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November - December 2016

NTA receives recognition award for ISO certification

THE National Tobacco Administration was awarded Certificate of Recognition by the Government Quality Management Committee (GQMC) for successfully attaining ISO 9001:2008 certification for its Quality Management System (QMS), during the 4th Recognition Ceremony, graced by Vice President Maria Leonora Robredo, held at the LBP Auditorium, LBP Building in Malate, Manila on November 10.

This GQMC gave the recognition to the government agencies, including government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), state universities and colleges, and local government units (LGUs), whose QMS have attained ISO 9001 QMS Certifications from January 2012 to October 2016.

NTA Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza, along with CorPlan Manager and Quality Management Representative (QMR) Rex Antonio P. Teoxon, received the award from Budget Secretary and GQMC Chair Benjamin E. Diokno.

Secretary Diokno said that the awardees were specially recognized for achieving the goal of Government Quality Management Program (GQMP) of strengthening institutional capacities of public sector organizations in delivering citizen-focused public services and in implementing international standards-based quality management system.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification for national agencies, executive offices, GOCCs, state universities and colleges, and LGUs, is in compliance with Executive Order No. 605 s. 2007 institutionalizing the structure, mechanisms and standards to implement GQMP. ISO is a UK-based independent certification body and the world's largest developer and publisher of international standards.

In her message to the awardees, Vice President Robredo reminded the officials that the word "government" should not simply refer to all of us who are working in government. "It is about how we interact with the public. It is about how we solve things together when we can't do things on our own," she explained.

Three days before the awarding ceremony, Administrator Zaragoza formally received the Certification issued by Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS)



Top: Administrator Zaragoza and QMR Representative Rex Antonio P. Teoxon receive the Certificate of Recognition for NTA from the GQMC Chair and Budget Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno (center). Also in photo are DAP Senior Vice President Magdalena L. Mendoza and Deputy Executive Secretary Alberto A. Bernardo (1st and 2nd from right).
N. E. Valdez

from Teoxon during the Monday flag-raising ceremony at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City.

The NTA ISO 9001:2008 Certification covers the NTA Central Office and the Farm Technology and Services Department in Batac City. The certification is dated September 19, 2016 and has validity until September 15, 2018, subject to satisfactory surveillance audits.

"Achieving the quality standards reinforces NTA's commitment to deliver the highest quality of service to all our stakeholders and continually improving its business processes," Zaragoza said.

The following frontline services are covered by the ISO 9001:2008 Certification: Regulatory Services; Research and Development; and Technology Assistance, Extension and Production Support Services.

Zaragoza thanked all the members of the NTA family for their valuable contributions in its success. He commended the NTA QMS Core

Team headed by CorPlan Manager Teoxon (QMR Representative) and Administrative Department Manager Dr. Cristina C. Lopez (Deputy QMR).

Other members of the Core Team are the Task Group Chairpersons, namely, Imelda N. Riñen, Technology Development, Extension and Production Support Services; Dinah E. Pichay, Support to Operations, Overview of Quality Procedure; Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, Research and Development, Control of Frontline Services; Maybelen B. Dictaan, Regulations; Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay, Branch Operations; Ma. Teresa B. Laudencia, Management of Resources to Support QMS; Priscilla S. Esguerra, Management Information System; and Raquel Leilani F. Seña, Customers Satisfaction Determination.

Also cited by the Administrator were the members of the QMS Secretariat, namely, Fortuna C. Benosa, chairperson; Manuel C. Ramiscal, vice-chairperson;

Pls turn to page 2

NTA receives recognition award for ISO certification ... from page 1

and Perla C. Manzon, Charity P. Garcia, Vivien F. Ferarez, Teresita D. Dela Rosa, and Rosalie P. Catura, members.

NTA started the development and implementation of the Development of QMS Certifiable to ISO in September 2015. This was brought about by the call of the national government for all its departments, bureaus and other agencies to be ISO certified, and aligned with its aim of streamlining procedures in the government to improve public service delivery and in ensuring good governance.

The agency went through quality management system awareness program and training courses on internal quality audit facilitated by the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) on the first quarter this year. It completed the stage 1 audit in July, then the rigorous stage 2 audit by the Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS) a month after. 🌟

Text/Photos: Neyo E. Valdez



Top: Administrator Zaragoza receives the Certification issued by Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS) from CorPlan Manager Rex Antonio P. Teoxon, with some members of the QMS Core Team (from left): Finance Department Manager Ma. Teresa B. Laudencia, NTA Employees Association President Raquel F. Seña, Internal Audit Manager Dinah E. Pichay, QMS Secretariat vice-chair Manuel C. Ramiscal, and Regulation Department Manager Maybelen B. Dictaan. **Left:** Administrator Zaragoza puts a SGS ISO sticker on a glass door of the Training Room. N. E. Valdez

NTA YEAR-END CONVOCATION 2016

NTA held its 2016 year-end convocation on December 19, with a simple but fun-filled program.

Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza, Deputy Administrator Atty. Everin F. Molina and members of the NTA Governing Board joined central office employees in the simple celebration. Highlights of the annual activity were dance performances from the different departments, awarding of winners in the sportsfests, and raffle of gifts.

Zaragoza in his message, commended the employees for their dedication and collective effort that made the agency a proud recipient of an ISO 9001 QMS Certification this year. Atty. Molina, on the other hand, highlighted his talk with inspiring message of peace and love.

EANTA President Raquel Leilani F.

Seña reminded the employees the true meaning of the celebration: “peace and reconciliation, humility and forgiveness, patience and understanding, giving and sharing and unity and harmony.” She also thanked the Administrator and the entire top management for the benefits the employees received this year, such as the performance-based incentive pay, groceries, year-end bonus, among others.

Administrator Zaragoza and Administrative Department Manager Dr. Cristina C. Lopez joined Seña in the handing out of cash prizes to the team and individual winners of the 2016 Administrator’s Cup Duckpin Bowling Tournament, which was held from October to November.

Winners are as follows: **Individual (Men):** Excelsior R. Mejia, champion; Mejia, highest single and highest triple;

Edgardo C. Guia, highest pinning; **Individual (Ladies):** Teresita D. Dela Rosa, champion; Carmelita V. Albano, highest single; Imelda B. Urubio, highest triple; and Charito M. Salazar, highest pinning. **Team (Mixed):** Aqua Blue team of Mejia, Alejandro S. Cristobal, Albano, and Marilene V. Sansano, Champion; Navy Blue team of Ramon L. Fernandez, Jay C. Darlucio, Dina B. dela Reyna, and Justito A. Ambros, Second Place; and White Team of Guia, Dela Rosa, Marioflor F. Molina and Roy Antonio V. Teneza, Third Place.

The provincial branches also conducted their respective year-end convocation programs during the week.

In NTA Cagayan, the Branch Office staff headed by Manager Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda celebrated Christmas with gift-giving at the Reception and Study Center, a child-caring institution in Lingu, Solana, Cagayan.

National Gov’t Employees Week

Meanwhile, EANTA members kicked off the National Government Employees Week with fun activities, such as its own version of the Amazing Race and Bingo games on December 6. This year’s theme is “Kawani: Kaagapay at Lakas ng Pamahalaan Tungo sa Kasarinlan at Kaunlaran.”

