned to the country last month to conduct lecture-demonstrations in Metro Manila, the Visayas and Mindanao. Jorge quoted the inventor as saying that "producing biodiesel using 'Cruzesterification' is as easy as making coffee [because] the catalyst is the coffee, alcohol is the sugar and oil is the hot water."

"Blend the three ingredients and you have 'coffee' or the biodiesel in minutes," Jorge quoted Cruz as saying in one of his lectures.

Farmers need to mix 100 liters of used oil, 1.1 kilograms of potassium hydroxide and 20 liters of methanol to produce 100 liters of biodiesel.

Potassium hydroxide costs P80 per kilogram while a liter of methanol costs no more than P80.

Farmers can buy 17 kilograms of used vegetable oil for P400. A liter of biodiesel using these ingredients can be valued at P38, Jorge said.

He said Cruz spent 20 years to develop his biodiesel system and it is now being used in Oregon. Jorge said PhilRice is considering setting up a demonstration plant for "Cruzesterification," although cooking oil is not in short supply.

"We can already teach farmers how to do it in smaller volumes," he said. "On our part, we will certainly use this [version of] biodiesel for the machines that we use in our compound and demonstration farms."

Ruben Miranda, PhilRice deputy executive director for development, said the technology creates opportunities for farmers to boost their farm efficiency without increasing their expenses. (*Anselmo Roque, Inquirer Central Luzon*)

## USDA lauds Mindanao livelihood programs

Ranking officials of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently lauded the implementation of livelihood enhancement and emergency livelihood assistance projects in Mindanao.

USDA Agriculture Counselor Philip Shull headed a contingent that visited four Livelihood Enhancement for Agricultural Development (LEAD) projects and one Support to Emergency Livelihood Assistance Project (SELAP) funded by the US PL 480 program in Misamis Oriental and Davao.

US Public Law 480, the original name of the Food for Peace Act (FPA), has three titles, and each title has a specific objective and provides assistance to countries at a particular level of economic development. Title I is administered by USDA, and Titles II and III are administered by USAID.

The Philippines, which is a recipient under Title I or Trade and Development Assistance, is entitled to government-to-government sales of U.S. agricultural commodities to developing countries on credit or grant terms.

Agreements under the Title I credit program may provide for repayment terms of up to 30 years with a grace period of up to 5 years.

Depending on the agreement, commodities provided under the program may be sold in the recipient country and the proceeds used to support agricultural, economic, or infrastructure development projects.

Counselor Shull's team is composed of Ms. Echo Domingues, Washington-based analyst of the US Food for Progress Program; Bill Verzani, USDA Agri Attaché to the Philippines, and Mr. Perfecto Corpuz and Ms. Pia Ang of the USDA office in Manila.

Verzani, Corpuz, and Ms. Domingues visited two goat-raising projects of the Mauswagon and Sinai Rural Improvement Clubs in Laguindingan, Misamis Oriental.

During the visit, Ms. Domingues noted the projects' impact on the community and wished that other Americans could see the fruits of their contribution to these far-flung areas and how these benefit and empower women in Mindanao.

At Malalag, Davao del Sur Counselor Shull showed interest upon learning that there are some 4,000 hectares presently planted to mangoes in the area, saying the USDA is working with the DA here on a project to export Philippine mangoes to their country.

Former Mayor Macario Humol, now executive assistant of Gov. Arturo Uy, thanked the US Government for their assistance to Philippine agriculture.

They added that the local government was able to put up four new classrooms in one of the public schools in their municipality using assistance from the program.

The visits were coordinated by the National Agricultural and Fishery Council (NAFC) under OIC Executive Director Noel A. Juliano, the DA regional directors, and the regional, provincial and municipal fishery councils.



**USDA Counselor Philip Shull together with local government officials of the municipality of Malalag in Davao Del Sur inspects fishes for sale at the town's trading center. The facility was built thru the Support to Emergency Livelihood Assistance Project (SELAP) funded by the US PL 480 Title 1 Program. In photo are Counselor Shull, Malalag Mayor Roelo Paras, Regional Agricultural and Fishery Council Chair Rodolfo Lopez, and DA Regional Technical Director Norlito Agduyeng. (DA-NAFC)**

### Aflatoxin-resistant peanut being developed

An aflatoxin-resistant peanut is being developed to eliminate toxin in this multivitamin-rich crop, a trait which may even be transferred to feed crop corn in the long term.

