

Massive agri infra projects underway

The Arroyo administration starting April through June will massively implement irrigation and postharvest projects nationwide, as part of its P330-billion program to sustain economic growth, create 1.5 million new jobs, and cushion off the brunt of the global economic crisis.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said the projects will directly benefit farming communities under the Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP). He is designated as the CLEEP Cabinet Coordinator Cagayan Valley (Region 2) and Bohol.

The task involves rehabilitation and restoration of irrigation facilities, covering 48,000 hectares and 100,000 hectares, respectively.

Rehabilitation involves minor repairs of irrigation canals and embankments, while restoration entails reviving non-functional sys-



President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (right) and Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap (2nd from right) listen appreciatively as farmer-leaders thank them for the repair of an irrigation system in Barangay Concepcion, Lubao, Pampanga, enabling them to plant a third palay crop.

tems and thus involves major civil works such as excavation, construction of diversion dams and canals.

Costing a total of P10.163 billion,

to 1.43 million families, could be traced to the combined efforts of the national government, particularly President Arroyo's hunger mitigation initiatives, Secretary Yap said.

These include the Food for School Program (FSP), which involves the daily distribution, through the DA-National Food Authority (DA-NFA), of one kilo rice for free to over three million schoolchildren and their families.

Another is Programang Gulayan Para sa Masa (PGMA), spearheaded by the DA-Bureau of Plant Industry (DA-BPI), which had benefited close to 2 million families, and the establishment of about 240 Bagsakan Centers or food terminals in Metro Manila and other regions, which had become a source of affordable rice, vegetables, fruits, meat and fish for poor families.

The DA chief said such positive SWS survey results couldn't have

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the irrigation component also includes the construction of small water impounding projects (SWIPs) and locally-funded communal irrigation projects.

The DA's National Irrigation Administration (DA-NIA) said Mindanao and the North Luzon Agribusiness Quadrangle will benefit most in terms of total area.

In Mindanao, rehabilitation will cover 15,993 hectares; and restoration, 31,781 hectares.

In NLAQ, where Secretary Yap is the regional development czar, irrigation systems for rehabilitation will serve 17,865 hectares, and for restoration, 42,971 hectares.

For Metro Luzon Urban Beltway, excluding National Capital Region, irrigation systems for rehabilitation cover 8,634 hectares, and for restoration, 10,846 hectares. For Central Philippines, 5,508 hectares are for rehabilitation and 14,405 hectares for restoration.

For the postharvest component, the DA has allotted P600 million to set up of flatbed dryers and agricultural tramline systems.

This year, the DA is also constructing various farm-to-market roads (FMRs), spanning over 2,000 kilometers, which will create 53,000 jobs.

DA forms infra monitoring teams

As part of its continuing efforts to ensure that its funds are well-spent, the Department of Agriculture has created national and regional monitoring teams that will conduct periodic field validation and appraisal of infrastructure projects.

The move dovetails a previous policy imposing rigid guidelines on the release of project funds to partners that include local government units, or farmers and fishers groups, NGOs and people's organizations (POs).

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap has designated in a concurrent capacity DA Region 2 Executive Director Gumersindo Lasam as the national monitoring team leader.

The teams have already begun validating completed and ongoing infrastructure projects, particularly farm-to-market roads (FMRs), irrigation systems, and postharvest facilities.

In their initial report to Secretary Yap, Lasam said they have so far inspected 375 FMRs and 97 irriga-

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Korea donates 4 rice centers

Korea is providing a \$13-million grant to build four rice processing centers (RPCs) in the provinces of Pangasinan, Iloilo, Bohol and Davao del Sur.

It forms part of Korea's continuing development assistance, through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), to the Philippines particularly to promote farm mechanization and efficient post harvest operations.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap and KOICA managing director Choi Sungho signed on March 27 the records of discussion, along with the respective governors of the four provinces: Amado Espino (Pangasinan), Neil Tupas, Sr. (Iloilo), Enrico Aumentado (Bohol) and Douglas Cagas (Davao del

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Hunger dips to 15.5%

Hunger incidence among Filipino families has eased down to 15.5 percent (%) from 23.7%, during the last three months from December 2008 to February 2009, according to the recent survey of the Social Weather Stations (SWS).

"This is proof that the Arroyo administration's efforts to attain food security and make basic staples available at affordable prices to low-income consumers are yielding tangible results," said Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap.

He added that the positive results of the SWS 2009 1st quarter survey will serve as a strong impetus for the DA and its attached agencies to further step up the implementation of their food security and sufficiency programs that are meant to increase the incomes of farmers and fisherfolk, and ensure the adequate supply of basic foodstuff at affordable prices, primarily for the benefit of ordinary consumers.

The hefty 8.2% drop, equivalent

Moving on to further relieve hunger

Last year's global food problem has regrettably pushed close to a billion people down the ranks of the hungry and tens of millions back into poverty, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN-FAO).

The Philippines was well-heeled to have weathered the crisis, as President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap have decisively confronted the challenge head-on.

They took a rapid, holistic and focused strategy to cushion the impact of the unprecedented rise in food prices, particularly on the Filipino poor.

Foremost, she launched the FIELDS program, which is one-year old on April 4, 2009.

For his part, Secretary Yap has ably marshalled the DA family and partners to ensure that rice, vegetables, meat and other basic food commodities were made accessible and affordable particularly to those who needed them most.

These include food production and distribution initiatives such as the Gulayan ng Masa, Tindahan Natin, Bagsakan Centers, and Food for School Program.

The President's efforts and those of Secretary Yap and the rest of the DA family are auspiciously paying off.

Hunger incidence has dipped to 15.5% in February 2009 from the previous 23.7% in December 2008, according to a nationwide Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey.

The numbers are encouraging and heartwarming — confirming that President Arroyo's food security and hunger reduction

programs are making a big difference, when and where they matter most.

The SWS asked 1,200 respondents (particularly household heads) if they **“experienced hunger and did not have anything to eat only once or a few times** (classified as moderate hunger), **or often or always** (severe hunger) **in the last three months.”**

The results showed that moderate hunger went down to 11.1% (2 million families) from 18.5% (3.3 M families), while severe hunger dipped to 4.4% (810,000 families) from 5.2% (940,000 families).

In all, the eight percentage point reduction is equivalent to 1.43 million families.

While the survey is favorable, there is much to be done — as about 2.81 million families are still hungry.

This remains one of the major hurdles that Secretary Yap and the entire DA family have yet to surmount.

While the task is doubly challenging — as many Filipinos, here and abroad, may be eased out of their jobs due to the economic slowdown — there is an air of confidence that we could once again survive and pass the test.

We hope the results of the SWS survey will further boost the resolve of the DA family to accomplish more, given wider latitude and resources this year, in continued partnerships with farmers' and fishers' groups, LGUs, the private sector — to lift more Filipino families from the pangs of hunger and bondage of poverty.

3M school kids benefit from NFA rice

As part of the Accelerated Hunger Mitigation Program (AHMP) of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the Department of Agriculture through the National Food Authority (DA-NFA) has supplied a total of 5.1 million bags of rice, benefiting three million elementary schoolchildren, since 2004 under for the Food for School Program (FSP).

Aimed at mitigating malnutrition among schoolchildren and minimizing hunger among their families, the FSP is jointly implemented by DA-NFA and the Departments of Education (DepEd) and Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

NFA administrator Jessup P. Navarro said under the program, each pupil is given a kilogram of iron-fortified rice everyday, whenever he or she attends class.

The total number of rice distribution days varies depending on the scheme determined by the DepEd and the DSWD. The two agencies buy the iron-fortified rice from NFA

at P20 per kilogram, or P1,000 per 50-kg bag, which are then repacked and delivered to target schools.

Navarro proudly reported the FSP has achieved its twin objectives, saying: “The most visible benefit of the program is the improved health and nutritional status of the beneficiaries, which led to improved school attendance and enhanced academic performance.”

The FSP creates a ripple effect, as the children share the rice with other family members, thus satisfying in part their daily food needs.

The NFA is currently completing rice deliveries of 480,100 bags of 50 kg each, under the FSP phase 2 “Thirteen Days School Program” for school year (SY) 2008-09.

In all, as SY 2008-09 ends, Navarro said the FSP has benefited a total of 1,846,564 pupils, 64% of whom are in 20 food-poor provinces, 18% each in the National Capital Region, and in the top 100 poorest municipalities. (NFA Public Affairs Dept.)



Secretary Yap shares light moments with school children in San Miguel, Bulacan.

Hunger ... (from p1)

come at a more appropriate time as the nation observed the first anniversary of the National Food Summit—held in Pampanga last April 4, 2008—in which President Arroyo rolled her administration's food security and sufficiency program dubbed as FIELDS (Fertilizer, Irrigation, Extension and training of farmers and fisherfolk, Loans, Dryers and other postharvest facilities, and Seeds and genetic materials).

The SWS reported that the number of Filipinos who experienced severe hunger (respondents experienced it very often) decreased from 5.2% (about 940,000 families) to 4.4% (down to 810,000 families) while moderate hunger (those that experienced it not that often) declined from 18.5

% (3.3 million) to 11.1% (2 million families).

The latest survey showed that Overall Hunger is now lowest in Mindanao as it declined by 22 points from a record-high 33.7% (1.4 million families) in December to 11.7% (490,000 families) in February.

Hunger incidence declined by six percentage points in Metro Manila, from a record-high of 23.3% (estimated 570,000 families) to 17.3% (estimated 430,000 families).

For the rest of Luzon, hunger incidence went down by five points, from 20% (1.6 million families) to 15% (1.2 million families); and by one percentage point in the Visayas, from 20.7% (750,000 families) to 19.7% (730,000 families).

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RP, PNG forge fisheries pact

The Philippines and Papua New Guinea (PNG) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on fisheries -- one of major highlights of the recent visit of PNG Prime Minister Michael Somare to the country.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Prime Minister Somare witnessed the MOU signing between Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and PNG National Fisheries Authority Minister Ben Semri, at Shangri-La Resort in Boracay.

President Arroyo said the MOU is a concrete manifestation of the two countries' commitment to sustainable fishery development.