Three EANTA members, Excelsior R. Mejia, Charito M. Salazar, and Ramon L. Fernandez participated in the National Convention of Government Employees held in Mall of Asia, Pasay City on December 9. 🌟



The Industrial Research Department headed by Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan (6th from left) receives from Administrator Zaragoza and Dr. Cristina C. Lopez cash prize for the department’s dance presentation. In photo, from left: Excelsior R. Mejia, Justito A. Ambros, Imelda B. Urubio, Dina B. Dela Reyna, Leandro D. Bagaoisan, Dr. Bonoan, Raquel Leilani F. Seña, Administrator Zaragoza, Dr. Lopez, Alejandro S. Cristobal, Myrna O. Lozano, and Ramon L. Fernandez.

NTA joins RP delegation in COP7 Delhi

THE National Tobacco Administration, as an integral part of the Department of Agriculture (DA), joined the Philippine Delegation to the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP7) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in New Delhi, India from November 7 to 12.



Atty. Ambros

The Philippine delegation, headed by Civil Service Commission Chairman Alicia Dela Rosa-Bala, attended the regional meeting for the West Pacific Region where the Philippines is a member. Other agencies in the delegation were representatives from the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Health, and Department of Labor and Employment, and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

NTA, tobacco regulatory agency attached to DA, was represented by Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros, Chief of Tobacco Products Regulation Division; while the DA was represented by Dr. Maria Araceli S. Escandor, Chief of the International Affairs Division.

According to Ambros, the NTA and DA successfully negotiated for the inclusion of majority of the issues and concerns in the Philippine positions, particularly on Article 5.3 (Prevention of Government Regulation and Control Policies/Programs from Tobacco Industry Interference), Articles 9 and 10 (Regulation of the Contents and Emissions of Tobacco Products and Disclosure of Same to the Government), and Articles 17 and 18 (Economically Sustainable Alternatives to Tobacco Growing and Protection of Health of Person to the Environment).

“The Philippine delegation was united in its position that the selection of delegates to COP7 should respect the sovereign rights of each Party with responsibility to abide with the principles laid down in Article 5.3,” he said.

He also added that the decision for Articles 17 and 18, as amended, was adopted by the Parties as a continuing work in progress, urging the Parties (1) to implement said articles with a whole-of-government and stakeholders’ approach in seeking alternatives to tobacco growing, (2) to call for policy coherence in the mandates of the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organizations, and (3) for the international community to support mobilization of resources to promote eco-nomically viable alternatives for tobacco growers and workers.

In a press release after an intense week of discussions, FCTC said that delegates addressed the longest agenda of any COP, indicating the enthusiasm of Parties and the growing role of tobacco control within areas of development and human rights, as well as public health.

NTA, represented by Deputy Administrator for Support Services Atty. Everin F. Molina, attended the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP6) that took place in Moscow, Russian Federation in 2014. 🌱

EDITORIAL

NTA recognized for its Quality Management System

THE whole NTA beamed with pride upon receipt of the invitation from the Chair of the Government Quality Management Committee (GQMC), DBM Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno, for the Administrator and one representative to attend the Recognition Ceremony on November 10, 2016 to receive the Certificate of Recognition to be awarded to government agencies, including government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), state universities and colleges, and local government units whose Quality Management Systems (QMS) have attained ISO 9001 QMS certification from January 2012 to October 2016, pursuant to Executive Order No. 605, s. 2007 (Institutionalizing the Structure, Mechanics and Standards to Implement the Government Quality Management Program, Amending for the Purpose Administrative Order No. 161, s. 006).

We note that the goal of the Government Quality Management Program (GQMP) is to strengthen institutional capacities of the public sector in the delivery of client-focused services, following international standards-based quality management system.

NTA attained its QMS certification on September 19, 2016. It joins the elite corps of government agencies, totalling only 449, of which 102 are GOCCs and GFIs, as of October 30, 2016, which successfully obtained said ISO certification.

The Recognition Award strengthened NTA’s resolve to bring distinct quality services to its various stakeholders, with firm commitment to do better through time, the systems and procedures, which will be subject of continual improvement. To constantly remind all employees of this commitment, the NTA Quality Policy is recited during the flag ceremony every Monday morning, to ensure that they internalize and practice the same.

This early, the NTA, with a more conscious effort, prepares for the next steps to pass with flying colors the ensuing surveillance audits for the renewal of its QMS certification and aims towards its migration to ISO 9001:2015 in the near future.

Meanwhile, NTA exhorts everybody to perform with nothing but excellence in consonance with the GQMP and contribute to the eradication of corruption in government. 🌱



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RECENTLY, for some farmers in Abra, the process of planting tobacco has been a matter of anticipating the drought.

With the early planting schedule, the farmers will benefit from the remaining moisture of the soil and avoid the effect of the extreme dry month during the harvest season.

This has been the case of tobacco grower Celso G. Bayle, 62, of Pakiling, Bucay, Abra. He prepared his seedbeds as early as October 1. Also a seedling grower, he expected that the seedlings will cater to a total of 1.2-hectare farm including his own farm lot in Pakiling.

But the seedbeds were washed out during the onslaught of Super Typhoon Lawin in Northeastern Luzon last October.

Like most local growers who have learned to be resilient to adverse and unpredictable weather conditions in their farming lives, Bayle knows he must not stop from there. Barely a week after the calamity, he started recovery by doing the same process of preparing his seedbeds. With assistance from the NTA Branch Office in Abra through extension worker Melben Bejarin, he was able to produce seedlings in time for the start of transplanting in December.

Bejarin describes his farmer as shy and soft-spoken but when he speaks about farming, he does so with conviction and full of hope.

“Farmers are hardworking and not easily discouraged,” Bayle said in Ilokano during a visit to his farm by the Branch Office headed by Manager Esmeralda G. Valera. His seedbeds that time were about three weeks old, and offering a promise of good, sturdy seedlings.

One cropping season, he recalled, his curing barn got burned in 2015 due to a technical problem. For the rest of his

Resilience and hardwork spell positive gains for this tobacco grower



Bayle (left) tending to his seedbeds

N. E. Valdez

tobacco than from corn,” he said. With tobacco production, other than improved economic gain, he is sure of production assistance from NTA and counting on the expertise of the extension workers from the Abra Branch to guide him from seedbedding to post-harvest activities.

Bayle and his partner in tobacco growing, his wife Elizabeth, 55, have reasons to take pride in growing tobacco, which is the major source of income for their family. Like most farmers in their place, Bayle went full-time in farming just after he finished high school.

With tobacco farming, Bayle was able to send all his three children to school, with the eldest now a college graduate and gainfully employed. He was able to purchase home appliances and farm implements and tools for tobacco production.

His attitude in farming and impressive works he has done in quality tobacco production bagged him the Tobacco

curing activities, he repaired the curing barn of his neighbor for temporary use. The local government provided him materials to construct a new barn: walling and roofing materials from the office of Governor Eustaquio Bersamin and hallow blocks, sand and gravel including complete set of Venturi type heating system from Bucay Mayor Victorino B. Baroña Jr.