The development of an aflatoxin-resistant peanut will have a significant impact in eliminating a cancer-causing content in peanut which is considered to be an important multivitamin, multi-nutrient-rich crop.

Aflatoxin, caused by the fungus *aspergillus flavus*, a common mold in the environment, is an economically important toxin as it hampers international trade and depresses farmers' income.

International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) Peanut Breeding Chief SN Nigam said ICRISAT is taking both the conventional and advanced technology approach through genetic modification (GM) in developing this peanut.

The GM path involves the use of antifungal genes chitinase and glucanase and another one, lipoxygenase, a family of iron-containing enzymes that helps in dioxygenation of polyunsaturated fatty acids.

"The toxin is produced by the fungus in the seed (peanut, but) lipoxygenase blocks the metabolic pathway, so the synthesis of the toxin is stopped," Nigam said in an interview.

The improved peanut is eyed as an alternative to staples such as rice specially in light of its climate change-mitigating impact.

Being a legume, peanut has the symbiotic or friendly relationship with a bacterium called rhizobium which enables it to fix nitrogen from the atmosphere. This eliminates the need for more nitrogen-based fertilizer which produces greenhouse gas nitrous oxide.

Given the GM technique, when the development of an aflatoxin-resistant peanut will have been developed, the trait may eventually be transferred to corn whose quality and price in the market is also adversely affected by the presence of aflatoxin-forming molds.

One trait that ICRISA is developing through GM is the multivitamin-multinutrient-rich peanut that is also rich with pro-Vitamin A.

It is also trying to raise oil content in peanut from the present 48 to 50 percent.

However, ICRISAT is also developing a peanut variety for calorie-conscious peanut-eaters. This has reduced oil content.

ICRISAT Director General William D Dar said ICRISAT has been relatively fast in releasing  
*(Pls turn to p10)*



**USDA delegate Ms. Echo Domingues, left, discusses with female members of the Rural Improvement Club of Barangay Mauswagon, Laguindingan, Misamis Oriental, the goat project being undertaken in the community under the Livelihood Assistance for Agricultural Development (LEAD), funded by the US PL 480 Title 1 Program, implemented by the NAFC. (DA-NAFC)**

## DA to promote bee culture for honey, fruit prod'n

The Department of Agriculture will fully support and promote the culture of bees (apiculture) for honey and as an adjunct enterprise to orchard fruit production.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala made the commitment during a meeting early September with apiculture industry stakeholders at the National Apiculture Research, Training and Development Institute (NARTDI), Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU), in Bacnotan, La Union.

Sec. Alcala also serves as the NARTDI board chairman.

He said aside from honey and other by-products, apiculture is also important in fruit production and organic agriculture since it is an effective method of enhancing flower and fruit production the natural way.

The Philippines imports natural and artificial honey, at about 400 metric tons (MT) annually, to augment local production of roughly 150 MT to satisfy the requirements of households, hotels, restaurants and other institutional buyers.

DA-Bureau Animal Industry apiculturist Elmer Esplana said api-

culture has a huge potential in the country, with a conservative per capita consumption of 1 spoon (about 20 to 25 grams of honey) a day, the country would require at least 728,175 metric tons annually.

DA-BAI Dir. Efren Nuestro said bee culture can be done in any part of the country, but the top five apiculture sites are the Cordillera region, Ilocos, Cagayan, Central Visayas, and Southern Tagalog.

During the NARTDI meeting, a memorandum of agreement was forged among Provincial Governor Manuel C. Ortega, DMMMSU, Rep. Victor Ortega, and the La Union Beekeepers Development Cooperative (LUBDCO) for the operation and composition of the management committee that will run the newly inaugurated P10.5-million La Union Honeybee Center at Raois, Bacnotan.

The center has designed a honey production module which may be replicated in various parts of the country to produce the needs for each family, Nuestro said.

## Chinese to help Filipino farmers

The People's Republic of China will help increase the productivity of Filipino farmers for the next five years as the second phase of its technical cooperation project begins.