In broad

strokes, the agreement involves enhanced technology transfer between the two countries on aquaculture and marine fishery research and development and training, promotion of joint fishing

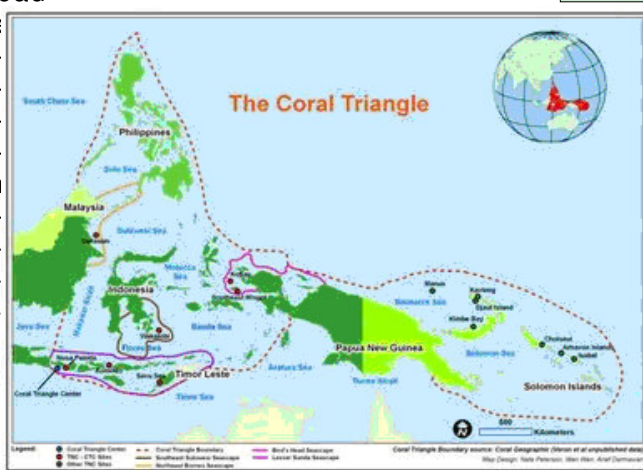
ventures, and infusion of investments, and strategic complementation of each country's plans and programs in response to the challenges and opportunities presented by the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI).

The Philippines and Papua New Guinea are members of the CTI, spearheaded by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

The 'coral triangle' spans 6.5 million square kilometers, encompass-



President Arroyo (right) and Papua New Guinea (PNG) Prime Minister Michael Somare (2nd from left, standing) witness the forging of a fishery agreement between the Philippines and PNG, signed by Secretary Arthur Yap (right) and PNG Fisheries Minister Ben Semri.



Fishers surrender tuna tags, receive cash rewards

Three fishermen from this Albay coastal city were the first in Bicol to get cash incentives from the Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP) for returning five tags found on yellow fin tuna they recently caught at the Pacific Ocean.

Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) region 5 director Dennis del Socorro identified them as Domingo Bansagales, Rogelio Biron and Fernando Esplan, all from Tabaco City, at the northeastern coast of Albay.

Bansagales turned over three yellow plastic tags, Biron and Esplana one each. They said they caught the yellow-fin tuna in the Pacific Ocean, about two miles off the eastern coast of Tabaco.

After validating the tags, del Socorro handed the fishermen cash rewards.

The five tagged tunas weigh about 5 kilos each, and were part of a school of about 50 yellow fins, Bansagales said.

Del Socorro explained that the tuna tag retrieval project is aimed

at sustainably conserving and managing the tuna stock in the Western and Central Pacific. The project is under the New Caledonia-based Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and funded by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

The DA-BFAR and the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute at the University of the Philippines oversees its implementation in the Philippines.

Other countries involved in the project are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Del Socorro said placing tags on tuna would give better information on fishery-exploitation rates and population sizes, and improve assessment of big eye, skipjack and yellow fin tuna species in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Tuna is highly migratory, spanning across entire Pacific Ocean.

All tagged tuna have one or two plastic dart tags inserted below the second dorsal fin and an identifying number printed twice on its tag

ing Indonesia, East Timor, Malaysia, the Solomon Islands, PNG and the Philippines.

It provides direct livelihood and incomes to about 130 million fish-

ermen and their families in said 6 countries, as it is one of the world's major spawning and nursery grounds of important marine fish species such as tuna.

Bicol develops 4 innovative seaweed food products

There are now four viable and profitable uses of seaweeds, according to the Department of Agriculture's Regional Integrated Fisheries Research Center (DA-RIFRC) in Bicol.

Center chief Aida S. Andayog said they have developed four new

innovative products from seaweeds, namely: jam, pickles, tart, and infant food.

She said these have big agribusiness potentials, and give Bicolano fishermen and entrepreneurs.

The four seaweed products were recently showcased during a project visit at the RIFRC Research Outreach Station (ROS) in Cabid-an, Sorsogon by a group from the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR).

The group, led by Joell H. Lales and Ferdinand Dax S. Lorena of the Planning Unit, conducted the visit to foster RDE collaboration and to intensify ties with the region.

Andayog said the four new seaweed food products enjoy competitive advantage, because they are unique and indeed nutritious. They can also add to the list of Bicol's One-Town-One Product (OTOP), along with pili and abaca.

The Technology Commercialization Unit (TCU) of the DA-BAR has assessed the products for possible support in terms of product development through packaging, processing, and nutritional tests.

The TCU monitors viable technologies on agriculture and fisheries from the different DA R&D institutions, and recommends additional funding. (Ferdinand Dax C. Lorena, DA-BAR)

Brunei seeks RP's help to increase rice production

The Philippines is helping Brunei Darussalam boost its rice production.

As part of this initiative, 19 rice researchers, extension workers, and producers from Brunei were in the country this month for needed training and capacity enhancement at the Department of Agriculture's Philippine Rice Research Institute (DA-PhilRice).

Brunei hopes to increase its 3.15% rice self-sufficiency level in 2007 to 20% by 2010, and 60% by 2015 to reduce its reliance on rice importation.

It imported 29,252 tons of rice in 2007, which was almost 100% of its domestic requirement and buffer stock.

In his recent state visit to the Philippines, His Majesty, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah said the rice price crisis in early 2008 and the looming threat of food insecurity worldwide prompted him to strengthen his kingdom's domestic agricultural production, especially rice, and to make food security a long-term policy priority of his government.

On February 23-26, the DA-PhilRice dispatched a five-man team to Brunei to assess the country's potential for rice self-sufficiency.

Thereafter, Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap visited Brunei on March 3-4 to firm up the Philippine government's technical assistance.

The recommended areas of assistance to Brunei include varietal

improvement, demonstration and promotion of rice production technologies, capacity building, dispatch of rice technical experts and skilled workers, and promotion of rice machinery.

The first batch of DA-PhilRice skilled workers and technical experts is currently in Brunei until April 18.

They will establish a 10-hectare rice technology cum seed production demonstration farm and set up screenhouse trials of 220 breeding lines.

An engineer from the DA-National

Irrigation Administration is also part of the technical team of experts.

The multidisciplinary team is also training Brunei's Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources-Department of Agriculture personnel on land preparation, crop establishment, water management, and use of rice machinery.

DA-PhilRice will also showcase a rice farm with at least 4 ton per hectare yield.

More rice technical experts, skilled workers, and farmers are to be dispatched to Brunei.

(PhilRice Web Team)

Japan turns over fertilizer grant

The Government of Japan formally turned-over to the Philippines through the Department of Agriculture some 34,905 metric tons of ammonium sulphate fertilizers procured from the Y600 Million grant agreement under the 7th Non-Project Grant Assistance (NPGA) of Japan, in ceremonies held at the Port of Subic on March 4, 2009.

The Honorable Minister and Head of Chancery Jiro Okuyama, Economic Section Second Secretary Shimpei Ishido of the Embassy of Japan, representing the Government of Japan; Department of Agriculture Undersecretary and Executive Director of the National Agricultural and Fishery Council Bernie Fondevilla representing the Government of the Philippines; and Mr. Daniel Oñate, Vice-President for Marketing and National Sales Manager, Agrotech Agricultural Products, Inc., representing the consignee of the third and last shipment of fertilizers, graced the occasion.

The first two tranches of the fertilizer shipments which arrived last February 1 at the Iloilo Port and February 12, 2009 at the Batangas Port were consigned to La Filipina Uygongco Corp., and Danat Fertilizer Corporation, respectively.

The ceremony was also witnessed by Mr. Rommel Herrera, Officer in charge of the Bilateral Assistance Division, International Finance Group of the Department of Finance, DA Region III Regional Executive Director Redentor Gatus, Mr. Kevin Fitzgerald of the Crown Agents and Mr. Oftociano Manalo, President of Region I Federation of Irrigators Associations, Mr. Fidel dela Cruz, Terminal Manager, Seaport Department, SBMA, as well as members of the NAFC Bids and Awards Committee.

In his speech, Minister Okuyama hopes that those donated fertilizers can help farmers improve their productivity for the next planting season in May.

He also announced that the Government of Japan has again extended the 8th NPGA amounting to Y700 Million through an Exchange of Notes signed between the two governments on February 16, 2009. He remarked that it shows well his government's determination to cooperate with the Government of the Philippines as much as possible in assisting the country's socio-economic development efforts.

He added that the proceeds generated from the sale of the donation are used to support various kinds of socio-economic development projects. In closing, Minister Okuyama hopes that this will serve as another bridge that will further strengthen and deepen the friendship and cooperation between Japan and the Philippines.

Undersecretary Fondevilla in his acceptance speech thanked the Government of Japan for its untiring support to the development of agriculture in the country as well as its contribution to the small farmers who are the direct beneficiaries of the donated fertilizers. He hopes as well, that this friendship and cooperation strengthen further the ties between the two governments.

As representatives of the consignee and the farmer-beneficiaries, Oñate and Manalo, respectively, expressed their gratitude to the Government of Japan for this grant and hope that the agriculture sector in the country attains self-sufficiency in rice in the near future.

(DA-NAFC Planning Monitoring & Communication Group)

P1.8-B MRDP projects underway

In spite of the 18-month unexpected gap, the Department of Agriculture's Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP) is picking up steam, so to speak.

Funded by the World Bank, the MRDP is five-year poverty reduction initiative implemented by the DA, with counterparts from concerned local government units.

To date, the program has prepared about P1.77-billion worth of subprojects, across various components in different stages of implementation.

The bulk of which is under the Rural Infrastructure component, with 234 subprojects in 125 LGUs amounting to P1.61B.

Construction of seven projects worth P52.8M are on-going, while 29 projects worth 160M are either waiting for the national government's Certificate of Availability of Funds (CAF) release/notice to proceed.

At least 198 more projects, amounting to P1.4B, are at various stages of implementation.

These include construction of farm-to-market roads of over 302 kilometers, 37 meters of single lane bridges, 150 hectares serviceable area of irrigation, and 8 units of potable water systems.

In terms of livelihood and agribusiness opportunities, 64 livelihood projects amounting to over P15M have benefitted 11,082 households across Mindanao, 36% of which ac-

counts for indigenous peoples and almost half of the beneficiaries are women who are covered under the Community Fund for Agricultural Development (CFAD) component.

CFAD has also prepared 548 livelihood projects, worth P128M. Majority of which, or 526, is ready for implementation.

Meanwhile, the Investment for Governance Reform component has completed close to 90% of its training targets to strengthen LGU partnership and capacity.

The WB noted the effective Monitoring and Information System established by the program as being simple, user-friendly and contains the most essential data required. It was even recommended for adoption both within the project and within the DA.

