



PHILIPPINE TOBACCO NEWS

ISSN-0116-4183

a bi-monthly publication of the NATIONAL TOBACCO ADMINISTRATION

Volume VIII * No. 6

www.nta.da.gov.ph

November - December 2017

Stakeholders meet on proposed trade rules amendments

NTA has started consulting the tobacco farmers and the private sector on the proposed amendments to the Tobacco Trading Rules and Regulations.

Agency officials, headed by Administrator Robert L. Seares, met on November 9 with representatives from tobacco buying firms and the farming sector in a consultative meeting initiated by the NTA Regulation Department (RD) held at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City.

According to Engr. Alex L. Borje, Chief Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer of RD, among the salient features of the proposed amendments to the trading rules and regulations, are the inclusion of the definition of pole vaulting, performance bond to support purchase commitment and financial guarantee, update on the amounts of license/permit fees, inclusion of the provision to institutionalize the Tobacco Tripartite Consultative Conference, pegging the amount of research and regulation fees, and increase of fines in case of violations on trading rules and regulations.

Also included is the revised provision on application for License and Authority to Buy/Purchase Leaf Tobacco. Issuance of said license and authority will only be limited to those who have existing contract/marketing agreement with NTA-registered tobacco farmers.

Other agency officials in the meeting were Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa; Directors Rodolfo F. Salanga, Nestor C. Casela, Wilfredo C. Martinez, and Teofilo R. Quintal; and Regulation Department OIC Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros.

The farmers were represented by the officers of the National Federation of Tobacco Farmers Associations and Cooperatives, headed by Mario E. Cabasal. Universal Leaf Philippines, Incorporated, Philip Morris Fortune Tobacco Corporation, La Suerte

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More income from tobacco production for local growers, including this hardworking Burley grower of Bacuit, Amulung, Cagayan, is assured with better production assistance package, increased subsidies, and reduced interest rates offered by the agency starting this current crop year.

Photo: Roberto F. Pedro

Tobacco growers receive P280-M production aid

THE National Tobacco Administration has given a total of P280.13 million to tobacco farmers in tobacco-growing provinces this year.

The production assistance package is under the various flagship projects of the agency such as the Integrated Farming and Other Income Generating Activities Project (IFOIGAP), Curing Barn Assistance Project (CBAP), and Renewable Fuelwood Energy Development Project.

Fortuna C. Benosa, officer in charge of the Corporate Planning Department, in her report submitted to the Department of Budget and Management, said that of the total amount, P114.89 million was given as production assistance to the farmers in the form of cash for land preparation, gas and oil, and fuelwood; and in kind in the form of fertilizers, pesticides, and suckerides.

A total of 2,841 hectares of tobacco farmlands are being cultivated by 4,617 tobacco farmers under the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS) this cropping season in tobacco-growing provinces.



According to Benosa, 20% of the cost of fertilizers and pesticides is given as subsidy to the farmers, with possible increase to 40% in CY 2018.

The agency has reduced beginning this year the interest on production assistance from 6% to 2% per annum and the one-time service fee, from 2% to 1% per annum, which is lower than the prevailing interest rates.

“One of the main thrusts of this current administration is to align all its programs and activities toward income augmentation for our farmers,” said Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa. He said that one way to increase their income is to lessen production cost in their farming venture through the provision of production subsidies.

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Tobacco Season CY 2017-2018 is on. Tobacco seedbeds such as those found in Cabulalaan, Sinait, Ilocos Sur are a common scene in the tobacco growing areas in the Ilocos Region at the start of the tobacco cropping season. A decline in the area of land planted to tobacco is expected this year as the NTA imposed the strict implementation of Total Contract Growing System to ensure ready market for the farmers' produce. Amidst the various threats to profitable tobacco production, the incoming season holds promise to the tobacco growers as it marks the adoption of the new set of floor prices in the next tobacco trading and the provision of more subsidies to the farmers to augment their income in their farming venture. Photos were taken during the visitation of the farm of seedling grower Loreto Ancheta of Brgy. Cabulalaan by the NTA Vigan last November 6. The seedlings are ready for transplanting.