But it was the quality of the majority of his produce scoring a high price in the trading floor that more than compensated for his loss.

Long-time farmer Bayle shifted from corn to tobacco planting only in 2011. “I gain more income from

Pls turn to page 9

Tobacco farmers' multi-purpose center to rise in La Union

Marcelo T. Pascual and Joannaliza D. Ordinante

THE Tobacco Farmers' Multi-purpose Training Center in the northern side of NTA La Union Branch Office ground in Brgy. Payocpoc, Bauang, La Union started construction last November 25.

The two-storey building will be jointly managed by the Branch Office headed by Branch Manager Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay and the La Union Agricultural-Growers Multi-Purpose Cooperative (LUAGMPC). LUAGMPC is comprised of 493 tobacco farmers and 37 NTA La Union staff.

The training center occupies a floor area of 91 square meters. The first floor will serve as practicum area and possible storage for farm input deliveries and

farm implements while the second floor will serve as farmers' office and function room for trainings, conferences, and seminars.

“We are looking forward to the completion of the said project with the hope of fully utilizing it for the benefit and advantage of the tobacco farmers' sector,” Dr. Palabay said.

The proposal for the farmers' center was first submitted to La Union Governor Francisco Emmanuel “Pacoy” R. Ortega, who then endorsed the proposal to the Provincial Board as one of its priority projects for funding from the excise tax shares of the province under Republic Act 7171.



The Provincial Government tasked the La Union Branch to make the concept and design which was used in the bidding.

The opening of the new building is expected to be held in February 2017. 🌱

NTA CAGAYAN

QUICK GLANCE: BRANCH PROFILE

- Number of Tobacco Farmers/Hectareage: **1,124 FC / 708.97 has**
- Number of Tobacco-growing Municipalities: **15**
- Number of Staff: **14 Regular; 4 Job Orders**

LGUs aid tobacco growers with proceeds from RA 8240

by Gilbert A. Taguiam

THE different Local Government Units (LGUs) in the province have allotted the biggest portion of their total shares from the collection of excise taxes on locally manufactured cigarettes, pursuant to Republic Act (RA) 8240, as amended by RA 10351, for the benefit of their tobacco farmers.

Among the projects implemented amounting to P87,236,610 were programs that will provide inputs, training and other support to tobacco farmers; programs that will provide financial support for tobacco farmers; livelihood programs and projects; infrastructure projects, such as farm-to-market roads; and agro-industrial projects. The proposals of said projects were approved by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), as per implementing guidelines of the New Sin Tax Law (RA 10351).

Before the release of funds for projects, the Local Chief Executives, along with the City/Municipal Agricultural Officer or Municipal Planning Officer, and NTA Cagayan, conducted their own consultative meetings with the tobacco farmers.

The total amount of proceeds from the RA 8240 was presented by the local officials to the tobacco farmers so they can plan and recommend the projects that can help them with their farming activities and other projects, that will redound to the development of the tobacco-producing communities.

Among the 15 tobacco-producing municipalities in the province, 11 shared the proceeds of the excise tax based on projects and budget approved by the DBM. The Mayors, who provided assistance to the tobacco farmers are Criselda Antonio of Alcala; Dr. Leonardo Pattung of Baggao; Matthew Nolasco of Gattaran; Atty. Carmelo Villacete of Piat; Atty. Joel Ruma of Rizal; Andrew Vincent R. Pagurayan of Sto. Niño; Atty. Jefferson P. Soriano of Tuguegarao City; Atty. Nicanor C. De Leon of Amulung; Meynard Carag of Solana; Atty. Francisco N. Mamba Jr. of Tuao; and Marilyn Taguinod of Peñablanca.

The Chief Executives helped their tobacco farmers in different strategies. The LGUs of Tuguegarao City, Alcala, Amulung, Piat, Tuao, Baggao, Solana, and Gattaran supported the needs of their tobacco farmers based on their consultation meetings. They provided financial assistance for farm labor, Livelihood Assistance Program, infrastructure projects such as farm-to-market roads, construction of box culverts, construction of

Pls turn to page 7



Registered tobacco farmers in Tuguegarao City receive from City Mayor Jefferson P. Soriano the replica of the check for livelihood projects thru funds from RA 8240.
Alicia A. Malab

Manager's Corner

Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda
Manager, Cagayan Branch Office



Service with a heart

TO be with the NTA family is a life-long commitment, and I sincerely dedicate my services to the tobacco industry, regardless of any challenges that arise.

NTA Cagayan is the smallest provincial branch office in terms of area and tobacco farmers covered, but we are not excused from pressures and issues that beset the industry, and these are challenges that the branch offices, big or small, have to deal with.

There has been a decreasing trend in the number of tobacco farmers and area planted to tobacco, brought about by low demand of cigar filler tobacco abroad that caused the buyer firms to declare a "crop holiday" of cigar filler for two to three years starting 2014.

Some farmers have been complaining about the alleged downgrading of tobacco by the contracting buyer firm, which resulted in their low net income. Weather disturbances have also been a factor, such as the frequent rains that flooded the tobacco and corn plants of the farmers. Then last October, Super Typhoon Lawin devastated rice crops, curing sheds, and most of their houses.

These issues and concerns post a consistent challenge to my leadership, but I must keep on going, for the realization of a more vibrant tobacco industry in the province.

We are not new to challenges. In the rationalization of the agency in 2007, there was a downsizing of manpower in our branch office from 32 to 16 permanent staff. It was in this year that I was appointed Officer-in-Charge of this Branch Office by the late Administrator Atty. Carlitos S. Encarnacion. I took up the challenge, evoking much needed confidence in the Lord that He will guide me and my staff on how we can serve our clients. During the transition, Dr. Cristina C. Lopez, Manager of the Administrative Department, emphasized the need of support, cooperation, and unity among us and, with the downsizing, to take "multi-tasking" functions. We have decided to stay, so we have to work as a team.

Recognizing the contributions of the tobacco farmers in the industry and with our vision to help improve their quality of life, we committed ourselves to work as a team with a willing hand and a serving heart for our clients. We have to encourage them so they can be strong enough to move on amidst challenges so that they, too, will reap the good fruits of their labor. Our Extension Workers give their full support to our tobacco farmers, providing them the technical assistance they need in tobacco production and in the implementation of the different projects of the agency.

Through the guidance of the NTA Management and the moving hands of God, we continue our commitment to serve our stakeholders, especially the tobacco farmers, in accordance with the mandates of the Agency.

The exemplary leadership of our past and present administrators made the Cagayan Branch even stronger. I would like to thank the NTA Management thru the leadership of our very supportive Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza for attending immediately to our concerns and requests.

I am very thankful for my staff, my intimate companions, my team, and my family. I am inspired by their quality of commitment, cooperation, and dedication in leading this Branch Office. We may be small in number, but we are very able to fulfill our tasks. That, for me, makes the Cagayan Branch the strongest in its own right. They continue to SERVE WITH A HEART. My staff are all willing to take assignments in distant and remote places, despite a minimal reimbursable Travelling expenses. They render overtime work for the sake of the farmers and to comply with the reports to be submitted on time. Their smiles, positive attitudes and the innate Cagayano hospitality, amidst pressures and exhaustion from work, make NTA Cagayan worthy of praise.