Reports cited region 9 as the top performing region, having P37.57 M worth of projects, wherein four are on-going.

CARAGA is second, with P68.58-million worth of sub-projects.

In terms of number and cost of project proposals on a per LGU basis, Tagum City, Davao del Norte, leads with 6 projects, worth P58M; followed by New Corella, Davao del Norte, with 7 projects at P37M.

The town of Alicia, Zamboanga Sibugay has 3 projects, worth P23.6M, and Initao, Misamis Oriental has 5 projects worth P20M. *(MRDP)*

Bicol farmers' coop expects millions from veggie farm

Pamplona, Camarines Sur — Harnessing the rich soil, a farmers' cooperative here converted an idle, seven-hectare land into a vegetable farm.

That was last year.

The group now expects to earn about P2 million from the sale of ampalaya grown at the vegetable farm.

"And to think that the ampalaya plantation is only 1.5 hectares, the rest of the land planted to eggplant, okra, string beans and cassava intercropped with corn is expected to yield bigger returns, perhaps more millions of pesos," according to Diego Tud, the Pamplona municipal agriculturist.

Indeed, there is money in vegetable farming and the experience of the Pamplona Farmers' Cooperative (PAMFACO) in Barangay Tambo would attest to that, Tud said.

The cooperative got the land through a P10,000-a year lease

agreement with a private owner and invested P120,000 for land preparation, production inputs, labor and planting materials.

They first focused on ampalaya.

Six months later, the first harvest yielded about 8,000 kilos of the vegetable sold at the wholesale price of P13 per kilo in some "bagsakan centers" in Metro Manila, Tud said.

"That would be the case each month this year, as they are still currently harvesting the fruits of the first crop.

"And considering the fact that the economic life of ampalaya palnts lasts for 20 harvest-months. At P104,000 per harvest-month, the cooperative stands to realize total sales of some P2 million from this vegetable alone," he said.

The other crops would soon start to be harvested, giving the cooperative more income, Tud added.

He said the economic benefits for members of the cooperative



A member of the Pamplona Farmers Cooperative sorts ampalaya before they are delivered to the market.

would spread to other residents of barangay Tambo as PAMFACO employs over a dozen people from the community. They do various farm activities like weeding, planting, spraying, hauling, fertilizer, harvesting and packing.

Apart from the seven-hectare vegetable farm, PAMFACO also main-

tains a 38-hectare cassava plantation. The land is owned by members of the cooperative.

PAMFACO has a marketing deal with San Miguel Corp.'s B-Meg Feed Mills, in Pili, Camarines Sur, which uses the yield from the plantation for its livestock feeds factory, Tud added. (*Business Mirror*)

Pinoy retirees, expats urged to go home, plant veggies

Go home and plant vegetables.

This advice directed at Filipino balikbayans and retirees comes from a Japanese retiree, Hiroyoshi Ono, who has been doing business and living in the Philippines since 1959.

Better still, he added, emulate US First Lady Michelle Obama, who has developed a vegetable patch at the White House to produce organic vegetables for President Barack Obama and their children.

Ono is spreading the gospel of organic farming in the country and asking anyone who listens to join the bandwagon since the trade of organic products is worth \$90 billion annually.

"There is a big potential market for vegetables not only in the Philippines but also all over the world. Unfortunately, Filipinos could not take advantage of the situation," he lamented.

Only a paltry three percent of all agricultural land in the

country is planted to vegetables, Ono said. In the entire Cordillera, only 40,000 hectares are devoted exclusively to vegetable culture.

"The Philippines actually has the lowest volume of vegetables produced compared to other countries," Ono noted, saying that the culprit for this low interest in vegetable farming is poor soil fertility due to the excessive use of pesticides and fungicides by farmers.

Ono explained that the use of these chemicals has killed microorganisms that serve as nutrients for plants.

These microorganisms, he said, inhabit only the topsoil and 80 percent of their activity is concentrated there.

To revitalize the soil and make it appropriate for vegetable farming, Ono turned to the use of microorganisms, particularly the effective microorganisms (EM) technology developed by Dr. Teruo Higa of the University of the Ryukyus in Okinawa. (*Manila Bulletin*)

BAR supports two LGU-led projects on vegetables, nursery

Two projects on high-value crops promotion and commercialization were recently completed through a counterpart funding of the local governments of Ormoc City, Biliran Province and the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR).

The first involves the establishment of a *bagsakan* or trading center, initiated by the Ormoc Federation of Vegetable Growers, and supervised by city agriculturist Imelda T. Remollo.

The second involves respective agricultural development projects in four municipalities in Biliran.

Through the *bagsakan* center, the Ormoc vegetable growers now supply the needs of the city, as well as Tacloban City, and other parts of Leyte, and Cebu.

The project also entails provision of needed farm inputs to sustain production of pest-resistant and high-yielding vegetable varieties.

The group is composed of 76 farmer-cooperators from 21 barangays, who completed a four-month technology demonstration in Brgys. Dolores, RM Tan, and San Jose.

They growers tapped East West

Seeds Company to provide technical support and seeds in the production of vegetables such as ampalaya, tomato, eggplant, and sweet pepper.

On the other hand, the Biliran project involves three components, namely: establishment of a nursery and scion grove; production of high-value vegetables; and cutflower production.

Of the three, the nursery and scion grove has the biggest impact, according to Corsino Jadulco, a technical evaluator commissioned by DA-BAR.

The project now provides farmers with quality grafted planting materials, and no longer from other provinces.

The proponents of the other two projects (on production of vegetables and cutflowers) will package production management guides and other informative materials for dissemination to farmer-beneficiaries in their respective localities.

The two projects are funded through the coordination of DA-BAR's Technology Commercialization Unit (TCU).

(*Miko Jazmine J. Mojica, DA-BAR*)

DA-BFAR sets up 40 mariculture parks

The Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) -- in tandem with the Local government units, fishers' groups and the private sector -- has recently established two additional mariculture parks (MPs) in Bacon and Magallanes, Sorsogon, bringing the total to 40 such large scale marine fish production ventures in the country.

In a report to Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, BFAR Director Malcolm Sarmiento, Jr. said of the 40 MPs, 16 are in Visayas, 13 in Mindanao, and the rest in Luzon.

"Mariculture parks operate much like industrial estates on land, with investors setting up or renting fish cages to grow high-value marine species such as bangus, lapu-lapu, siganids, seaweeds and other high-value aquatic organisms," said Sarmiento.

Along with the LGUs and other stakeholders, a management council is organized by the DA-BFAR and a development plan is crafted to ensure the sustainability of each MP venture.

"Mariculture parks are not only practical and economical but are also ecology-friendly," Sarmiento said.

To illustrate, you don't have to cut a single mangrove tree in raising bangus, in a sea cage, Sarmiento said.

It is also more economical because it would cost only about P150,000 to put up a sea cage, while development cost for a hectare of fishpond would reach about P1 million, he added.

Moreover, yields could reach as much as five tons in a 10 x 10 x 5 meter-sea cage in a mariculture park, which is the same as in a one-hectare fishpond.

With production cost of P70 to P75 per kilo, he said a fish farmer could easily earn some P 90,000.00 per cropping per cage or a total of P 180,000.00 for two cropping periods per year.

"To further increase his earnings, a fish farmer can also grow danggit or samaral in cages in tandem with bangus," he said.

After one cropping with 1,680 fingerlings, the danggit catch could reach an estimated 100 kilos, which could easily fetch an additional cash of P 8,800."

"This is a far cry from the usual two to three kilos of fish caught on

ordinary days by a marginal fisherman using traditional fishing methods," Sarmiento said.

Fish farming in mariculture parks does not only mean assured profits for small fisherfolk, but also reduced working hours, more savings on fuel costs, and fewer hazards to life and limb as well, he added.

To encourage small fisherfolk to venture in mariculture parks, he said the BFAR helps fishermen organize themselves into cooperatives and enroll in its "Rent-a-Cage" Program.

Under this scheme, the fishermen could start raising fish and pay the cage rent, including the cost of production after selling their produce, he said.

A bamboo fish cage costs P350,000 and a GI pipe cage, P576,000. This amount covers the cost of the cage, fingerlings, feeds and labor, among others during the grow-out period, he said.

Within a period of two years or an average of four harvests, he said



a fishermen's cooperative could be able to pay in full the cost of the cage and acquire additional cages for their business venture.

Sarmiento said five fisherfolk-families are currently enrolled in the "Rent-a-Cage" program.

Besides empowering small fisherfolk, Sarmiento said the establishment of mariculture parks will also help mitigate the ill effects of climate change on the fisheries sector.

"Coral bleaching, changes in the migratory patterns of fishes, occurrence of dreadful diseases and

even mutation are among the adverse effects of climate change on the marine environment," he said.

Sarmiento said mariculture parks provide a respite for marine life to flourish and increase in population without any adverse effects on the environment.

For instance, the combination of fish cage and seaweed farming would ensure natural nutrient cycling as the seaweeds would need the carbon dioxide given off by the fish, which in turn would benefit from the oxygen produced by the former, he explained.

CHARM 2 project kicks off

The Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project (CHARMP 2) was officially launched March 13, 2009, in Quezon City, by the Department of Agriculture and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) of the United Nations (UN).

CHARMP-2 will operate in 37 municipalities in all six provinces of CAR-Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mountain Province--where poverty incidence is high.

Directly benefitting 12,530 house-

holds, the project builds on the first Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project to further reduce poverty and improve the livelihoods of indigenous peoples.

CHARMP 2 will implemented until 2015, with total project cost of \$66.4 million.

IFAD has extended a soft loan of \$26.6M and a technical grant of \$561,000.

The Asian Development Bank and OPEC Fund for International

Development have likewise extended a loan of \$10M each.

In line with IFAD's strategy of supporting sustainable natural resource management, the project focuses on the value of indigenous farming systems, which are environmentally sustainable.

The aim is to increase the added value of products from farming systems that are both organic and environmentally sustainable.

The project supports the government's decentralization policy by promoting the participation of local communities in planning activities, and by supporting local government units providing services to the communities.

It also supports implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, landmark legislation that recognizes the values and institutions of indigenous people and their right to manage the natural resources in their domains.

The project introduces new innovations, such as commercialization of indigenous peoples' products through value chain development and market linkages.