Felicidad T. Tagad, NTA Vigan Branch

Tobacco growers receive P280-million... from page 1

“A subsidy gives them the real support that will help them gain more profits, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation and inclusive growth, as they produce world-class quality tobacco,” he added.

Production subsidy and reduced interest rates have been part of the interventions being implemented by the current leadership of Administrator Robert L. Seares to augment the income of the farmers for tobacco production. Other interventions include livelihood training courses for tobacco farming families and other income generating activities such as rice production and hog raising.

Rice production, other projects

The agency distributed rice production assistance amounting to P25.54 million to the farmer-cooperators of its IFOIG-AP Rice Wet Season 2017. Some 2,654 farmers representing an aggregate area of 1,897 hectares availed of said production assistance to plant rice.

Administrator Seares, along with Deputy Administrator Verzosa, visited the branch offices in separate schedules during the last quarter, to meet the farmer-cooperators for the orientation on rice production and distribution of production assistance.

A total of P7.37 million was also given as production assistance to the farmer-cooperators of the AgriPinoy Hog Production Project this year. Hog production is a component of the NTA AgriPinoy Tobacco Farmers Food Processing and Trading Center, which was launched in 2013, as part of income



augmentation program of the agency.

For the implementation of CBAP, a total of 3,934 tobacco growers received curing barn assistance amounting to P95.5 million from NTA. This was released in separate batches from July to December. Of the total number of farmers, 2,441 were extended assistance for construction/repair of flue-curing barns, while the rest are for construction/repair of air-curing sheds.

NTA implemented the CBAP to promote the use of the prescribed efficient curing barns/sheds and help the farmers increase their income through the production of properly cured leaf.

The farmers either received P20,000 each for repair/improvement of flue-curing barn for Virginia (or air-curing shed for Burley/native) or P50,000 each for construction of new barns/sheds.

Out of the P50,000 given for curing barn construction, P10,000 was given as subsidy and the remaining amount to be paid in four years with similar interest as TCGS assistance.

For the Renewable Fuelwood Energy Development Project, production assistance amounting to P28.46 million was given to 1,177 farmer-cooperators under the Kahuyang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan (KPP) component of the project. The farmers were able to plant a total of 3,892,800 tree seedlings in an aggregate area of 1,130 hectares.

For the Synchronized Tree Planting component, a total of 2,033,105 tree

seedlings was planted in July 2017.

Lineup of projects next year

According to Benosa, another lineup of projects to be implemented next year will give more benefits to the farmers. These are the Beef Cattle Dispersal for Tobacco Farmers and the Integrated Demo/Model Farm and Extension Training Laboratory with the installation of Solar-Powered Irrigation System.

For beef cattle dispersal, with an estimated budget of P50 million, a total of 1,109 heads of cattle will be dispersed for the tobacco farmers (*see related story on page 4*).

For the Integrated Demo/Model Farm project, with an estimated budget of P12.5 million, the provincial branch offices will establish the demo/model farms in their respective areas and these will serve as a show window for tobacco farmers with the objective of improving their income.

The agency has also provided continuous education to the tobacco farmers and their dependents through training support and livelihood assistance to increase the farmers' income. This is under the Livelihood Assistance Program, in line with the thrust of the agency through its Farmers Organizational Development Program.

The agency through the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD) has started conducting this year trainings on meat processing, noodle, bread and pastry making, agro-mechanic course, and sari-sari store management in tobacco-growing provinces. A total of 1,060 trainees are expected to complete the courses which will end in June next year. (Neyo E. Valdez)

Stakeholders meeting... from page 1

Cigar and Cigarette Factory, Associated Anglo-American Tobacco Corporation, and Japan Tobacco International represented the buying sector.

Representatives of the buying sector requested for an ample time to review the written draft and said that they will be sending

their comments regarding the proposed amendments to the Regulation Department.