Before the start of the tobacco season, we have to work harmoniously with the Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. (ULPI), the

Pls turn to page 8

NTA Cagayan: Breakthroughs & Highlights

by Gilbert A. Taguam

THE National Tobacco Administration (NTA) Cagayan Branch is located in Brgy. San Gabriel in Tuguegarao City, capital city of Cagayan. It had 46 employees including casuals before the 1999 reorganization. After the reorganization, the manpower was trimmed down to 27 then eventually decreased to 16 plantilla positions after the 2007 rationalization.

NTA Cagayan was formerly headed by the following branch managers, in chronological order, namely: Florencio T. Telan, from Pamplona, Cagayan, 1989-1993; John P. Burkley from Gamu, Isabela, 1993-1999; and Herman C. Torres from Aurora, Quezon, 1999-2007.

At present, the Branch is being managed by Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda, who hails from San Vicente, Gattaran, Cagayan. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture, a Master's Degree in Crop Production cognate in Extension Education, and a Doctoral Degree in Rural Development, cognate in Public Administration. She rose from the ranks, from Research Assistant then Research Specialist of the Research and Training Unit in the Branch Office, then Supervising Agriculturist in the Operations Division. After an excellent performance in her job, she was promoted to Operations Chief. With the transfer of then Cagayan Manager Herman Torres to Isabela Branch after the rationalization in 2007, Riazonda was designated as Officer-in-Charge of Cagayan Branch. She was appointed Department Manager III in 2010.

At present, NTA Cagayan has 14 warm bodies out of the 16 approved plantilla positions and four Job Orders.

The Branch Office covers Cagayan, with a total of 15 municipalities and 110 tobacco-producing barangays, and the province of Kalinga. The Branch Office, despite its small manpower, relies on strong leadership and dedicated staff to deliver exemplary performance and quality service to its clientele. It has been recognized by linkages in the government and partners from the private sectors.

Three types of tobacco are grown in the province: Burley which covers the biggest area, followed by cigar filler, and Batek tobacco with the least area.

Registration of Tobacco Farmers

From seven municipalities in 1994, tobacco-growing areas increased to 15 municipalities in 2016, namely, Alcala, Baggao, Gattaran, and Gonzaga of District I; Lasam, Piat, Rizal and Sto. Niño of District II; Amulung, Enrile, Iguig, Peñablanca, Solana, Tuao, and Tuguegarao of District III, all in Cagayan; and Pinukpuk and Tabuk in Kalinga.

For two crop years (CY), 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS), under the buyer firms Isabela Leaf Tobacco Corporation (ILTC) and the Campaña De Filipinas (CDF), registered a total of 3,288 farmer-cooperators with a total aggregate area of 1,819 hectares. With the Tobacco Crop Holiday in the next cropping season

(2015-2016), the number of farmers dropped to only 1,124 with a reduced area of 708.97 ha.

The crop holiday imposed by both trading centers affected the tobacco growers because they had been dependent on these trading centers for financial assistance not only during production but also for other needs such as tuition fees for their children.

To date, only the buyer firm Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. (ULPI) is involved in the contract growing for both cigar filler and Burley tobacco. The Branch Office is recruiting more farmers to meet the purchase commitment of the buyer firm and to sustain the viability of the tobacco industry.

Seed Production and Distribution

NTA Cagayan in previous years produced different seed varieties of the cigar filler type. For CY 2013-2014, some 231 kg of treated seeds of Vizcaya and Tabije varieties are currently stored in the seed laboratory of the Farm Technology and Services Department in Batac City, ready for distribution to tobacco farmers in Cagayan for the next cropping seasons. For CY 2016-2017, the branch utilized 12 kg of cigar filler seeds as backup for the farmers and the seedling growers of ULPI.

Tobacco Contract Growing System

There was a significant increase in yield from 1,800 kg/ha to 2,265 kg/ha for cigar filler and 2,000 kg/ha to 2,386.12 kg/ha for Burley during CY 2015-2016. This can be attributed to the use of recommended technology by the tobacco farmers, accompanied by good weather condition.

The field representatives (middlemen or "cowboys") were gradually phased out with the adoption of total tobacco contract growing to ensure the production of quality leaves. The middlemen were replaced by the farmer leaders.

There was a notable decrease of the farmers' Return on Investment (ROI) for the past two cropping seasons. ROI for cigar filler in CY 2014-2015 was 103.56%, which dropped to 50% in CY 2015-2016. For Burley, it was 39.31% in CY 2014-2015, and likewise dropped to 33.91% in CY 2015-2016.

A high collection efficiency of the production assistance during the same period, however, was attained, which was 98.97% and 91.8% in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, respectively. The high collection efficiency is attributed to the diligence of the extension workers of the Branch Office and ULPI in giving technical assistance to the farmers and timely delivery of said financial assistance during

crucial farm activities.

Tobacco Grower of the Year (TGY) Contest

For CY 2014-2015, two tobacco growers of Cagayan won the TGY contest, National Level: Reggie Bangibang of Cattaran, Solana, Cagayan, for Cigar Filler; and Ignacio Llanto of Cumao, Gattaran for Burley category.

Last CY 2015-2016, Loida Tambauan of Libag Sur, Tuguegarao City, and Ernesto Francisco of Alabiao, Tuao, emerged as provincial winners, for Cigar Filler and Burley category, respectively, and are qualified for TGY National Level.

Farmers Organizational Development

Tobacco farmers in Cagayan pooled their resources and organized their own cooperative or association.

In coordination with the Cooperative Development Authority, Security and Exchange Commission (SEC), and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) as the registering agencies and in collaboration with some of the LGUs, 12 cooperatives and 13 associations were organized and given accreditations by the NTA.

Twelve of the 13 farmers' associations were registered with DOLE, while Piat Tobacco Farmers Association was registered with the SEC.

NTA has been conducting a series of meetings to strengthen these cooperatives and associations.

Tobacco Marketing

Trading operations in Cagayan usually start on the first week of May, as per Trading Rules and Regulations. Early opening of trading (last week of April) may be allowed upon request by the traders.

The loading of the farmers' produce and delivery to the contracting buyer firm is free of charge.

The Operations staff of NTA Cagayan Branch is taking the initiative, with approval and guidance by the Branch Manager, in threshing out issues that may arise during trading activities, such as grading and related problems like pole-vaulting and inclusion of a farmer's produce with other farmer's produce to evade paying of loans.

IFOIGAP Rice

The IFOIGAP Rice Production Program started in Cagayan in 2014. Last CY 2015-2016, the Branch Office had 82 farmer-cooperators (FCs) with a total area of 50 hectares in different tobacco-producing municipalities for Wet Season; and 86



Visitation of a tobacco farm in Cattaran, Solana, Cagayan

Roberto F. Pedro

FCs with 31 hectares for the Dry Season. The collection efficiency was 100% during the first year of implementation of the program. This was reduced, however, to only 87.47% for Wet Season 2016 because of the Super Typhoon Lawin that damaged almost all the rice crops of our farmers.