To be implemented until 2016, the Philippine-Sino Center for Agricultural Technology (PhilSCAT) project, aims to breed new hybrids using the Philippine's local and China's rice germplasm and introduce China's hybrid rice varieties in the country.

PhilSCAT, located at the Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, will also introduce farm machineries to the Filipino rice farmers.

In the signed Minutes of Discussion and Implementation Plan, represented by Yuanxing Fang of China's Yuan Longping High Tech Agriculture Co., Ltd and Dante de Lima of the Philippine's Department of Agriculture, the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhiRice) will help in testing the field performance of the introduced China's hybrids.

The hybrid rice varieties to be introduced and the hybrid rice project's first phase will be tested in six locations in Luzon.

PhilSCAT in collaboration with PhilRice bred seven promising hybrid rice lines in the project's first implementation in 2003-2008.

The second phase, which aims to "sustain and continue the significant achievement in the first phase," will also include the harnessing of biogas using China-developed techniques. Dr. Jose Falla, head of the projects' Knowledge Management Division, said the research and development on biogas will be prioritized for farmers to adopt the technology in their households.

China, a rice self-sufficient country supporting its 1.3 billion population, recently sets its third world record in rice production when Yuan Longping, the father of hybrid rice, and his team announced the 13.9 t/ha-harvest of a new "super hybrid rice" in Longhui County in Hunan Province.

Longping's research team first made their record in 2000 when their variety reached 10.5 t/ha and in 2004, when the new hybrid rice registered 12 t/ha.



**Fish Kill No More.** Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala disperses fingerlings during the ceremonial lake seeding cum fingerling dispersal at the Taal Lake on September 9, 2011 in Laurel, Batangas. The activity was conducted by the DA through BFAR to offset the losses incurred during the massive fishkill in June. A total of 5,000 maliputo fingerlings were released in the open waters of Taal, while six million bangus and two million tilapia fingerlings will soon be distributed to 96 small-scale fish cage owners affected by the fishkill. Assisting Sec. Alcala are: BFAR Director Asis Perez (in green polo shirt) and Alson's Group of Companies representative Renato Ulit (in white polo shirt).

## DA-BAI celebrates ... (from p5)

the face and head, both of which carry a higher risk of contracting rabies.

They are often unaware of the danger that dogs transmit rabies and may not tell their parents when a bite, lick, or scratch has occurred from an infected animal" he added.

Highlights of the celebration at SM MOA included 1) the awarding of Rabies Free Zone Certificates to the Municipalities of Daanbantayan, Pilar, Poro, San Francisco and Tudela in Cebu; 2) Launching of Rabies Free Philippines Pin; and 3) The 1st "Best Practices in Rabies Control" Poster Contest.

Rabies Free Zones are jointly declared by the DA-BAI and DOH in areas that have satisfied various criteria including zero cases in humans and animals for the past two years, and has a functional rabies control program in the area.

The Rabies Free Philippines Pin which symbolizes the people's commitment to the prevention and control of rabies based on the winning logo in last year's World Rabies Day Celebration at Podium, Ortigas.

The "Best Practices in Rabies Control" Poster Contest winners

were: 1st place -Dr. Stella Marie Lapiz, Bohol Provincial Veterinary Office; 2<sup>nd</sup> place- Dr. Mary Rose Vincoy, Cebu Provincial Veterinary Office; and 3<sup>rd</sup> place- Dr. Alan Lacuñas, Department of Health's Center for Health Development – Region V. The winners were chosen from among twelve poster entries nationwide.

Rabies is a viral disease that can be transmitted to animals and humans.

The disease is transmitted mainly by bite, but exposure may also occur through contamination of broken skin or mucous membranes with saliva from an infected animal.

Rabies prevention starts with the animal owner. Protect yourself, your pet and your community by taking animals to be vaccinated. Avoid stray animals.

If you are bitten, wash bite wounds with soap and water and seek medical attention immediately.

If your pet is bitten, consult your veterinarian immediately. Prompt and appropriate treatment after being bitten and before the disease develops can stop rabies infection and/or prevent the disease in humans and animals.