According to Atty. Ambros, the trading rules and regulations, as amended will be endorsed to the NTA Governing Board for approval. He expects the approval before February next year, in time for its orientation to the traders in the different buying stations in tobacco-growing provinces. (Melanie Rapiz-Parel)

Ensuring farmers' income

IN consonance with the “Farmers First” policy of the Administrator, the NTA, amidst the formidable challenges besetting the local tobacco industry, stands firm in looking after the interest of the farmers, its backbone, without whom it cannot be one among the strongest pillars of the Philippine economy.

In connection with the above, the NTA Governing Board has been in constant search for programs and projects that would improve farm productivity and increase profitability/income for the venture. To start with, it has promoted the implementation of the Integrated Farming and Other Income Generating Activities Project - Tobacco Contract Growing System (IFOIGAP-TCGS), where before the onset of Crop Year 2017-2018, it passed Resolution No. 721-2017, dated 8 September 2017, to reduce the interest rates and administrative charges on production assistance extended to the farmer-cooperators, from the present 6% and 2% to only 2% and 1%, respectively.

Three months later, on December 8, 2017, the NTA Governing Board likewise passed Resolution No. 767-2017, to grant subsidy to tobacco farmer-cooperators of the IFOIGAP-TCGS of CY 2017-2018, equivalent to 20% of the production assistance allocated for inputs specifically fertilizer, pesticide/insecticide and suckeride.

To augment their income from the tobacco production venture, the NTA is in constant search of other income-generating activities that include Beef Cattle Production Project, approved through Resolution No. 735-2017, and other livelihood endeavors, like rolling store management (which can also involve the members of their families), incorporated in the agency’s corporate operating budget for the period.

The above activities are in aggressive pursuance of the agency’s mandate to improve the economic and living condition and raise the quality of life of the farmers and in faithful compliance of the balanced policy adopted by the government for tobacco, under Republic Act No. 9211 (Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003) which, in brief, says that while we regulate the tobacco industry to promote the health environment for our population, we also have to ensure that the interest and welfare of the stakeholders are not adversely compromised. 🍏

NTA releases its own FOI manual

NTA is one of the 381 government agencies that have successfully uploaded their Freedom of Information (FOI) Manuals in their respective websites.

The NTA FOI Manual, prepared by the Public Relations Office based on a template provided by the Department of Agriculture, was uploaded in the agency website (<http://nta.da.gov.ph/>) on December 16. Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016) on FOI requires all offices under the executive branch to disclose details of their transactions, covering official records, public records, and documents and papers pertaining to official acts, transactions or decisions, and government research data used as basis for policy formulation.



Compliance of the order is one of the requirements for the grant of performance-based bonus (PBB) of government workers this year. To be considered compliant, government agencies are required to upload their corresponding FOI manuals in their websites through the “transparency seal.”

According to Communications Assistant Secretary Kris Ablan, the inclusion of the FOI criteria for PBB was an initiative of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on the Harmonization of National Government Performance Monitoring, Information and Reporting Systems or Task Force AO 25 (Administrative Order No. 25 s. 2011).

Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa and Neyo E. Valdez, Public Relations Officer III, are the designated FOI Decision-Maker and FOI Receiving Officer, respectively, in the Central Office. Said designation is contained in the Special Order (SO) No. 1017 s. 2017 signed by Administrator Robert L. Seares on November 23, 2017.

The said SO also designated Branch and Project Managers as FOI Decision Makers in their respective branch or project management offices. 🍏

Tobacco Seed Distribution in Pangasinan

Yolanda S. Ignacio and Lorna S. Espanto, both Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer I of NTA Pangasinan, pack tobacco seeds ready for distribution in time for the start of the cropping season in the province. A total of 643 packets of seeds of recommended variety (TN-90) were distributed free to 520 Burley-Neutral farmer-cooperators under the IFOIGAP-TCGS of the



branch office for crop year 2017-2018. The seeds are sourced from the Farm Technology and Services Department in Batac City. Seedlings for Burley-Improved will be provided to the farmer-cooperators by their respective company/ market tie-up.

Elizabeth Q. Biala



is published bi-monthly by the Department of Agriculture National Tobacco Administration Scout Reyes cor. Panay Ave., Quezon City, Tel. Nos. 3743987. Fax: 3732095. Website: www.nta.da.gov.ph.