It also aims to strengthen participatory systems of monitoring and evaluation of project activities, and the capacity of indigenous peoples and their councils of elders to assume responsibility for forest management.



Sana Foday Kebba Jatta (center), Philippine country program manager of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and DA-Cordillera Regional Director Cesar Rodriguez lead the ceremonial toast at the launch of the 2nd Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project, with officials of co-implementing agencies and guests.

From the Regions

Selected news and developments on agriculture, fisheries, agribusiness and related sectors, as reported by the DA-Regional Field Units, and those published in national and provincial publications.

P37-M corn center up in Sagay City

Negrense corn farmers, consumers and feed millers are happy these days with the recent establishment of a corn post harvest facility and trading center in Sagay City, Negros Occidental.

Worth P37 million, the corn hub was funded by the Department of Agriculture through the National Agribusiness Corporation (DA-NABCOR).

DA Region 6 Executive Director Larry P. Nacionales said the facility will further boost the growth of the corn, feedmilling, livestock and meat industries in Negros and Western Visayas.

For his part, Negros Occidental Governor Isidro Zayco thanked the DA and NABCOR for choosing Sagay among several towns in the region. He assured that the center will be maximized, and properly maintained and managed.

He thus urged the farmers to plant more corn, as trading and post harvest processing will be easier, and thus they will earn more income.

Of the total project cost, P20 M was spent for post harvest facilities such as cob dryer, sheller and grain dryer. The local government of Sagay shared P12 M as counterpart in the form of the building, land, and setting up of a three-phase electric power to run the plant. The remaining P5 M is allotted for operating capital to buy corn in

cobs from farmers.

The first five years, the center will be managed by the DA-NABCOR. Thereafter, the center will be turned-over to the local government of Sagay.

Last year, Western Visayas produced 349,300 tons of corn, with Negros Occidental contributing 81,475 tons (yellow - 44,020 tons; white - 37,455 tons). (Theresa A. Gerafil, DA-RFU 6)

SACY allots P20M to finish Zambo Sur FMR

To complete a major farm-to-market road in San Pablo, Zamboanga del Sur, the Department of Agriculture is allotting P20 million as counterpart.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap made the commitment upon the instruction of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, when she visited San Pablo March 17.

The amount will be spent to complete a 21-kilometer road network connecting two barangays in the town of Guipos with nine barangays in San Pablo.

Of the total length, only one-fifth or 4.28 km is concreted, while the remaining 16.72 km is in bad shape, reported Zamboanga del Sur Governor Aurora Cerilles.

In reply, President Arroyo said: "**Kinahanglan unta mahuman**



Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap (right) issues instructions to DA Region 9 Director Oscar Parawan (left) and NIA Region 9 Director Alberto Lacuaren, during inspection of FMR and irrigation projects in San Pablo, Zamboanga del Sur.

ang tibuok karsada, makahatag kita ug mga materyales aron ma improve ang karsada ug matabangan labi na ang mga mag-uuma." (We need to finish the road. We can give materials to improve the road, and help especially the farmers.)

Immediately, Secretary Yap committed P20 million as the DA's counterpart to the project, saying: "**Kailangan magtulungan ang LGU at ang DA sa paggawa ng kalsada.**" (There is a need for the LGU and DA to help each other in building roads.)

For his part, DA Region 9 Director Oscar Parawan explained the P20 million is the DA's initial counterpart to purchase construction materials. A memorandum will be signed to effect the counterparting

agreement between the DA and the Provincial Government of Zamboanga del Sur.

Further, Dir. Parawan reported several agricultural infrastructure projects in Zamboanga Peninsula, namely:

- Completed a diversion dam in Culasian, San Pablo, worth P2 million, constructed under the Support to Emergency Livelihood Project (SELAP);

- Construction of a Small Water Impounding project (SWIP) in Barangay Payag, worth P730,000. The San Pablo LGU shared a counterpart of P146,000;

- Ongoing improvement of the 6.33-km Sagasan-Sacbulan FMR, worth P1M, with San Pablo LGU counterparting P200,000, under the DA's Zamboanga Peninsula Agricultural Development Program (ZIADP). (Melba B. Wee, DA-RFU9)

DA built 1,682 kms of FMRs in 2008

The Department of Agriculture constructed 1,682 kilometers (kms) of farm-to-market roads (FMRs) in 2008, involving 1,334 projects and generating 25,359 jobs.

Said accomplishment was recently reported to Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap by Undersecretary Jesus Emmanuel Paras.

On per super region basis, Paras said majority of the FMRs was built in Mindanao, spanning 606 kms, involving 259 projects.

It was followed by Central Philippines, with 496 kms; North Luzon Agribusiness Quadrangle, 425 kms; and Metro Luzon Urban Beltway, excluding Metro Manila,

182 kms.

The DA will speed up the implementation of FMR and other infrastructure projects in the first semester of 2009 to create needed jobs and stimulate economic activity in the countryside.

Further, the DA will closely monitor the implementation of all projects to ensure that funds are judiciously used by partners like LGUs, NGOs and farmers' groups.

The task will be done by newly-created national and regional monitoring teams that will conduct periodic field validation and rapid appraisals, and thereafter submit their findings and recommendations to Secretary Yap.



Negros Occidental Governor Isidro Zayco (right) shakes hands with DA-NABCOR President Allan Javellana, as they unveil the marker of the P37-million Sagay corn postharvest center. Looking on are Congressman Alfredo Marañon (2nd Dist., Negros Occidental) and DA Region 6 Dir. Larry Nacionales.

Meet the ‘seedling queen’ of San Ildefonso

By Adora Dolores Rodriguez

Who could have thought that a fishball vendor would later turn into a millionaire?

By following her gut-feel, Desiree “Daisy” Duran, has become one of the most successful vegetable growers of Basuit, San Ildefonso, Bulacan today.

From seeds . . .

While she only finished elementary, it never hindered her determination to learn, to be an entrepreneur, and to succeed. She has proven time and time again that she is no ordinary woman for she knows what she wants and goes out of her way to get it.

Before she discovered the benefits of growing vegetables, Daisy sold fishballs and *isaw* as well as other grocery items to Basuit locals to augment the income of their household.

Eight years ago, Daisy first ventured into planting off-season vegetables after attending a farmers’ training under the “*Unlad Buhay sa Nayon Program*” of the Bulacan Agricultural State College, the Provincial Government of Bulacan and the Municipal Government of San Ildefonso.

But what pushed her to greater heights, along with her fellow vegetable farmers in San Ildefonso, was the sustained and vigorous support extended to them by the Department of Agriculture through Secretary Arthur Yap.

“Kami’y nagpapasalamat kay Secretary Yap at sa kanyang pamunuan sa DA.

“Siya ang kauna-unahang Kalihim ng Pagsasaka na bumisita sa San Ildefonso, at lumusong sa bukid.

“Siya ang nagpadaloy muli ng patubig sa aming bayan, na kung saan nakinabang ang 11 barangay, na ngayon ay nakakatanim na ng

tatlong beses kada taon.

“Suli na sulit ang biyaya ang ibinigay sa amin ng DA at ni Secretary Yap.”

Thus said Daisy of her benefactor.

When she started in 2001 she first planted grafted tomato to a

greenhouse project into 6 units capable of producing less than 200,000 assorted vegetable seedlings on a monthly basis. These seedlings are sold at P2.00.

...to fruits...

What was once a quiet and

‘Kami’y nagpapasalamat kay Secretary Yap... Siya ang kauna-unahang Kalihim ng Pagsasaka na bumisita sa San Ildefonso, at lumusong sa bukid.’

1,000-square meter plot, where she earned a cool P70,000.00, not bad for a newbie in the industry. Later, she converted a one-hectare family-owned rainfed riceland into an oasis of pinakbet veggies, which include eggplant, ampalaya, upo, and patola. She has also planted hot and sweet pepper, cucumber, and tomato. All of which she intercrop with Sinta papaya.

...to seedlings...

In 2003, Daisy yet again ventured into another income-generating project. With the assistance of the Department of Agriculture, the East-West Seed Company, and the local agri offices, she developed seedlings to sell to other vegetable growers in their area who do not have the time or expertise to do so.

In three years time, Daisy--now dubbed as the seedling lady of the province--expanded her single

quaint community in the outskirts of San Ildefonso, Basuit is now known as the Vegetable Basket of the municipality thanks to Daisy all the other vegetable growers in the area.

The group, thru her leadership, has formed the Basuit Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative. It later became part of the bigger San Ildefonso Vegetable Growers MPC, also formed in 2001, with Daisy as its founding chairperson and currently its manager. From the original 50 members, the San Ildefonso MPC has grown 10-fold to 500.

The cooperative was a recipient of a Small Water Impounding Project, open dug wells,

and shallow tubewells, organic fertilizers and seeds – through a 50:50 counterparting scheme with the DA. It also received a delivery van and plastic crates from the DA’s Bureau of Postharvest Research and Extension.

On her own, she applied for a loan with the DA-National Agribusiness Corporation (Nabcor) that enabled her to buy an elf truck, which she uses to deliver vegetables to various market outlets.

And through the DA’s direct market linkage program, Daisy and the San Ildefonso vegetable growers MPC got even bigger as they were able to sell their off-season vegetables wholesale to such major markets as Mega Q Mart and Balintawak.

To date, Daisy and her fellow vegetable farmers in San Ildefonso continue to sell directly their produce at bagsakan centers and food terminals minus the middlemen thus giving them bigger profits.

...to profits.

Indeed, small seeds when properly nurtured turn into big fruits, and in Daisy’s case, big big profits. With her earnings, she was able to acquire half a hectare land, a truck, an owner-type jeep, a motorcycle, and a 4x4 pick-up truck. She is also able to provide quality education to her three teenage children, as well as employment to the dozens of women in her community.

Nowadays, Daisy not only extends her seedling stocks to other vegetable growers but gives lectures and teaches her tested technology on its production and marketing strategy. She even gets to travel to share her knowledge and success. (DA Info Service)

Daisy in a sea of tomato seedlings.



P150-M pili nut program in the offing

The Department of Agriculture is revitalizing the pili nut industry in Bicol through a P150-million program aimed at commercializing crop production and transforming it into one of the Philippines' export winners.

In a report to Secretary Arthur Yap, DA Region 5 Executive Director Jose Dayao said the Pili Development Program (PDP) involves massive replanting of seven pili varieties in the five Bicol provinces of Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes and Sorsogon. These areas account for 82% of the country's total pili nut production.