**Seated (L-R): CHED Commissioner William Medrano; DA-RFU 2 Regional Executive Director, Dr Lucrecio R Alviar, Jr.; ICRISAT Director General Dr William D Dar; Rep. Ana Cristina Go, 2<sup>nd</sup> District of Isabela; Vice-Mayor Roberto M. Agcaoili, San Mateo, Isabela. Standing (L-R): Dr Samuel O Benigno, QSC; Dr Serafin L Ngohayon, IfSU; Dr Maria Luisa R Soliven, CMU; Dr Romeo R Quilang, ISU; Dr Elpidio T Magante, BISU; Dr Jesus Antonio G. Derije, USM; Atty. Benjamin P Sapidula, DMMMSU; and Dr Roger P Perez, CSU.**

## ICRISAT and Philippine SUCs sign agreement to revitalize rainfed agriculture

Revitalizing rainfed agriculture research, development and extension (RD&E) is now on top of the agenda of Philippine state universities and colleges (SUCs) in their efforts to contribute to national food security and improved livelihoods of smallholder farmers in the country.

Seven Philippine SUCs recently signed Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs) with the India-based International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) for the implementation of collaborative rainfed agriculture RD&E projects.

The MOA signing was done in conjunction with the visit to ICRISAT of a top-level delegation from the Philippines on 30 August – 02 September 2011.

The agreements were signed between ICRISAT represented by Director General William D. Dar, and Philippine SUCs represented by their respective Presidents, namely: Dr. Roger P. Perez, Cagayan State University (CSU); Dr. Jesus Antonio G. Derije, University of Southern Mindanao (USM); Dr. Maria Luisa R. Soliven, Central Mindanao University (CMU); Atty. Benjamin P. Sapidula, Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU); Dr. Elpidio T. Magante, Bohol Island State University (BISU); Dr. Samuel O. Benigno, Quirino State College (QSC); and Dr. Serafin L. Ngohayon, Ifugao

State University (IfSU).

Another MOA was signed between ICRISAT and the Department of Agriculture - Regional Field Office No. 02 (DA-RFO 2) represented by its Regional Executive Director, Dr Lucrecio R Alviar, Jr., to boost Cagayan Valley's food security and agricultural growth and development through improved rainfed agriculture.

Under the MOAs, ICRISAT will provide Philippine partners access to the Institute's cutting edge technologies related to rainfed/dryland agriculture for adaptation and commercialization in the Philippines.

It will also work with Philippine SUCs and DA-RO in pursuing an integrated and unified RD&E approach to strengthen, invigorate and hasten the development of existing rainfed farming systems in the country.

This approach is envisioned to serve as the country's defense to mitigate drought, land degradation and other risks arising from climate change.

Funded by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the delegation's visit to ICRISAT is in line with a new initiative of the DA Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR) – the Philippine Rainfed Agriculture Research, Development and Extension Program (PHIRARDEP).

The team was led by CHED Commissioner William Medrano with Rep. Ana Cristina Go of the second district of Isabela.

In a meeting with the team, Dr.

Dar stressed the need for SUCs to generate climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and technologies to minimize risk and protect the livelihoods of smallholder farmers as well as to empower communities in rainfed

areas.

In response, Dr. Medrano expressed CHED's commitment to pursue the incorporation of climate change in the country's higher education curriculum.

### DA creates RP team to attend Pacific Fisheries Commission

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala has approved the creation of a Philippine team responsible for the country's strategic positioning, bargaining, and negotiations with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

In a memorandum to Secretary Alcala, Director Asis G. Perez of the DA's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said the team is composed of representatives from the departments of agriculture (DA), foreign affairs (DFA), and trade and industry (DTI), the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA), and other fishing industry leaders.

The team will attend the 8<sup>th</sup> WCPFC regular session on December 5-9, 2011, at Ngarachamayong Cultural Centre, Madalii in Koror, Palau. Among the matters to be discussed is the stock status of key tuna species and evaluation of the WCPFC Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) 2008-01.

Under the CMM, the WCPFC implemented on January 1, 2008 the closure of high sea pockets in the Pacific Ocean to address

overfishing of various types of tuna like big-eye, yellowfin, skipjack, and South Pacific albacore.

The closure has since then adversely affected Philippine tuna production.

Secretary Alcala approved the creation of the WCPFC Philippine team at the recently concluded 13<sup>th</sup> National Tuna Congress, in General Santos City. He also approved several resolutions forwarded by the SOCSKARGEN Federation of Fishing and Allied Industries, Inc. (SFFAIL), and recommendations by the DA-BFAR to shore up the ailing tuna industry.