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Tobacco growers tapped for beef cattle production

by Melanie Rapiz-Parel

TOBACCO farmers in tobacco-growing provinces are set to see their livelihoods improve under the Beef Cattle Production Project of the National Tobacco Administration to be launched next year.

The agency, under its Integrated Farming and Other Income Generating Activities Project (IFOIGAP), has allocated P20 million from the Tobacco Farmers Production Assistance or Investment Outlay for 2017. An additional P30 million will be pipelined from the same fund in the year 2018.

A qualified farmer-cooperator will be given a 20-month-old Upgraded Brahman Heifer, amounting to a maximum of P45,000. Also included in the assistance package are essential services like production technology package; cattle production training/seminar, including grazing land development and organic feed production; artificial insemination; and other technical and animal healthcare support.

Speaking during the distribution of production assistance in Ilocos Sur last September, Administrator Robert L. Seares pointed to the importance of improving the economic and living condition of small tobacco farmers through aggressive, economically viable and sustainable livelihood support.

“This latest project of the agency only shows how serious we are in helping the farmers augment their income aside from tobacco production,” Seares said.

He further urged farmers to take advantage of this opportunity that would help diversify and improve their farming businesses.

“We hope this will stimulate growth in livestock farming in the countryside and that farmers will be encouraged to invest in their production and increase productivity,” said Seares.

Prospective farmer-cooperators must be registered tobacco farmers with the NTA, willing to undergo cattle production training, and have the capability to provide cattle shed housing and equipment, labor, adequate grazing area, supplementary feed, and clean water source.

Per project guidelines, the production assistance shall be repaid with two 12-month-old cows, specifically, the first and third offspring (heifers or bulls), within a maximum period



of six years. The first offspring is the repayment which is to be loaned out immediately to next-in-line or downline farmer-cooperator, and the third offspring for the second repayment, to be sold out as income of the agency to recover investment.

NTA may also have the option to loan out or award all heifers immediately and sell all bulls immediately or loan them out for fattening and sold later to form part of the income/recovery of investment from the project.

The certificate of ownership/documents for the heifer cattle earlier loaned out to the farmer-cooperator shall remain with the NTA, and will only be turned over to them as soon as the above deliveries/repayments have been made.

Beef cattle production has gained prominence as an important business undertaking as the local demand for both the fresh and processed beef is so high that the country has to resort to importation to meet said demand.

“We must groom and equip our farmers to become a vital link in ensuring food security and development of the agriculture sector in the country,” Seares said.

The distribution of the cattle to the qualified farmer-cooperators will be held early next year or once the bidding procedure of the cattle is approved by the agency.

The Beef Cattle Production Assistance Project is implemented in line with the Livestock Development Program of the Department of Agriculture as a production and marketing intervention for the tobacco farmers.

NTA already has an established production and marketing intervention for the tobacco farmers through its AgriPinoy Projects, with its value-adding component, the Tobacco Farmers Food Processing and Trading Center. 🌱

NTA holds store management training for farmers, dependents

NTA through its Farm Technology and Services Department conducted a livelihood training on Sari-Sari/Rolling Store Management for tobacco farmers and their dependents through the agency’s Livelihood Assistance Program.

The two-day training was held in separate schedules in November and December in the provincial offices in Candon City, Isabela, Ilocos Norte and La Union, involving a total of 138 participants.

The participants learned the skills in entrepreneurship from expert trainers from various training providers such as Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and state universities and colleges in the province where the training is held.

Among the topics discussed were Entrepreneurial Mind Setting and Values Formation, Opportunity Seeking and Operations Management, Accounting for Non-Accountants, and Marketing.

FTSD Manager Imelda N. Riñen said that the skills that the participants will gain will help them “cope with the challenges in the business environment and thrive in their own enterprise

through quality management and innovative products or services.”

FTSD started conducting the training course at the Candon Branch in Candon City on November 8 and 9. The 47 trainees are the tobacco farmers and their dependents from the different municipalities in the second district of Ilocos Sur. The resource person was Lorma J. Castro, an accredited TESDA trainer, from Tagudin, Ilocos Sur.