"Pili has high potentials for being a top export commodity, as it can very well compete with macadamia, cashew, almond and walnut in terms of quality," Dayao said.

The PDP will kick off with the production and distribution of

quality planting materials through the existing nurseries of the DA, private sector, local government units (LGUs) and research outreach stations.

Through the LGUs, the DA will also establish techno-demo farms and pili orchards; distribute organic fertilizers and provide soil analysis services; conduct training and provide extension support to farmers; undertake research and development work, marketing activities and monitoring and evaluation of the Program.

Dayao said the target areas under the PDP will cover a total of 5,000 hectares, of which 75% or 3,750 hectares are located in the



municipalities of Bacacay, Malilipot, Malinao, Sto. Domingo, Tiwi and Tabaco City; Rapu-rapu, Camalig, Daraga, Manito and Legazpi City; Guinobatan, Libon, Ligao, Pio Duran, Oas, Polangui and Jovellar in Albay.

The other PDP areas are: 150 hectares, in Camarines Norte;

600 hectares in Camarines Sur; 1,150 hectares in Catanduanes; and 350 hectares in Sorsogon.

Under the Program, the DA will showcase production and processing technology through model farms to be put up at the local level, particularly within the region's Strategic Agricultural and Fisheries Development Zone (SAFDZ).

Dayao said the research, promotion and development efforts under the PDP involve the production of quality products with vast market potentials; establishment of strong marketing linkages between users and producers; and improvement of the packaging of pili products and by-products.

DA-BAR approves 102 CPAR projects

The Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR) will undertake 102 new and continuing Community-based Participatory Action Research (CPAR) projects, where farmer-cooperators earn additional incomes as they directly undertake on-farm research activities.

Since its inception in 1999, CPAR has benefited more than 7,000 farmer-cooperators all over the country, reported BAR Director Nicomedes Eleazar to Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap.

One of them is Carlos Gamiao — a farmer-adopter of a CPAR vegetable research and livelihood project in Brgy. Cabisera 10, Ilagan, Isabela — who said:

"Talagang malaki ang naitutulung sa aming pamilya ng kita sa mga gulay mula sa CPAR project. Ginagamit namin itong pambili ng karne, at allowance para sa aming mga anak na nag-aaral. Talagang napakaganda ng CPAR." (The income from vegetables as a result of a CPAR project has indeed helped our family a lot. From it, we buy meat for food, and school allowance for our children. Indeed, CPAR is a very good project).

Funded by the DA-BAR, CPAR is implemented at the baranggay level through the 16 DA Regional Integrated Agricultural Research Centers and Bureau of Fisheries

and Aquatic Resources-Research Outreach Stations nationwide. It is undertaken in coordination with the local government units (LGUs), national and regional research implementing units, the academe, and small farmers and fisherfolk as cooperators or adopters.

Of this year's 102 projects, 40 are in Luzon, 24 in Visayas, and 38 in Mindanao.

Dir. Eleazar said that as farmers participate in a particular research activity, they are provided with farm inputs and technical assistance. In the process, they learn modern farming technologies that pave the way to increasing their farm productivity and incomes.

The CPAR project is sustained through re-dispersal and rollover of benefits to succeeding or next-in-line community adopters, Eleazar added.

Among the CPAR technology interventions are crop diversification, poultry and livestock production, use of improved crop varieties and organic fertilizers, integrated nutrient management, integrated pest management, and other cultural management practices.

With such technologies, farmer-cooperators learn to maximize the use of their farmland and available resources, employ sustainable and integrated farming systems approach, and in the process produce more food and earn additional income for their family. (Rita T. dela Cruz, DA-BAR)



CvSU Barako (left) is easily recognized by its large berries, flowers and leaves. CvSU Robusta (right) is characterized by umbrella-shaped growth.

Cavite develops two new coffee varieties

The Cavite State University (CvSU), through the National Coffee Research Development and Extension Center (NCRDEC), has successfully developed two new coffee varieties.

These are recently registered with the National Seed Industry Council (NSIC) of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry (DA-BPI).

The two varieties are: *coffee liberica L.*, commonly called "Cavite Barako or kapeng makapal"; and coffee Robusta (*coffea canephora L.*) also known as "kapeng manipis."

NCRDEC Director Alejandro C. Mojica and Engr. Rene Marasigan assisted CvSU with the registration process with NSIC.

The Liberica variety was

formally registered "CvSU Barako" (NSIC 2007 CF-L01), while the Robusta variety as "CvSU Robust" (NSIC 2007 CF-R07).

The CvSU Barako has a strong pharmacological taste and flavor. Its distinguishing physical characteristics are its berries, flowers and leaves which are larger than other varieties.

On the other hand, CvSU Robusta is a high-yielding variety and characterized by large, umbrella-shaped growth when pruned. It has thin leaves, and yields heavy clusters of berries. This variety is more resistant to pests and diseases.

CvSU coffee varieties planting materials are being grown and available at the NCRDEC coffee nurseries. (PCARRD)

Be entrepreneurs!

By Emily B. Bordado

Thus was the advice of Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap to the more than 220 graduates of the Camarines Sur State Agricultural College (CSSAC).

"Keep your entrepreneurial spirit alive. Do not be contented when hired for a job, but instead aspire to be job generators," Secretary Yap said during commencement ceremonies held March 27 at the CSSAC Calabanga campus.

He also urged the graduates to "never stop learning. Find your own niche. Be always cheerful. Find time to laugh. And always keep faith in God."

Despite his hectic schedule, the DA chief attended the affair upon the invitation of CSSAC President Atty. Marito T. Bernales and Dr. Alden S. Bonot, Dean of the CSSAC Institute of Industrial Technology and head of the Calabanga campus.

Secretary Yap also met briefly with the officers and members of the Hinagyanan Integrated Farmers Association (Hi-Farm), and Federation of Irrigators' Associations (FIAs) of three other adjoining municipalities (Bombon, Magarao and Canaman), both led

by Ernesto de los Reyes.

They personally thanked and handed him their respective Board Resolutions, for all the assistance the DA has extended to them.

Among the package of assistance they have received are: 1 unit flatbed dryer, 2 units of recirculating dryers, 1 unit rice drum seeder, 120 bags of certified seeds, 1 water pump, and fertilizers discount coupons.

In addition, Hi-Farm was chosen as site for the 50-hectare techno demo on modified rapid composting (MRC), while the FIAs received 7 units of flatbed dryers.

Thereafter, Secretary Yap led the ceremonial turnover of a P3.87-million check to CSSAC president Marito Bernales. The amount represents the DA's counterpart to the P5.4-million goat meat and milk production project in Camarines Sur under the Bicol Calamity Assistance Rehabilitation Efforts (BCARE).

Before he went to back to Manila, the DA chief met briefly with local mediapersons, and shared with them the DA's major initiatives in 2009.

Also present at commencement



Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap (left) delivers his message to the graduates of the Camarines Sur State Agricultural College (CSSAC), in Calabanga. Looking on are (from left) CSSAC President Marito Bernales, Rep. Luis R. Villafuerte and Calabanga campus Dean Alden S. Bonot.

rites was Camarines Sur Congressman Luis R. Villafuerte, who came to personally hand over to Secretary Yap his recently published book on malunggay. He also asked the DA chief to support his campaign for a massive planting of malunggay not only in his district but in the entire province, and to assist CSSAC.

In response, Sec. Yap committed to provide CSSAC with

P5 M for post-harvest facilities.

Other top officials at the CSSAC commencement were: Calabanga Mayor Evelyn S. Yu, DA-BFAR OIC-Regional Director Denis del Socorro, DA-RFU 5 asst regional for research Edgar Madrid, national fisherfolk leader Charlie Capricho, and senior officials and faculty of CSSAC main campus. (Editor's note: Ms. Bordado is Regional Information Officer of DA-RFU 5.)

DA-10 has new RTDs



Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap recently swore into office two top DA officials in Northern Mindanao, namely: Constancio C. Maghanoy, Jr. as Regional Technical Director (RTD) for Extension and LGU Support, and Engr. Roxan Hojas as RTD for Administration, Finance, Information, Planning, Regulatory and Research.

Before his appointment, RTD Maghanoy served as manager of the DA-Northern Mindanao Integrated Agricultural Research Center (NOMIARC). He has a Masters Degree in Public Administration at Medina Colleges in Ozamis City, and a BS in Agriculture at the Cen-

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap administers the oath of office to DA 10 Regional Technical Directors Constancio C. Maghanoy, Jr. and Engr. Roxan Hojas.

tral Mindanao University.

RTD Hojasis is an agricultural engineering from Xavier University, where she also earned a Master's degree in Public Administration and Management. She has attended several foreign and local trainings, and clinched scholarships from the USAID, JICA and AusAid. She served as OIC-Chief of the Planning Division before her appointment.

Organic fertilizer hubs to rise up in E. Visayas

More than 100 organic fertilizer production facilities will be put in Eastern Visayas to raise rice production in low-yielding farms.

Arman Arcamo, regional coordinator of the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Soils and Water Management (DA-BSWM), said 129 organic fertilizer centers will be set up in the next two years. Some 12,900 hectares of low-yielding rice farms are expected to benefit.

Each facility will provide institutional support to farmers' groups and local governments to produce their own organic fertilizers, Arcamo said.

Of the 129 units, 18 will be in Eastern Samar, 14 in Northern Samar, 30 in Samar, 41 in Leyte, 18 in Southern Leyte, and eight in Biliran. The first set will be put up within the first semester.

Priority areas are those where palay yields are less than the national average of 3.8 tons per hectare, as well as to 4th, 5th and 6th class municipalities.

Each facility is capable of providing the fertilizer requirements of 100 hectares, Arcamo said.

The project is envisioned to reduce the use of imported chemical fertilizers for rice by at least two bags per hectare. Farmers could save as much as P2,200 to P4,130 per hectare.

This will also reduce pollution of soils in agricultural areas with chemical residues, and improve ecological balance through the conversion of farm waste into compost fertilizer, Arcamo said.

For his part, Leo Cañeda, DA Region 8 executive director, said they've been promoting balanced fertilizer strategy, which advocates the judicious use of organic-inorganic fertilizer combinations, without sacrificing the yield targets.

Eastern Visayas has 57,000 hectares devoted to rice production, with most of the areas applied with inorganic fertilizers.