To date, the office granted more than P1.62-M rice production assistance for dry seeded rice.

Irrigation Support Program

Since the start of the Burley production in the province in 1992, the farmers had been relying on their own irrigation system and on the support of their contracting buyer firms. Most of the farmers had to buy or rent gasoline-fed water pumps just to attain their yield targets.

With the Irrigation Support Project (ISP) of NTA, which was launched in CY 2012-2013, the farmers are provided with financial assistance at a very minimal interest rate to purchase diesel-fed water pumps and accessories, which means less expenses on fuel.

To date, 341 units of engine pumps and accessories have been distributed to selected tobacco farmers in the province, amounting to P9.8 million, covering 292.68 hectares as service area for the production of tobacco and other crops.

Renewable Fuelwood Energy Farm Project

A total of 76,131 propagules were produced for the last three years for bamboo production under the Renewable Fuelwood Energy Farm Development Project and Restoration of Ecological Integrity project of the agency. These propagules/seedlings were distributed to 250 famer-cooperators from different

tobacco-producing municipalities.

For the Synchronized Tree Planting (STP), a total of 300,586 seedlings of forest trees, fruit trees and ornamental plants of different species were produced in the Branch-managed nursery, a collaborative effort of the Branch Office, NTA scholars and their parents, and NSTP students. The seedlings were distributed to 1,284 recipients for the STP in Cagayan.

Since the launching of STP in 2013, a total of 198,696 seedlings had been planted to different planting sites in Cagayan, involving 1,326 volunteers from various sectors in 2016.

The bamboo propagation and tree seedlings production were intended for the tobacco farmers, but the project was also extended to non-tobacco farmers who are from the tobacco-producing municipalities, because most of the farmers are tenants and have minimal area to plant.

AgriPinoy Projects

Although there is a difficulty of selling the products to the consumers because of strong competition in the market, the Branch Office has done its part to meet its sales target. The Branch Office has a total sales of P699,830 from July to December 2015, and P1,086,958 from January to December 2016. The huge total sales for the last two semesters is credited to the joint effort of the Branch Office staff, but special mention is given to Emmaculata G. Paggao, Branch Cashier designated as Marketing Aide, for her exemplary effort in promoting the product to our clientele.

“Oras ni Mannalón ti Tabako” (OMT) Radio Program

The radio program was launched in 1993 in the branch office, and aired at the

defunct DZTG. The program, however, was terminated in 1998 due to lack of funds. OMT for Cagayan found a new home at DWPE “Radio ng Bayan” but still it did not go far because of financial constraints.

This CY 2016-2017, through the initiative of Branch Manager Riazonda, OMT returned to regular broadcast, with free air time, thanks to the accommodation of Department of Agriculture (DA) Region 2 headed by Dir. Lucrecio Alviar, at the DWDA “Radio Kaunlaran” of DA in Tuguegarao City. The program is aired every Tuesday from 4:00 to 5:00 PM anchored by Branch Chief Agriculturist Gilbert A. Taguam and Manager Riazonda.

Regulatory Service

1. Conduct of Mediation and Arbitration (Branch Initiative Project)

The conduct of Mediation and Arbitration by the Branch Office is a big help in settling issues on matters related to production and trading. Some of the issues settled by NTA Cagayan are as follows: pole-vaulting or double listing of farmers, overstated Statements of Accounts, downgrading, spurious names, unauthorized buying by some farmer leaders, delivery of unfermented tobacco leaves, and schedules of hauling. Fortunately, the respondents or complainants have been very cooperative and they respect the decisions or solutions offered by the mediators (Branch Manager or the Chief Agriculturist).

2. Conduct of Post-Trading Evaluation

This activity was first conducted in 2014 where the Branch Office visited almost all tobacco-producing municipalities to discuss the farmers’ issues and concerns and agree on solutions to the grievances aired. Both the traders and the farmers appreciated the initiative of the office in maintaining good relationship among stakeholders, which are necessary in sustaining the viability of the tobacco industry.

The Branch Office continues conducting the Post-Evaluation meeting with the tobacco growers, giving them the opportunity to air their concerns for possible and immediate settlement. Immediately attending to their problems helps clear whatever doubts they have of planting again. 🌱

LGUs aid tobacco growers... from page 5

curing sheds (provisions of GI sheets for roofing materials in Piat), training course, livelihood projects (provision of Hybrid corn seeds in Tuguegarao City), provision of fertilizers and provision of irrigation facilities. The LGU of Alcalá, thru its Municipal and Agricultural Officer and Municipal Development and Planning Officer, provided projects in consultation with the cooperative officials

and tobacco farmers. The LGUs of Rizal and Peñablanca utilized their funds for the construction of farm-to-market roads, while the LGU of Sto. Niño used the fund for Livestock Dispersal Project.

The tobacco farmers during the consultations expressed their gratitude to their local leaders for their support to the industry, which is the major source of their livelihood. The gesture of support and generosity of the Mayors has been

appreciated by the NTA Management headed by Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza. In return, the mayors during the awarding in separate occasions of the financial support and other livelihood projects to the farmer beneficiaries, recognized the effort of NTA Cagayan, headed by Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda, in coordinating with the LGUS, for the accomplishment of their various projects and programs. 🌱

My Life as an Extension Worker

by Josefa P. Correo

I am assigned in one of the remotest areas in Peñablanca, Cagayan to bring the government support closer to the people. I am not just an extension worker, as Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer (TPRO) I of NTA Cagayan, but also a teacher, a rice and corn technician, and a generalist as a whole.

We are a small group in the Operations, and I was designated as supervisor for Area III covering the tobacco-producing municipalities of Amulung, Solana, Peñablanca, and Tuguegarao City. I was also designated as Branch Coordinator for the annual Tobacco Grower of the Year contest.

At first, I thought I could not do the tasks, but I took the challenge. I had to step my best foot forward and put my full trust in the Lord and draw my strength from Him.

The life of an extension worker requires patience and sacrifice to achieve the vision and mission of the agency, which is to uplift the quality of life of the tobacco farmers and those who depend on the tobacco industry for their livelihood.

I have to wake up very early just to catch up a ride from my residence in Alibago, Enrile to reach my work assignments. Sometimes I have to hike for a kilometer or two just to reach the farms of our tobacco growers. I have to cross rivers and climb mountains to monitor the different projects in the area. And when necessary I have to shell part of my salary to augment my travelling allowance. It's not an easy job, especially during the rainy season.

I have to work even on weekends and holidays, when my farmers have urgent concerns that need my immediate



The author (right) at work, during a monitoring and evaluation of a tobacco farm in Cattaran, Solana

attention. Sometimes, when my farmers need cash for an emergency, I have to lend them some amount. My heart always cries for the poor farmers. But that's all I can do and I have to make both ends meet for my family, too.