The SFFAIL, in a resolution, said the Philippines submitted a position to the WCPFC meeting in Hawaii last December 2010 calling for the establishment of a Special Management Area in High Seas Pocket 1, where Filipino fresh and ice-chilled fishing vessels may be allowed.

But the federation noted that closure of portions of the high seas may be extended beyond

(Pls turn to p12)

## DA to pursue ... (from p1)

nism where various forms of assistance are extended to farmers, fisherfolk, cooperatives, and agribusiness entrepreneurs.

The fund is supposed to provide safety nets to the agricultural sectors affected by trade liberalization when the Philippines joined the World Trade Organization.

ACEF was suspended by DA early this year to make way for review, validation, and audit procedures as this was surrounded by questionable circumstances, low collection rate, or had defaulting borrowers.

Agriculture Undersecretary for Finance Antonio Fleta, in a press briefing revealed that contrary to newspaper reports, ACEF still has about P2 billion (B) available for loans and grants, awaiting fund release by the Department of Budget and Management.

He added that out of P10-B fund in 2010, P8-B had been released comprising of loans and grants. A total of 110 accounts have been listed with arrears, and 18 for restructuring.

"We have to sort this out. We do not want the farmers to lose their trust in government. Somebody has to be made responsible," Alcalá said.

Under the new rules outlined in a 44-page Administrative Order No. 18 signed by Sec. Alcalá, eligible proponents and beneficiaries include cooperatives and associations of Filipino farmers and fisherfolk; micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs) in agriculture, aquaculture, and fisheries sectors; state universities and colleges (SUCs) and private academic institutions with tie-ups with farmers' or fisherfolk's cooperatives, or private entities primarily engaged in agriculture or fisheries in the locality where the SUC is situated.

ACEF shall require equity from every loan offered to qualified organizations, depending on the proponent's set-up.

Minimum assistance that ACEF shall provide is pegged at P15,000, while the maximum loanable amount is P15 million (M) for each project.

However, ACEF may allow a higher amount of loan for projects that are viable and important to agricultural development, particularly those which will utilize indigenous raw materials and gen-

erate local employment.

Alcalá revealed that for loans and grants amounting to P15-M, approval shall be done jointly by the Agriculture Secretary and the chairpersons of the Senate and House Committees on agriculture.

Loan releases shall be made at the DA Central Office and recipients will be required to personally claim the check.

Loan disbursement and repayments shall be covered by existing guidelines, procedures, rules and regulations on the release of funds and loan collection.

Proponents shall also be required to submit post-dated checks to the DA-Central Office upon claiming their loan proceeds, and on the schedule of payment.

Failure to comply with the ACEF's provisions, particularly on the loan amortization schedule shall compel the DA to take legal or remedial measures to secure the loan by registering the unregistered mortgage or chattel mortgage.

## Aflatoxin-resistant ... (from p7)

superior varieties of its drought-prone mandate crops among which is peanut.

"We have good scientists, and we have the support of the government of India which you can't just find elsewhere," he said in a separate interview.

The Philippines can benefit from using these aflatoxin-resistant or nutrient-enriched varieties given their regulatory approval. And it may even be able to collaborate in their research if only the technologies are under public domain or without patent or plant exchange restrictions.

The development of the pro-Vitamin A-enhanced multivitamin-rich peanut may need at least another three years of field trials. After this, it has yet to go through government regulatory approval.

With it, a person may be able to take in a substantial amount of his recommended Vitamin A intake from a handful of peanut. However, bioavailability studies which determine the amount of effective Vitamin A absorbed into the body has yet to be conducted. (Manila Bulletin)



**DA Counterparts P40-M for Pampanga Agri Projects.** Sec. Alcalá (inset, right) answers a query from farmer Moises Tiglao, during a forum in Barangay San Patricio, Mexico, Pampanga on September 19, 2011 where he committed an initial P40 million as counterpart fund with San Fernando City and other adjoining towns for the implementation of several agriculture and fishery projects such as flatbed dryers, a rice mill, shallow tube wells with engine pump sets, and hand tractors, among others. The DA will also validate a proposed farm-to-market road and rehabilitation of several irrigation projects for funding in 2012, said DA-Central Luzon regional director Andrew Villacorta.