Organic fertilizers address macronutrient deficiency of the soil in nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. It also improves soil's water holding capacity. Thus, it facilitates easy absorption of the needed nutrients by the crop's roots. (Business World)

NFA now using biomass-fed mechanical driers

National Food Authority Administrator Jessup P. Navarro said the NFA is already operating an initial eleven units of mechanical driers using biomass furnace to boost its drive to reduce grains post-harvest losses and cut the cost of palay drying.

The eleven units now in operation are part of the 91 units of grain driers complete with biomass furnace the agency bought to be used during the first half of this year as part of the FIELDS (Fertilizer, Irrigation, Extension, Loans, Dryers and Seeds) program of the government to increase the country's palay production.

Navarro said post harvest losses particularly in palay increases during the main harvest which coincides with the rainy months when farmers' income is low.

"Grains losses during this period due to improper grains drying also sets back our efforts towards rice sufficiency," said Navarro.

The NFA addresses this problem by continuously upgrading its drying facilities to cater to the farmers need. Based on the agency's record, however, the utilization of mechanical driers remain low primarily due to the high cost of fuel for mechanical driers, according to

Navarro.

"Through the extensive use of mechanical driers among farmers, we expect to reduce the estimated 14 percent losses in the country's palay production," he added.

"At 65 percent milling recovery, this volume is equivalent to 1.48 million metric tons or close to 30 million bags of rice. This could contribute a lot in attaining the country's goal towards rice self-sufficiency and in reducing the incidence of hunger and poverty," he emphasized.

An NFA study conducted on the performance of batch-recirculating mechanical dryer retrofitted to a prototype biomass furnace proved to be adaptable and cost viable in the agency's dryer installation.

The use of biomass fuel significantly reduced the cost of drying by around 36 percent. "Lower cost could eventually attract more farmers to avail of NFA's grains' drying services and give them the opportunity to produce quality grains that could demand a better price in the market," said Navarro.

For more information on the story, the public may send their inquiries via Text NFA program through mobile number 0917-6210927. (NFA Public Affairs Department)

Davao swine raiser is also biogas advocate

Minimizing or controlling the foul odor from pigpens has been a challenge to many swine raisers.

Unknown to many, Felimon 'Boy' Santander, a swine raiser in Mandug, Davao City, has adopted a modified biogas digester, which he built 14 years ago.

For his feat, he was chosen as PCARRD's Magasaka-Siyentista. It effectively eliminated the unpleasant odor from his pigpen, at the same time providing his household free cooking gas.

Since then he has promoted the technology to fellow swine raisers in Davao, and providing assistance in constructing their biogas digesters.

His modified digester is simple, with sizes ranging from two to 20 cubic meters. It uses concrete materials.

A political science graduate, Santander has been a Sangguniang Bayan technical staff, when swine raising was just a hobby and source of additional income.

It never occurred to him that such

would redeem him after he ran and lost the race for an elected position.

Needing to have ends meet, he raised swine in his backyard.

He self-trained; did lots of research on animal diseases, breeding, and production; and made the hobby a full time source of income in 1997.

It's not unlikely for him to pursue swine raising full-time.

His parents raised all of his eight siblings through income derived from swine raising.

His skills in constructing modified biogas digester gained popularity not only in Davao City, but also in Davao del Sur, Compostela Valley Province, Davao del Norte, Bukidnon, Capiz, and in other parts of the country.

He did this by conducting technology clinics and fora through the help of Southern Mindanao Agriculture and Resources Research and Development Consortium (SMARRDEC). Further, he advocated for agri-waste management and sludge utilization from biogas as organic fertilizer with SMARRDEC and B-Meg Philippines. Santander also founded the



Quick Turn Around (QTA) for Lubao Farmers. *With the timely repair of the Porac-Gumain River Irrigation System, thus expanding the service area to about 3,130 hectares, farmers in Lubao, Pampanga, are now enjoying a third palay cropping or aptly a 'Quick Turn Around.'* Above, Secretary Arthur Yap joins them in a recent transplanting ceremony.

ATI trains more agri techs on 'PalayCheck'

The Department of Agriculture through the Agricultural Training Institute (DA-ATI) as of March 2009 has trained more than 49,700 Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs) on PalayCheck in 14 regions of the country. It will train about 152,900 more starting May.

The trained AEWs will subsequently train farmers by establishing PalayCheck Field Schools (PFS) in their respective regions. To date, the DA-ATI has put up 1,452 Farmers' Field Schools (FFS) nationwide.

PalayCheck was initiated in 2004 by the DA-Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) in

collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

It is a dynamic rice crop management system (RICM) that includes processes such as packaging technologies as "key checks," checking management practices of farmers against the best practices exhibited in the demonstration farms, comparing results, and learning through farmers' group discussion.

The key checks serve as standards on which existing farming practices are compared, and the best practices are decided and agreed upon, which are then adopted and employed. (Vic Thor A. Palarca, DA-ATI)

NDA has new chief

The Department of Agriculture's National Dairy Authority (DA-NDA) has a new administrator, in Atty. Orkhan Usman.

A former Deputy Administrator of the DA's National Tobacco Administration, from 2006 to 2008, Usman said he would focus on how to increase the country's dairy produc-

tion which, right now, accounts for a mere two percent of the national requirement.

He also plans to increase the number of dairy zones and push dairy farming and livelihood projects to benefit farmers and their families, especially children, especially in depressed communities, and upgrade local cattle stock by means of artificial insemination.

He thanked President Arroyo and Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap for giving him the chance to lead NDA.

He is married to Merenisa Moti-Usman, a medical doctor, with whom he has a son, Orkhan Jr.

G8 Summit on Agri set in Italy

"There's a simple solution to emerging from the current crisis and coming up with an answer to the global food emergency sparked by the rising price of raw materials: farm produce needs to be put back in the front seat in the economy."

Thus said Minister Luca Zaia, of Italy's Ministry of Farm, Food and Forestry Policies, during a briefing of Italian and international journalists on the issues that farm ministers will be addressing at the first-ever G8 Summit to be devoted to agriculture. The Summit is scheduled to be held at Cison di Valmarino, in Treviso, Italy, April 18-20, 2009.

"If we want our 'house' to come through this crisis undamaged, then we need to strengthen it from the foundations up, and its foundations are our farmers," said Minister Zaia, who will chair the Summit.

He said "we need to draft a shared road map designed to get us out of the crisis and provide an answer to the global food emergency. We need to restore to agricultural output and farmers the central role in the economy that is theirs by right. We need to cut the waste that comes at a social and economic price we can no longer afford today."

Expected to attend are representatives of such international organizations as the Food and Agriculture Organization, World Food Programme, International Fund for Agricultural Development, World Bank, and the UN's High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, which UN Secretary General Ban Ki-

'We need to place farmers back in the center of the economy, and work to boost farm output in developing countries.'

-- Luca Zaia, Italian Minister of Farm, Food and Forestry

moon set up last year.

"We will be redesigning the future of farming with them," Minister Zaia stressed, adding: "This industry is currently enjoying a renaissance after years of political short-

sightedness, when governments in the industrially-advanced countries thought they could just cut back on farming. We're paying a high price for

those decisions today.

"For every calorie we eat, we need to use up seven just to transport the food. We need to make up for lost time, not just by placing farming back in the center of the economy, but also by working to boost farm output in developing

countries."

"We have to narrow the gap between demand and supply, among other things by coordinating the way we manage international stocks, so that we can put the major producer countries' reserves on the market.

"I am convinced that when the global economic cycle picks up again, demand in the major emerging economies starts to grow, and the cost of energy inevitably starts to rise again with it. We will start to see farm prices rocketing, too.

"This is a structural problem, and it's our job to thrash out a strategy on which we all agree at the global level. And we need to do so now," Minister Zaia concluded.

At the end of the G8 Summit, the farm ministers are expected to issue a joint declaration, which it will submit to the G8 Leaders Summit in July, in La Maddalena, Italy. (www.g8italia2009.it)

Drip irrigation is not sustainable, depletes aquifers

In an effort to make irrigation more efficient — to obtain more "crop per drop" — farmers have adopted alternatives to flooding and other conventional methods. Among these is drip irrigation in which water flows only to the roots. Drip systems are costly, but they save much water.

A hydrologic and economic analysis suggests that subsidies and other policies that encourage conservation methods like drip irrigation can actually increase water consumption.

With flood irrigation, much of the water is not used by the plants and seeps back to the source, an aquifer or a river. Drip irrigation draws less water, but almost all of it is

taken up by the plants, so very little is returned. Those aquifers are not going to get recharged.

Drip irrigation also generally increases crop yields, which encourages farmers to expand acreage and request the right to take even more water, thus depleting even more of it. The indirect effect is very possibly to undermine policy attempts to reduce water consumption.

Policymakers must balance the need for more food and for farmers to make a living with water needs. Subsidies are very good for food security and very good for farmer income but they may be taking water away from other people. (www.nytimes.com)



Rice bran oil to cut cholesterol



A form of vitamin E found naturally in rice bran oil lowers cholesterol in rats.

The research shows that total cholesterol levels in animals dropped by 42 per cent, and LDL or 'bad cholesterol' levels dropped up to 62 per cent after the rats' diets were supplemented with tocotrienol rich fraction (TRF) isolated from rice bran oil.

The findings support increasing evidence of the benefits of tocotrienols, a form of the vitamin that has been less widely researched than the more well-known tocopherol form.

While corn, wheat and soybeans are rich in tocopherols, tocotrienols are found in greater quantities in barley, oats, palm and rice bran.

Rice bran oil lowered LDL levels in humans by 7 per cent, although they did not identify the compounds present in the oil that were responsible for this effect.

TRF inhibits the activity of HMG-

CoA reductase, an enzyme involved in cholesterol biosynthesis.

The most effective dose in rats was 8 IU kg per day. Extrapolated to humans, a person with an average body weight of 154 pounds would get around 560 IU, which is close to the 400 IU of vitamin E normally taken.

Rice bran oil, or other sources of tocotrienols, could be of interest to food makers looking to enter the growing category of cholesterol-lowering foods, currently dominated by products containing plant sterols.

Cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease, the disease that kills more people than any other around the world.

So far, there is no adverse effects of tocotrienols.

TRF reduces cholesterol in humans as well as in animals.