During the trading season, I have to accompany my farmers to the trading center from dawn, and when necessary, to be with them until midnight. I am always ready to assist farmers from other municipalities outside my area, if they have problems on leaf grading and classification in the trading center.

These challenges and sacrifices never hinder me in performing my duties. The Lord can see how hard I have been working.

I have spent 20 of my 35 years in government service with NTA, and my current job has been my family's bread

and butter. I was able to provide for the education of my four children, three are college graduates and now have stable jobs.

I found a true family in NTA Cagayan. With the constant encouragement, support and love of our Branch Manager Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda and her equally competent Chief Agriculturist, Mr. Gilbert Taguiam, I was given the chance to prove my worth as a government worker, and able to surmount every trial, difficulty, or hardship that I encounter in my daily tasks.

Life can be hard. But if we put all our faith, hope, and trust in the Lord, things will be easy.

Let us do our part in the best way we can, and let the Lord bless us. I dedicate these words to my fellow extension workers to ponder on and live by. 🙏

BRANCH OFFICE STAFF



Front Row (L-R): Emmaculata G. Paggao (Cashier II), Bernadeth C. Tamayao (Accountant II), Zenaida T. Arrojo (Administrative Officer III), Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda (Department Manager III), Gilbert A. Taguiam (Chief Agriculturist), Alicia A. Malab (Senior TPRO);

Second Row (L-R): Roberto Pervera (JO Utility), Edna C. Zingapan (TPRO I), Moises D. Duran (TPRO I), Josefa P. Correo (TPRO I), Maricar R. De Leon (JO Computer Operator);

Back Row (L-R): Virginous S. Catalon (JO TPRO), Mariano C. Dela Cruz (Driver I), Roberto F. Pedro (Agriculturist I), Elmerante A. Ginez (Agriculturist I), Mary Ann A. Gumabay (TPRO I), Edna R. Simeon (TPRO I), and Lovely L. Guiyab (JO Secretary).

Manager's Corner ... from page 5

lone contracting buyer firm in Region 2, to conduct orientation seminars on the policies and guidelines concerning tobacco production and also to discuss the thrusts and programs of NTA. The attendance of both the government (NTA) and the private sector (ULPI) during the orientation seminars, boosts the morale of the tobacco farmers, knowing that the government and the private sector are one in supporting them from the very beginning of tobacco production until the trading operations. They feel secured with our agency that protects their rights as contract growers and provides assistance in acquiring their irrigation and curing facilities. So I take this opportunity to commend the representatives from ULPI for being so supportive in the endeavor. We are not working only as partners, but as a family.

I would like also to commend our Chief Executives of the local government units, especially the tobacco-producing municipalities in Cagayan for sharing the proceeds of their excise tax shares from tobacco to their tobacco growers through financial assistance and other projects that are within the implementing guidelines of projects under Republic Act 8240.

Above all, and through the years, I thank the ever-powerful God for His guidance in sustaining us amidst the ups and downs in serving for the welfare of our tobacco farmers in Cagayan. The challenges in the industry are designed not to break us but to bend us towards God, and to remain committed for the industry.

To God be the Glory! 🙏

Rhonelle and his work ethic

by Divina D. Pagdilao

INDUSTRY, determination, and patience kept Rhonelle P. Sulicipan in the NTA Ilocos Norte Branch as Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer (TPRO) I for almost eight years even without a permanent status, until he got the reward he truly deserved: a permanent or regular appointment last March 11, 2016.

Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz describes Rhonelle as hard working. He shows dedication in his tasks and willingness to work overtime as required by his job.

His outstanding work performance was recognized by the agency when he was awarded as one of the Most Outstanding Extension Workers for assisting the national awardees of the Tobacco Grower of the Year (TGY) Contest in December 2016. His farmer, Antonio Salmasan of Camanga, Badoc, Ilocos Norte, was awarded TGY National Winner for Virginia Improved Category.

He also assisted another farmer, Crisostomo Bautista of Madupayas, Badoc, who was awarded as Best Farmer of the TCGS (Improved Flavor category) under TransManila, Inc. (TMI).

Rhonelle was hired as a Job Order TPRO in November 17, 2008. Before his appointment, he worked with a Job Order status in the agency for two years: first as a Research Assistant at the Agricultural Research Department, Tobacco Improvement and Production Research Division (NTA Batac) from 1995 to 2003, and at the Farm Technology and Services Department from 2005 to 2008.

He was not discouraged with the nonpermanent status, despite his Civil Service eligibility. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Biology Degree from Mariano Marcos State University in 1995 and had 37 units of Masters in Education Major in Biology.

As an extension worker, he has been assigned in two remote barangays, Madupayas and Camanga, and four nearer areas of barangays Labut, Turod, Lubigan and Ar-arusip, Badoc, Ilocos

Norte. He drives his motorcycle, from his place in Barangay #13 Baay in Batac City for almost an hour to reach his nearest farmer-cooperator and less than an hour more to reach the farthest.

To arrive early in his area of assignment, he leaves home, as early as he could, mostly early dawn, to reach his farmers in time with the morning coffee or before they embark for field activities.

This had been his attitude at work, while on a Job Order status, and he has no reason to change, more so that he has been given the permanent status.

His farmer-cooperators under Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS) are contracted to two different buyer firms: Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. with a buying station in Cabugao, Ilocos Sur and TMI in San Juan, Ilocos Sur.

During recruitment, or before the tobacco season, Rhonelle assists his farmers in the filling up of loan documents. He offers his technical assistance from seedbedding to post-harvest activities, becoming more active



A selfie after a tiring day of extension work



Rhonelle (left, with NTA Ilocos Norte Manager Mario E. Corpuz) as Outstanding Extension Worker for CY 2013-2015

during the trading season. He starts at dawn and returns home late in the night. During the peak trading season, he sleeps at the buying station with his farmers.

Rhonelle also assists farmers under IFOIGAP-Rice Program, Kahuyang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan, Farmers Organizational Development, TGY contest, among other programs of the agency.

As a friend, Rhonelle is a nice guy, who willingly shares his ideas and knowledge. He is ready to help and willing even to shell out his personal resources just to help his friends in need.

His peers in the branch office get along with him. They even give him advice, sometimes, in jest, such as when the female staff tease him to get a permanent inspiration in life (why not, he has earned an ideal employment position and work environment) as he is unmarried at 45.

But Rhonelle, always the nice guy, would just reply with a smile, perhaps a family of his own, has been his ultimate goal after all.

Surely he can make it possible, what with his trademark industry, patience and determination. But he is just hoping for a perfect time destined for him to settle down. 🙏

Resilience and hardwork spell positive gains,...from page 4

Grower of the Year Provincial Award for Virginia Neutral category during crop year 2012-2013. He was also a recipient of farmers' incentive award for obtaining a high yield and percentage of grades of his produce, and for his diligence in the application of recommended technology and farming practices.

Other than tobacco production under the NTA Tobacco Contract Growing System, Bayle also earns income from other programs of NTA

such as the Kahuyang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan, Synchronized Tree Planting program (as a seedlings grower), and the Wet Season Rice Production Program.