## Phl, China ... (from p4)

technical exchanges in rice and corn production," he said.

He cited the introduction of Chinese hybrid rice varieties in the Philippines, including agriculture technologies and equipment being used to boost agricultural productivity, particularly through the Philippines-China Center for Agricultural Technology (Philscat) in Muñoz City, Nueva Ecija.

Sec. Alcalá also promoted Philippine coco coir products as flood control and soil erosion agents.

Meanwhile, Sec. Alcalá updated Mr. Sun on a 2007 Memorandum of Understanding forged among several Philippine government agencies (DA included) with Jilin province, China Development Bank, and Jilin Fuhua Agricultural Science and Technology Development Co. Ltd., involving the lease of one million hectares for grains and bio-fuel crops.

The agreement was suspended when a cause-oriented group questioned its legality before the Supreme Court.

"I hope that the relevant government agencies will resolve the matter soon. The current administration is committed at making a transparent, predictable, reliable and profitable business destination for all our partners," Alcalá said.

## Phl mango ... (from p3)

tons, respectively.

The combined exports of fresh, dried, and processed mangoes last year earned a total of more than US\$50-M, according to the Secretary.

Despite these figures, Alcalá still noted a shortage in supply and urged growers and producers to plant more.

He challenged them to surpass last year's produce considering that the DA is working with the sector "in improving, handling and transport systems."

Alcalá finds this year's theme, "Positioning the Philippine Mango Strongly in the World Market," very timely with the huge demand for Philippine mango.

"I-ayos lamang po natin na matugunan po ang mga kailangan gawin ng industry upang patuloy na tangkilikin ng ibang bansa ang ating mangga. Ito po ay para sa inihangad ng industry ng mangga sa pandaigdigang pamilihan at maging sa Pilipinas," Alcalá said.

Major mango producers in the country are Ilocos Region, Zamboanga Peninsula, Central Visayas, Central Luzon, and SOCSKSARGEN (South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and General Santos) area.

## BSP retains 25% agri-agra allocation rule

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) has retained the 25 percent mandatory credit allocation to the agricultural sector through agrarian reform and agri-agra activities despite complaints from major players in the banking industry.

BSP Governor Amando M. Tetangco, Jr. has issued Circular 736 containing the revised rules and regulations governing the mandatory credit allocation for agriculture and agrarian reform credit under Republic Act 10000 also known as "The Agri-Agra Reform Credit Act of 2009."

The Agri-Agra Reform Credit

Act of 2009 was signed by former President Arroyo amending Presidential Decree 717 to facilitate increased credit to farmers and spur productivity.

Groups led by the Bankers Association of the Philippines (BAP) have been calling for the relaxation of the provision that requires the banking sector to allocate at least 25 percent of its loanable funds for agricultural credit.

Of the figure, about 15 percent must be lent to agriculture stakeholders through agri-agra loans while the balance of 10 percent must be lent to beneficiaries of agrarian reform.

## Tuna, fish export fees ... (from p1)

Administrative Order (FAO) 233 issued in 2010, stipulating fees for the issuance of export/re-export permits equivalent to 3% of export value.

BFAR national director Asis G. Perez said the reduced fee is equivalent to P1,650 or 0.2% of fish raw material value computed from the previous year's average wholesale price, whichever is higher.

The price should be based on surveys done by the DA's Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS).

The SOCSKARGEN Fed'n. of Fishing and Allied Industries, Inc. (SFFAI) said the previous 3% fee was an additional burden and a

disincentive, unduly increasing the export prices of tuna products, thus making them less competitive in the world market.

"It was counterproductive and inconsistent with the thrust of the government to promote exports," said Marfenio Y. Tan, outgoing SFFAI chairman.

The National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC) initially promulgated FAO 233, in keeping with the intent of Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2001.