Five healthy volunteers with total cholesterol levels in the 'normal' range of 170-230 mg/dL, who ingested TRF in capsule form at a dose of 8 IU kg/day for four weeks, saw their cholesterol levels drop by 10 per cent with a 26-per cent decline in LDL-cholesterol levels. (www.asiarice.org)

Nigerian farmers favor pest-resistant corn

Nigerian farmers who tested new corn varieties resistant to the widespread *Striga* plant parasite are so enthusiastic about their increased crop yields that they are selling more seeds than the official distribution channels.

The crops were developed in the Nigerian laboratories of the International Institute for Agricultural Research (IITA). They dramatically cut maize losses from the root-infecting *Striga*, or witchweed,

during two years of trial cultivation by farmers in Borno State in northern Nigeria.

Nigeria's Institute for Agricultural Research began distributing the new parasite-resistant maize seeds in December 2008.

The farmers couldn't wait for the official release of seedlings because the variety is successful, cutting losses and the next step is to distribute the parasite-resistant maize in other countries in West

and Central Africa.

The varieties, known as Sammaz 15 and 16 contain genes that diminish the growth of parasitic flowering plants such as *Striga*, which attaches to the maize root. Both Sammaz varieties tolerate heavy *Striga* infestations without suffering crop losses.

A normal maize variety without resistance to *Striga* can sustain from 60 per cent to 100 per cent grain yield loss in farmers' fields that are severely infested.



Sammaz 16 loses just ten per cent of yield in an extreme invasion.

Sammaz 16 is a late-maturing variety requiring 110 to 120 days of growth, whereas Sammaz 15 can often be harvested at 100 days and is more suitable for regions with short growing periods or unpredictable water supplies. (www.scidev.net)

New green revolution via 'magic pea'

A new, improved, protein-rich pea called *Pushkal*, is now available.

It is first commercially available hybrid legume in the world, and may launch a new Green Revolution because of its 40% higher yields than the best local varieties, said Dr. William Dar, director-general of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), in India.

Pigeonpea is a high protein dietary staple, with 20 to 22 percent protein, in many countries like India, Myanmar, Nepal, China, south-eastern Africa, and the Caribbean, said Dr. Dar, former acting agriculture secretary in the Philippines.

Globally, it is cultivated on 4.92 million hectares with a productivity of 898 kg (1975.6 lbs) per hectare.

Most of the research had been done in India, where small brown, quick-cooking beans are preferred; in Africa, the preferred pigeonpeas are white, larger and the whole seeds are cooked.

Indian pigeonpea hybrids don't adapt well to conditions in Africa, where altitude, climate, soil condition and rainfall are quite different.

Since wilt disease is a significant problem for African pigeonpea, various varieties were planted in local fields to find plants which were wilt resistant.

Thus, researchers, working with local farmers, were able to incorporate in the African pigeonpea

adaptation to temperature, climate and light.

Other varieties include bean varieties favored in India, where crops are timed for export between May and October when the country faces a pigeonpea shortage. This work has boosted income for local farmers and varieties that



to provide animal feed; in rural areas, its dry stems are used for fuel. The new hybrid thrives in drought conditions and has greater resistance to diseases than the best varieties.

It creates a strong root system which aids greater nitrogen fixation to keep soils fertile. The new variety comes during a global pigeonpea shortage which has caused prices to soar, creating misery among millions of poor people who cannot afford them.

To date, seeds for the new pigeonpea hybrid have been planted on some 5,000 hectares, but hybrid will be widely planted in the next few years as the low cost seed becomes more readily available in India.

The new hybrid technology has generated interest from a number of other countries, including Myanmar, Brazil, the Philippines and China. (www.icrisat.org)

Also, pigeonpea seeds are crushed to provide animal feed; in rural areas, its dry stems are used for fuel. The new hybrid thrives in drought conditions and has greater resistance to diseases than the best varieties.

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'Super cassava' in the offing

An ambitious attempt to bioengineer cassava into a "complete meal" took a step forward with the approval of field trials for the plant by Nigeria's National Biosafety Committee.

The genetically modified cassava contains 30 times as much beta-carotene, a precursor of vitamin A, as its normal counterpart.

Ultimately it is hoped that the cassava will contain increased levels of iron, protein, zinc and vitamin E that will meet the minimum daily allowance in a 500 gram meal.

Some 250 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa — and 800 million people globally — rely on cassava as their main source of energy. But it is low in nutrients, able to resist ruses, and only a few days out of process. Aside from adding extra nutrients, the team has successfully produced varieties with increased virus resistance, decreased amounts of poisonous cyanides — which can remain in cassava if the crop is poorly processed — and a longer shelf life.

For example, iron levels were increased nine-fold; zinc, four-fold; and protein, four-fold. Nigeria's approval is the first it has granted for a GM confined field trial. The team also hopes to begin confined field trials in Kenya, to be overseen by the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, before the end of 2009. They are now in the process of training African scientists in the labs wherein they are going to learn the technology to make a transgenic cassava plant. They will return and make the final products themselves. (www.scidev.net)



DA-BAR funds 82 agribusiness projects

The Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR) has funded 82 projects on agriculture and fisheries under its National Technology Commercialization Program (NTCP), since its inception in 2005.

The projects cut across agricultural crops, fisheries, and livestock sectors that were carefully chosen in an effort to maximize the research outputs of scientists and researchers by bringing total packages of technologies to farming and rural communities.

On crops, some of the completed projects include the following:

Mass production and commercialization of locally-developed sweet tamarind variety;

Development of special product lines from the medicinal oregano plant such as wine, tea, and vinegar;

Testing of post-harvest technology using coir dust and evapora-

tive cooling for off-season supply of tomato;

Production of high-quality garlic through the use of Gibberellic acid; and

Enhancing the export quality of fruits and vegetables through Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and application of post-harvest handling technologies.

The project on enhancing exports of fruits and vegetables also started the full support of DA-BAR to the fresh and processed mango export venture of Lito Arenas, a successful mango producer, processor and exporter in Pangasinan.

BAR has financed the successful market reconnaissance of Mr. Arenas to Europe, and his project on using a German-based fabricated drying system for the commercial production of dried mango fruit through the Pangasinan Tropical Multi-purpose Cooperative.

In the market reconnaissance to Europe, pickled mango was found

to be a viable venture since processed food has less stringent requirements for export than fresh produce.

Similarly, as part of BAR's support to the National Rubber Development Program (NRDP), it has also funded and completed several projects.

These include the establishment of budwood gardens, nurseries, and technology demonstration farms nationwide for the recommended rubber clones, namely: RRIM 600, RRIM 712, RRIM 901, PB 217, PB 235, PB 260, USM 1, PB 311, and RRIM 628.

To support the R&D component of the DA's Biofuel Feedstock Program for the production of sufficient amount of feedstock to meet the local demand for biofuels, BAR's NTCP funded several projects on the commercialization of sweet sorghum for wide-scale production and use not only for fuel but as human food and animal feed as well. This

came about after the feasibility study, commissioned by BAR also on the viability of sweet sorghum as energy source, found it to be one of the most promising sources of biofuel feedstock in the Philippines.

Sweet sorghum is among the world's top five most important cereals. It was introduced in the country by the India-based International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) alongside other pro-poor crops such as pigeon pea and *Asha* peanut which is also being commercialized in the country through projects funded by BAR.

On livestock, DA-BAR has also funded an upgraded goat production project, propagation of genetically-superior water buffaloes through *in-vitro* production and embryo transfer, and promotion and commercialization of carabao-based dairy products.

On fisheries, the development of products from the commerciable seaweeds such as seaweed longganisa, pickles, noodles, and chips were funded. There is likewise an on-going project on the development of post-harvest technologies on the *halymenia* and *portiera* seaweed species which are also being screened for their bioactive compounds.

The appropriate technology for the grow-out of sea urchin, a delicacy popular in Japan, Southeast Asia, and the United States, was also given support.

Since 2005, BAR has been regularly conducting technology commercialization exhibits and fora at the national and regional levels to create awareness and to disseminate these viable technologies where needed.

In line with BAR's plans to continue and strengthen the worthwhile contributions of NTCP, more projects and activities related to agriculture and fisheries technology commercialization are expected to be funded this year.

The Technology Commercialization Unit (TCU) is the focal unit assigned by BAR to facilitate the funding and monitoring of the commercialization of viable technologies on agriculture and fisheries from the different R&D institutions within DA, other government agencies, state colleges and universities (SUC), non-government organizations (NGOs), and local government units (LGU) involved in the development of the sector. (*Miko Jazmine J. Mojica, DA-BAR*)

'Win-win for farmers and consumers'

More BBs underway in EV

Twenty-one Barangay Bagsakans (BBs) are now operating in Region 8.

These are in Biliran (Kawayan, Culaba, Caibiran & Almeria), Leyte (Capoocan, MacArthur, San Isidro, Abuyog, Hindang & Baybay), Southern Leyte (Maasin City), Samar (Calbiga, Pinabacdao, Daram and Brgys. Bougainvillea & Tominamos, Sta. Rita), Eastern Samar (Dolores & Mercedes) and Northern Samar (Catarman, Mondragon & San Roque).

"And we're still counting for more," says BB Focal Person Regional Technical Director Arsenio A. Fortin.

"There are still proposals from interested local government units (LGUs). Positive responses from farmers and consumers have encouraged the LGUs to replicate the project in their locality," he said.

The project has indeed been a big help to both farmers and consumers, Fortin added.

Take the case of 50-year old Felizardo Darasin of the Baybay Farmers' Association, who said:

"Before, we were given no fair option. If not at the mercy of the middlemen.

"We endured the hassle of transporting our produce to the public

market which incurred considerable transport costs.

"And worst, we incurred big losses when our products were not bought by consumers. So, we had to sell them at a very low prices.

"Now, with the Barangay Bagsakan project, we are encouraged to produce more, since we are now assured of a ready market

"With its battlecry, '*Negosyo sa Sakahan Laban sa Kahirapan*,' BB does not only offer affordable products, but also generates employment as it requires several workers for its operation,"

that will give us the real worth of our produce."

Consumers, on the other hand, stated that the establishment of BBs is also favorable and well worth it.

For instance, 30-year old housewife and mother Ghila Quiro of Baybay, Leyte said:

"It is really advantageous having a BB because we can save time and money. We no longer take a ride to the public market and waste time in going around stalls for the lowest priced agri-commodities.