Bayle considers his TGY contest year as the best crop year for him. In the succeeding cropping seasons, however, he saw a decline in his income, which he attributed to the low quality of leaves brought about by the drought for the past two or three years. But it's still a gainful

enterprise for my family, he countered. Last cropping season, Bayle earned a net income of P35,000 per hectare.

Before the year end, Bayle has completed transplanting seedlings for his one-hectare farm lot, hoping that he could continue producing quality leaves.

While, during the pre-production, it was a matter of the farmers anticipating the weather, this time, while the tobacco is being cultivated in the field, it is a matter of their diligence and good agricultural practices. 🙏

NTA holds strategic planning workshop for the Medium-Term 2017-22

THE National Tobacco Administration conducted a Strategic Planning Workshop for its managers and senior officers from the branch offices, department managers, project officers and other focal persons for planning to discuss and agree on the NTA Strategic Plan for 2017 to 2022 and the Operation Plan for 2016-2017.

The two-day meeting, facilitated by Corporate Planning (CorPlan) Department Manager Rex Antonio P. Teoxon and staff, was held at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City last December 15 and 16.

This is also in preparation for the Road Map/Master Plan for the Philippine Tobacco Industry and the Medium-Term Public Investment Program. According to Teoxon, this should be aligned with the directive of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte in his State of the Nation Address that government development and security efforts should be streamlined and reengineered to ensure that government resources are spent wisely and the outcomes are felt on the ground.

The medium-term goal of the Duterte Administration is expressed in the slogan: “Malasakit at pagbabago tungo sa kaunlaran at katiwasayan.”

Also discussed were the major objectives and key strategies set by the Department of Agriculture under Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol for the medium-term goal. One of the objectives is to increase income of farmers and fisherfolk, and among the key strategies are development of a National Color-Coded Agriculture and Fisheries Map; an easy access financing program for farmers, fishermen and agriculture and fisheries stakeholders; and a strategic and effective post-harvest, storage and processing facility.

After the overview, the branch managers, project officers, and department heads presented situationers, accomplishments, and plans which were consolidated by the CorPlan Department



Top: CorPlan Manager Rex Antonio P. Teoxon (seated, 2nd from left) and the participants of the strategic planning workshop. *Left:* Dr. Cristina C. Lopez presents accomplishments and strategic plans for the Administrative Department.

and Priscilla S. Esguerra (Information Technology Officer III), both of the CorPlan Department, acted as emcees and facilitators and moderators during the two-day event.

4th course on competency-based HR system completed

Meanwhile, officers and staff of the National Tobacco Administration wrapped up its four-course training on the development of Competency-Based Human Resource System with the conduct of the fourth and final course, Integration in the Recruitment and Promotion System, last December 8 and 9 at the NTA Central Office.

The course provides a process of identifying the required level of competencies of people in the organization and assessing how these competencies will meet future demands and challenges in the organization.

The course, conducted by CSC HR and Organizational Development Consultant Jocelyn C Linsao-Ng and Jennifer R. Pajaro, resource speaker and facilitator, respectively, from the CSC, was attended by top and middle level managers of the central office and provincial branches. *(Neyo E. Valdez)*

for the Corporate Strategic Plan 2017-2022 and Corporate Plan and Budget 2017.

The agency also reiterated its major interventions for achieving the targets for the medium-term, namely, (1) Market-Driven Quality Tobacco Production (for import substitution and increasing exports), which includes area mapping/zonification; continuing technology enhancement and Good Agricultural Practices, Tobacco Contract Growing System, irrigation support and facility assistance, and Quality Assurance Support; (2) Integrated Farming and other Income Generating Activities Project, which includes rice and corn production, food processing center and milling complex, and livelihood training assistance and services; and (3) Regulatory Services (on production, trading, exportation and importation).

Fortuna C. Benosa (Division Chief III)

OMT Radio Program back to 6 broadcast stations

THE “Oras ni Mannelon ti Tabako” Radio Program goes back to six stations for 2016-17 tobacco cropping season, with three radio stations back in hosting timeslots for NTA.

OMT programs started its weekly broadcast in three radio stations: DZVV Vigan (Saturday, December 24), DZTP Candon (Monday, December 26), DZPA Bangued (Sunday, December 25). Each OMT program is aired for 30 minutes. OMT anchors are Nora A. Corre (DZPA), Adonis D. Lazo and Marcelia P. Pulgar

(DZTP), Jose A. Taclas Jr. and Noralyn I. Idica (DZVV).

The three returning OMT programs, with twice-a-month schedule of 30 minutes, will start broadcasts in DZSO San Fernando City (Saturday, January 7) DZVR Laoag City (Saturday, January 7), and DZRD Dagupan (Friday, January 13). Back as OMT anchors are Jesusa D. Calano (DZVR), Elizabeth Q. Biala (DZRD), and Aurie Nellie A. Tumbaga (DZSO).

Since its relaunching during crop

year 2011-2012, OMT has been aired weekly (November to March) in DZVV, DZTP, and DZPA. OMT programs for Ilocos Norte, La Union and Pangasinan had their first broadcast during crop year 2014-2015, but did not air on the succeeding year.

Before the broadcasts, NTA Candon Branch Office hosted the meeting last December 22 of the OMT anchors from the different branch offices for the evaluation and planning of the agency’s radio program.

Also present were Felisa R. Aurellano



Admin officers, HRMOs attend 6th Luzon HRMP convention

A BIG gathering for Human Resource Management practitioners was held on November 28-30 at the prestigious Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City.

Tagged as the 6th Luzon Convention of Human Resource Management Practitioners (HRMPs), the event was attended by administrative officers, human resource management officers (HRMOs) and HRMO-designates of local government units, national agencies and government-owned and -controlled corporations in the National Capital Region (NCR), Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and the Cordillera Autonomous Region.

Perla C. Manzon, Human Resource Management Officer V, headed the delegation of Administrative Officers (having the plantilla position Administrative Officer III) from NTA, namely, Elaine A. Tinio, Ilocos Norte; Loreto S. Reyes, Candon; Joselyn G. Miguel, Pangasinan; Rogelio T. Tarun, Isabela; and Zenaida T. Arrojo, Cagayan. Also in the delegation were designated administrative officers of their respective branch offices: Felicisimo T. Lazo (Cashier II) for Abra, Aurie Nellie U. Tumbaga (TPRO III) for La Union, and Noralyn I. Idica (TPRO III) for NTA AgriPinoy Projects.

The Luzon-wide convention, attended by 2,723 delegates, was hosted by Civil Service Commission NCR and had the theme "Organizational Change and Transformation: How HRMPs Can Lead the Change." It was a gathering of forward-looking HRMPs and expert HR practitioners and thinkers in Luzon to promote a well-versed undertaking of their roles in managing and sustaining change and to further enhance their role in public service.

Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales, Senator Sherwin T. Gatchalian, Civil Service Institute Executive Director Arthur Luis P. Florentin, Psychologist/Educator Margarita Holmes, and Broadcast Journalist/News Anchor Kara David were the resource speakers for the topic: "The Challenge of Good

of the Farm Technology and Services Department and Neyo E. Valdez, OMT Project Coordinator from the Central Office.