**DA-BFAR to put up crab hatcheries.** *The Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) will establish crab hatcheries in selected coastal communities nationwide — in partnership with fishfarmers' groups, local government units and Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center-Aquaculture Department (SEAFDEC-AQD) — that will provide crablets to fisherfolk and their families for fattening as source of additional income and livelihood, while the excess crablet production will be dispersed in coastal areas to benefit municipal fishermen. Secretary Proceso J. Alcala (left), during a recent visit to SEAFDEC-AQD in Tigbauan, Iloilo, said that the DA-BFAR will initially put up 60 crab hatcheries this year, and 60 more in 2012. The breeder crabs will be sourced from the DA-BFAR regional research centers and SEAFDEC-AQD. Shown with him inspecting a breeder crab (inset) are SEAFDEC-AQD chief Dr. Joebert Toledo (middle) and DA-Western Visayas regional director Larry Nacionales.*

The NFARMC is a multi-sectoral, advisory group under the supervision of the DA-BFAR.

It conducts national

consultations to craft needed policies for the protection, conservation, sustainable development and management of the country's fisheries and aquatic resources.

The recommended policies are then sent to the DA Secretary for consideration and approval.

During its July 22, 2011 meeting, the NFARMC upon consultations with tuna industry stakeholders approved the recommendation to reduce the 3% export fee for captured aquatic wildlife like tuna.

Sixty percent of the country's tuna catch is unloaded at General Santos City, making it the "tuna capital" of the Philippines.

The tuna industry is presently facing hard times as a result of a ban on fishing in the high seas imposed by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) since January 1, 2010.

Last year, the country's tuna production totaled 387,101 metric tons (MT), which was 9% less than in 2008.

Of the total, commercial fish catch accounted for 70% or 271,625 MT, 14% less than in 2008, the SFFAI said.

## Phl may ... (from p5)

terial.

It is used to produce syrup for sweetening, vinegar, wine, and other food products.

The Philippines just implemented on August 6 a 10 percent mandated mix of bioethanol with gasoline for selected octane levels.

This sends the country's total ethanol requirement to approximately 400 million (M) liters per year.

The ethanol demand in the country is estimated to be 645 M liters in 2015 if a 15 percent ethanol-gas mix will be mandated as per a study of Japan International Cooperation Agency.

This will displace the projected 645 M liters of petroleum-based fuel by 2015.

Foreign exchange savings was placed at \$218.203 M in 2010. This is predicted to rise to \$789.3 M in 2015 and \$1.274 billion in 2020.

Given this demand,

bioethanol has the potential to generate jobs totalling to 179,386 by 2015 and 289,611 by 2020.

Aside from PNOC-AFC potential entry into sweet sorghum production, two other companies have been engaged in a comprehensive research on sweet sorghum for ethanol.

Fuel Inc., an affiliate of gas distributor Seaoil, has engaged in a 16,000 square meter field trial area in Negros Occidental. Its sweet sorghum yield has hit a high range of 46 to 84 MT per hectare.

The company earlier acquired a 36-hectare area in Negros to establish an ethanol plant.

Moreover, Lucio Tan's Negros Biochem Corp (NBC) has a 848 square meter field trial area that has observed a yield of 49 MT per hectare.

At present negotiation is being made for a Negros Occidental LGU and cooperative to conduct collaborative commercial plantation of a 50-hectare sweet

sorghum planting for both production and processing technology demonstration purposes.

Massive propagation of sweet sorghum and other ethanol feedstock crops aligns with government's aim to help reverse the predicted adverse effect of climate change.

Sweet sorghum is estimated to reduce carbon emission reduction by 2,906 MT in 2015 which will further rise to 4,692 MT by 2020.

Even if all immediate programmed ethanol plant construction in the country will have been realized, this will still be less than 50 percent of the estimated total annual requirement of 400 million liters.

Other alternative materials being considered feedstock for ethanol are cassava and corn; cellulosic materials, grasses, agricultural waste material, forest waste, and residues; and macro algae. (BAR)

# DA sets up asparagus facility in GenSan, commits P10-M for FMRs

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is constructing a P3.75-million asparagus packing facility at Barangay San Jose, in General Santos City (GenSan), to trans-

Marman Drysdale Agriventures, Inc.

With the new packing facility, which will be completed by end of October, Pascual said the

Irrigation Administration to undertake appropriate irrigation projects to support the year-round production of high value crops.

He also instructed the DA-

Bureau of Agricultural Research to assess the potential of processing and canning asparagus for domestic and export markets.

For its part, the DA-NABCOR will help the GAPMC to link directly with institutional buyers and assist the group in their marketing activities.