"Instead, we just go to the BB

and we are able to buy fresh commodities at lower prices, compared to those sold in other local public markets."

National BB Focal Person Director Francisco Ramos of DA Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service noted that the BB is among the projects under President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Accelerated Hunger Mitigation Program, which was conceptualized in 2006 to help alleviate hunger in the country.

"With its resonating battlecry, '*Negosyo sa Sakahan Laban sa Kahirapan*,' BB does not only offer affordable products, but also generates employment as it requires several workers for its operation," he said.

Through a counterparting scheme between the DA and LGUs, BBs are granted a P200,000 fund assistance for needed equipment such as chest freezer, vegetable chiller, digital weighing scale, plastic crates, meat hangers, commodity price boards and others.

And as part of the technical support package, the DA also conducts an orientation seminar on BB management, and food handling techniques for operators. (*Jessa Faye G. Esponilla, DA-RFU 8 Info Div.*)

Korea donates ... (from p1)

Sur). The signing is among the final stages in the processing of the grant.

The forthcoming project amounts to P785.45 million in total cost, with P649 million coming from KOICA and P136.45 million as counterpart of the Philippine government.

The new project follows the successful construction and operation of the first KOICA-funded RPC in Baler, Aurora in 2007, worth \$2.3 million.

Sitting on a 1.1 hectare site in Barangay Reserva, the Baler RPC has significantly reduced

postharvest losses, produced quality rice grain and increased farmers' income. It has also provided high-quality rice at reasonable prices.

In Korea, the operation of about 328 RPCs and 568 drying and storage complexes has reduced working hours by 64% and operating costs by 34% while cutting postproduction losses from 6% to 1%.

A KOICA team is in the country to assess budgetary requirements and mode of implementation for the construction of the four RPCs.

DA forms... (from p3)

tion projects nationwide.

For his part, Undersecretary Jesus Emmanuel Paras said program partners should have the capability to efficiently undertake proposed intervention measures, and priority will be given to the LGUs that are willing and able to provide the appropriate counterpart funds.

As for NGOs and POs, they should be at least three years old and in good standing as certified

by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Moreover, he said disbursements to program partners will be done in three tranches, where funds will be released only after they had fully liquidated previous allotments.

Finally, NGOs, POs or foundations that have unsatisfactory performance in the implementation of previous DA-funded projects can no longer participate.

Ilonggo farmers benefit from flatbed dryer

Members of the Irrigators' Association (IA) in Palacatian, Pavia, Iloilo, are now enjoying a P1.00 increase per one kilogram of their dried palay sold, from P17 to P18, thanks to the flatbed dryer (FBD) awarded to them by Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap April last year.

Prior to the grant, farmers have gotten used to losses and quality deterioration, as the palay germinates inside the sack due to improper drying technology.

Solar drying or drying palay on the road has resulted to almost 10% postharvest losses, according to the DA's Bureau of

Postharvest Research and Extension (DA-BPRE).

The Palacatian IA said the FBD has so far dried 3,555 sacks last October 2008 and 3,141 sacks last January 2009.

The association imposes a three-tiered fee that it uses to properly maintain the FBD: P27 per sack for the IA board of directors; P30 for active members; and P32 for non-members.

Compared to existing mechanical dryers, the FBD is cost-efficient as it utilizes rice hull as fuel. It also requires minimum labor, and repair and maintenance expenses. (BPRE Sagip Ani Balita)



Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap (left) and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) Managing Director Choi Sungho sign the records of discussions on the project to establish four modern integrated rice processing complexes (RPCs) in Pangasinan, Iloilo, Bohol, and Davao del Sur. Assisting them are Zenaida Villegas and Cristy Polido of the DA-Project Development Service.

UPLB completes standards on multicrop processing machines

Like any other machine produced for export, agricultural machines have to pass quality and performance standards before they get to the market.

Researchers at the Agricultural Machinery Testing and Evaluation Center of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (AMTEC-UPLB) recently completed evaluating the standards for fabricating and testing multicrop processing machines.

These machines slated for commercialization are:

Washer-peeler, a customized machine that peels outer skin, or cleans and removes undesirable debris of ginger rhizomes, sweet potato, potato, arrowroot, radish, and carrot;

Multicrop juice extractor, which extracts juice from ginger, lemon grass, pandan leaves, arrowroot, herbal plants, vegetable leaves, and other crops;

Crystallizer, which cooks ginger juice to produce powdered ginger tea; and

Multicrop micromill, which dries and grinds product meal of various crops into finer materials suitable for food seasoning or as flour.

The standards specify the fabrication and performance requirements and the methods that should be followed in testing and inspecting the machines.

With the standards, machines are guaranteed of high quality engineering design for wide-scale application.

A multidisciplinary technical committee formed by AMTEC-UPLB

reviewed existing standards from national and international organizations and formulated one that fits Philippine resources and conditions.

Using the developed standard, AMTEC-UPLB project leader Engr. Darwin C. Aranguren, tested the machines that are currently installed at the Bicol University in Polangui, Albay.

Findings showed that the four machines generally conformed to the requirements on safety, workmanship, and finish. The washer-peeler, micromill, and crystallizer required design improvements to make them more serviceable and efficient. The juice extractor satisfied most of the standards.

The standards have been endorsed to the Department of Trade and Industry - Bureau of Products and Standards and the Board of Agricultural Engineering Professional Regulation Commission for adoption as National Standards.

It will also be endorsed to the Department of Agriculture (DA) for issuance of appropriate policy. The policy would require DA-attached agencies to use the standards in their procurement of machines. Machine manufacturers from the private sector, on the other hand, can use the standards to guide the design and fabrication of other machines.

The project is funded by the Technology Innovation for Commercialization Program of the Department of Science Technology and coordinated by PCARRD.



A typical DA-BPRE flatbed dryer.

Expanded veggie project to benefit 900,000 families

The Department of Agriculture will expand this year the *Gulayan ng Masa*, its national backyard-based vegetable production program, to include root crops and fruits.

The expanded program targets to benefit 900,000 rural and urban poor households, particularly in rainfed areas and low-income provinces, said Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap during the March 28 launch of "*Bayan-Anihan*," a joint project of the DA with the private sector-led Gawad Kalinga (GK) movement, in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija.

"We plan to begin full implementation of the expanded Gulayan program before the onset of the wet season in May," Yap said

Gawad Kalinga is best known for building houses for the poor, in partnerships with government agencies, private sector, individual benefactors and philanthropists. This is the first time that it is teaming up with the DA to carry out a food sufficiency and livelihood program.

Secretary Yap, who has been an active participant in GK projects since he was administrator of the National Food Authority in 2002, said the support of private sector groups such as Gawad Kalinga is crucial in helping government achieve President Arroyo's goal of providing food on the table of every Filipino family.

The *Bayan-Anihan* was launched at two farm sites at the Nuestra Senora de Soledad Village in Barangay Tabon. It will involve and benefit 62 families, who will grow upland *kangkong*, eggplant, okra, ampalaya, hot pepper, and tomato. The project is supported by Globe Telecom, one of the country's leading telecommunications company. It has committed to adopt 35 farms under the *Bayan-Anihan* project.

Also present during the project launch were San Isidro Mayor Sonia Lorenzo; lawyer Joe Tale, GK chairman; Tony Meloto, GK advocate champion; John Concepcion, president of Bayan-Anihan Foundation Inc.; Jeffrey Tarayao, community relations head of Globe Telecom; and Dr. Ruben Sevillejo, president of the Central Luzon State University.

San Isidro is among the 100 sites in Luzon, where the Bayan-anihan project was launched

simultaneously last week of March, according to Dr. Rene Rafael Espino, national coordinator of the DA's Ginintuang Masaganang Ani-High Value Commercial Crops (GMA-HVCC) program.

He said the project will be implemented initially in 115 sites in Luzon, benefiting at least 30 families per site.

This year, it aims to cover a total of 500 sites all over the country, of which 225 will be in GK sites and 275 in non-GK sites. An additional 2,000 sites are planned in 2010 and 2011.

A series of training programs on vegetable gardening and community farming were already

given in February to GK residents. Education and empowerment seminars for the youth are also in

progress through a planned youth movement campaign in June to ensure sustainability.



Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap (3rd from right) leads the ceremonial planting of vegetable seedlings at 'Bayan-Anihan' launch, in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. Flanking him (from right) are San Isidro Mayor Sonia Lorenzo, Gawad Kalinga (GK) chair Atty. Joe Tale, GK champion advocate Tony Meloto, Bayan-Anihan Foundation president John Concepcion, Jeffrey Tarayao of Globe Telecom, and Central Luzon State University president Dr. Ruben Sevillejo.

'Bayan-Anihan' is also in Bicol

Cadlan, Pili, Camarines Sur - The Department of Agriculture and Gawad Kalinga (GK) here likewise joined other GK sites in the country to simultaneously launch Bayan-Anihan, at Pagkamoot GK Village, near the provincial capitol.

Of the first batch of 100 Bayan-Anihan sites in Luzon, 45 are in Bicol.

DA Region 5 director Jose V. Dayao led the ceremonies, along with GK national officer Melo Villaroman, Dr. Roman Bucad of

Camarines Sur State Agricultural College (CSSAC), Jeff Uy of Bayan-Anihan PMO, Allan Pato of GK Cadlan, Isagani Betchayda of Shell Foundation, and Pili Councilor Augusto Cabañero.

Director Dayao said the DA will provide participating families with vegetable seeds and seedlings, fruit tree seedlings, weighing scales and organic fertilizers.

Each site for one family should be at least 10 square meters, with adequate freshwater source. They will be given open-pollinated seed varieties. They may choose to plant a "recipe mix" like pinakbet and sinigang.

For GK's part, Villaroman explained the five core values of Bayan-Anihan.

CSSAC will train the participating families on proper and improved vegetable production practices. (Emily B. Bordado, DA-RFU5)



DA Region 5 Director Dr. Jose V. Dayao (4th from left) hands over a tray of vegetable seedlings to Allan Pato of Gawad Kalinga Pagkamoot Village, Cadlan, Camarines Sur. Looking on are (from left to right): GK national officer Melo Villaroman, Dr. Roman Bucad of Camarines Sur State Agricultural College, Pili Councilor Augusto Cabañero, Isagani Betchayda of Shell Foundation, and Cadlan barangay captain Walden Brosas.