The OMT radio program has been helping the agency in upgrading the knowledge and competencies of tobacco farmers on quality production. It also serves as a venue to clarify issues, particularly on the tobacco price and grading system during the trading season.

The OMT program is under the direct supervision of the branch manager of the covered area. (Neyo E. Valdez) 🌟



NTA delegates (rom left): Rogelio T. Tarun, Felicisimo T. Lazo, Perla C. Manzon, Elaine A. Tinio, Zenaida T. Arrojo, Joselyn G. Miguel, Noralyn I. Idica, Aurie Nellie U. Tumbaga, and Loreto S. Reyes. F.T. Lazo

Governance and Accountability in the Public Sector."

Also held were plenary discussions on various HR topics such as "The Role of HR in Corporate Social Responsibility," "Embracing Change: Personal and Organizational Experience," "Transformational Change: Best Practice," "Building HR Credibility and Influence Big Results," and "Linking Innovations and Operations."

Rep. Vilma Santos-Recto (6th District, Batangas), Chair of the House Committee on Civil Service

and Professional Regulation, gave the keynote address during the closing rite.

Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, the Halili-Cruz Dance Company, and the El Gamma Penumbra were among the performers that provided entertainment during the three-day convention.

Manzon said that the convention gave a fruitful experience for the administrative officers and HRMOs. "We were able to gain insights on how to be attentive to our roles in human resource management and be effective public servants," she added. (Elaine A. Tinio) 🌟

NTA scholar is No. 10 in LET

HEIDIBEL C. Balais, Bachelor in Elementary Education graduate of Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU), copped 10th place in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) for secondary teachers given in various testing centers on September 2016.

Balais, recipient of the Tobacco Farmer's Dependents Scholarship Program of NTA, joined four other Education graduates from MMSU who copped Top 10 places: Clarissa Pascual (No. 7), Shiena Mae T. Acierda (No. 8), Ralph Christian V. Currimao (No. 8), and Darie Mae A. Mateo (No. 10).

Heidibel and her mother Gilda Balais visited the NTA Ilocos Norte Branch Office, after the release of the results in November, to personally thank the agency, through Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz, for the scholarship grants Heidibel enjoyed in full eight semesters of her college education. Her father Medrano is a registered tobacco farmer from Brgy. Bacsil, Dingras.

"We thank God for we were able to meet the school needs of our child and thank you for the educational assistance of NTA that augmented the needs in her schooling," Mrs Balais said in Ilokano.

Heidibel was born on October 18, 1995 in Dingras. She finished elementary in Bacsil Elementary School in 2008, and secondary in Suyo National High School in 2012,

as valedictorian in both levels. She graduated as Cum Laude for her college degree from MMSU in 2016.

Balais is one of the 174 NTA scholars who finished their college degrees at the end of the second semester in SY 2015-2016, six of them including Balais, come from the NTA Ilocos Norte Branch

Meanwhile, 36 recipients of the NTA Scholarship Grants personally received their monthly allowance from Greta Torres, Ilocos Norte Branch cashier, last October 10.

The NTA started offering scholarship grants to deserving college students, who are dependents of tobacco farmers, in school year 2011-2012. The program, as an incentive for local farmers, is in line with the Tobacco Free Education Program embodied in Republic Act No. 9211 or Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003. (Divina D. Pagdilao) 🌟



H. Balais

First Tobacco Farmers Summit in Misamis Oriental

by Mercedes M. Ayco



(Top) Laguindingan Mayor Diosdado T. Obsioma (on mic) is flanked by Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan (left) and Rex Antonio P. Teoxon of the National Tobacco Administration.

(Photos courtesy of Dr. R. R. Bonoan)

THE local government of Laguindingan, Misamis Oriental, the top producer of native tobacco in Mindanao, conducted its first Tobacco Farmers' Summit held at the town's gymnasium on December 21.

NTA representatives Corporate Planning Manager Rex Antonio P. Teoxon and Industrial Research Department Manager Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, local leaders headed by Laguindingan Mayor Diosdado T. Obsioma and Municipal Agriculturist Diosdado G. Ayson, and 200 registered Batek tobacco growers from 11 tobacco-growing barangays gathered on this occasion to discuss on tobacco production, plans and programs for the tobacco growers, and other industry concerns.

Mayor Obsioma talked on the programs and projects that the local government implements for the benefit of the local growers, out of the funds from the excise tax share of the LGU.

Teoxon discussed excise tax shares of LGUs per Republic Acts 7171 (for Virginia) and 8240 (for Burley and native), while Bonoan, also the Technical Coordinator for Branch Offices, gave an update on the tobacco industry. Mercedes M. Ayco, NTA Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer assigned in the province, gave the overview of the Summit.

An open forum followed after the discussions. The farmers were happy and thankful to NTA and Laguindingan LGU for the opportunity given to them. Green T-shirts bearing the logo of NTA and LGU-Laguindingan were given to the participants.

Ayson announced that Part 2 of the summit will be the plant tour at PMFTC Buying and curing facility in Claveria, Misamis Oriental and field tour to the Virginia tobacco farms.

Ayco said that she will coordinate with PMFTC and wait for further announcements. 🌱

Quirino, I. Sur farmers get tractors from RA 7171

THE Local Government of Quirino, Ilocos Sur distributed four tractor units to farmers' association in time for the start of the tobacco planting season.

During the turnover ceremony held at the Municipal Hall last November 25, Mayor Allen Nimo Jr. said the farm machineries provided to farmers for land preparation will boost production of quality tobacco in the town.

With Mayor Nimo during the turnover were Quirino Municipal Agriculture Officer (MAO) Marlyn Bad-ay, and a team from the NTA Candon Branch led by Amelia Veronica L. Lacaden (Agriculturist II) and Charlemagne P.

Navarro (TPRO I) of NTA.

Jose Prudencio Galut, president of the federated farmers associations of Quirino, received the tractors in behalf of 128 tobacco farmers from tobacco-growing barangays, who will benefit from the tractor units.

According to Mayor Nimo, the amount used for the purchase of farm machineries is part of the town's share from the 2013 excise tax collection of the national government for locally manufactured tobacco pursuant to Republic Act (RA) 7171, as amended by RA 10351. (Charlemagne P. Navarro & Michael Christian Laya) 🌱



NTA conducts briefing, planning on its 1st video production venture

THE Video Production Team attended a briefing and planning on its first venture on producing videos for tobacco technology and related activities held at the Candon Branch Office in Candon City last September 27.

The Team is composed of the designated scriptwriters and lead videographer from the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), videographers from the branch offices, the public relations office, and the branch managers as consultants.

Team leader is FTSD officer in charge Imelda N. Riñen and to be assisted by Neyo E. Valdez, PRO III.

The team will be filming starting next month the Tobacco Contract Growing System, the production technology of each type/subtype of tobacco, and related projects and programs of the agency for CY 2016-2017.

Said video production, as a component of the Communication Support Project of the agency, will be an effective tool in education and information dissemination on production of quality tobacco.

The event was also attended by Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, Industrial Research Department Manager and Technical Coordinator for Branch Offices. 🌱