## DA creates ... (from p9)

2011, and skipjack tuna may be among the species to be managed by the Commission, warranting the organization of a Philippine team "that will draw strong and strategic positioning and negotiating tools on WCPFC matters."

Meanwhile, director Perez said they recently sent two BFAR scientists to attend the 7th Regular Session of the WCPFC Scientific Committee (SC) in August 9-17, in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia.

Accordingly, the WCPFC SC concluded that tuna, specifically the yellow fin species, is not experiencing overfishing.

However, the SC recommended that there should be no increase in fishing efforts in the western equatorial region.

It was also learned during the same conference that bigeye tuna was nearing the overfishing level, prompting the WCPFC SC to recommend a 32 percent reduction in fishing effort to address the diminishing stock, Perez said.

He added that it was still early to determine the effects of the high seas closure in 2009 in terms of other tuna varieties.

As this developed, Perez recommended to Secretary Alcala to adopt a comprehensive approach towards building better relations with Indonesia and other Pacific Island countries by strengthening the National Tuna Industry Council (NTIC).



**P3.75-M Asparagus Facility to Rise in GenSan.** Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala and Gen. Santos City Mayor Darlene Antonino-Custodio lead the ceremonial groundbreaking of a P3.75-million asparagus packing facility at Barangay San Jose, General Santos City, funded by the Department of Agriculture through its High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) and National Agribusiness Corporation (NABCOR). When completed by end of October, the facility will replace a nearby makeshift hut (at right), where the GAPMC has been sorting and packing asparagus shoots for the last three years. Also shown at right are GenSan City councilor and GAPMC farmer-member Richard Atendido, GAPMC chairman Roger Pascual, a lady farmer-sorter, and DA Region 12 director Amalia Datukan (partly hidden).

form the area and the SOCSKSARGEN region into a major high value crop producer, on top of its distinction as the 'tuna capital' of the Philippines.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala and GenSan Mayor Darlene Antonino-Custodio led on September 1, 2011 the ceremonial groundbreaking of the facility that will benefit 60 farmer-members of the Greenland Asparagus Producers Multipurpose Cooperative (GAPMC), funded by the DA's High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) and the National Agribusiness Corporation (NABCOR).

Sec. Alcala also committed to allot P10-M for the construction of farm-to-market roads (FMRs) next year, among other interventions to transform GenSan into a major producer of high value crops, including onions and garlic.

The GAPMC farmer-members, led by their chairman Roger Pascual, currently maintain a total of 15 hectares asparagus plantation, where they harvest an average of 300 to 400 kilos asparagus shoots daily, which are sorted and packed in a makeshift hut. Pascual said most of them were former contract growers of

GAPMC would be able to double their capacity of up to 800 kilos per day. Currently they supply major supermarkets, restaurants and hotels in Metro Manila.

"I would therefore like to see farmers here in General Santos City to improve their quality of life in the next one and a half years," Sec. Alcala said during the simple groundbreaking ceremony.

He thus encouraged the GAPMC farmer-members to expand their respective area planted to asparagus.

He also urged them to consider planting other suitable crops like onions and garlic, as GenSan and other areas in SOCSKSARGEN or Region 12 have fertilize soil and favorable weather condition year-round.

Sec. Alcala instructed DA-Region 12 director Amalia Datukan to look at an initial area of at least 100 hectares that could be planted to onions and garlic next year.

Pascual said in GenSan alone there are about 5,000 hectares that could be planted to high value crops.

Sec. Alcala also instructed regional officials of the National

## DA to help ... (from p2)

import additional rice for 2011.

He said the DA has created an inter-agency task force to assess and validate the actual damage, particularly on palay, corn and high value crops.

He said this effort will complement the ongoing October 2011 palay production survey, which is conducted every quarter by the DA's Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS).

The survey results will include the final estimate of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter palay production, the projected 4<sup>th</sup> quarter palay production based on standing crop, and projected 2012 1<sup>st</sup> quarter production based on farmers' planting intentions.

### Farmer's Contact Center "Ang Inyong Kaagapay sa Usaping Agrikultura"

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**Text:** 391DA (or 391-32) for Smart and Talk 'N Text subscribers  
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**Email:** info@e-extension.gov.ph

**For the Nutrient Manager for Rice (NMRiceMobile):**  
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