The other training schedules were held at the Isabela Branch Office in Ilagan City on November 15 and 16, with 35 participants; Ilocos Norte Branch Office in Batac City on November 22 and 23, with 30 participants; and La Union Branch Office in Bauang, La Union on December 12 and 27, with 26 participants.

The Sari-Sari/Rolling Store Management is one of the four training courses offered by the FTSD starting this year. The others are Agro-Mechanic Course; Noodle, Bread and Pastry Production; and Food Processing.

A total of 1,060 trainees are expected to complete the courses which started in batches this November and to end in June next year. The selected trainees are tobacco farmers and their dependents who are members of farmers’ organizations or cooperatives in the different tobacco-growing municipalities in Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Abra, La Union, Pangasinan, Cagayan, and Isabela. 🌱

NTA holds TGY awards rites, year-end convocation

NTA held its year-end convocation with guests from the private sector and farmers at the NTA Central Office quadrangle in Quezon City on December 15.

The event's program was highlighted by the awarding of another batch of 16 outstanding tobacco growers including their extension workers, and fellowship night of Central Office employees, with provincial managers and senior staff as guests.

The set of TGY awardees, this time for crop year 2016-2017, are all provincial winners and qualified for the National Contest next year.

The latest awardees for each category are as follows:

Virginia: Leonardo D. Banasan of San Vicente, Lidlidda, Ilocos Sur (Virginia Improved); Bernardo V. Comadre of Camiling, Balaoan, La Union (Virginia Improved); Mario R. Rosario of Bacsil, San Juan, Ilocos Sur (Virginia Improved); Flor T. Bautista of Ar-arusip, Badoc, Ilocos Norte (Virginia Improved); Melody G. Del Pintor of San Juan West, Pilar, Abra (Virginia Neutral); Irene A. Casilla of Narra Oeste, San Fernando City (Virginia Neutral); Bernardo S. Lopez of Pug-os, Cabugao, Ilocos Sur (Virginia Neutral); and Lester P. Pagatpatan of Bungro, Pinili, Ilocos Norte (Virginia Neutral);

Burley: Florentino G. Gallardo of San Miguel, Balungao, Pangasinan (Burley Neutral); Zaldy P. Martinez of Tabtabungao, Rosario, La Union (Burley Neutral); Rodolfo T. Macaraeg of Bauan, Amulung, Cagayan (Burley Improved); Jerome D. Iddurot of Maligaya, Mallig, Isabela (Burley Improved); and Joseph J. Quiton of Mabini, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro (Burley Improved); and

Native: Rico B. Bangibang of Cattaran, Solana, Cagayan (Native Cigar Filler); Angelito D. Lalata of Amaperez, Villasis, Pangasinan (Native Batek); and Pio S. Ramos of Boy-utan, Bauang, La Union (Native Batek).

NTA Administrator Robert L. Seares commended the winners for "inspiring other farmers to be more responsible and hardworking" to produce quality tobacco and increase their income. He assured the tobacco growers of the agency's continuous support in terms of production assistance and subsidy and the implementation of projects and programs that benefit them, their families, and their community.

The private sector, the tobacco traders and manufacturers, supported the administrator's call to help and empower the tobacco farmers so they can improve their lives. "It's about time that Filipino tobacco farmers and farm workers, as our partners in the industry, be given proper attribution for their contributions to the country's economic development," Diogo Boettcher, Leaf Director of PMFTC said. He assured them that the private sector are even more determined to play an active



TGY winner Florentino G. Gallardo of Balungao, Pangasinan receives his plaque and cash prize from NTA Director Nestor C. Casela and Administrator Robert L. Seares.

role in the sustainability agenda, while delivering long-term growth for their business and stakeholders.

Administrator Seares and Boettcher joined Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa and the members of the NTA Governing Board in handing out on stage the Plaques of Recognition and cash prizes to the TGY winners and the assisting extension workers.

Farmer-leader Mario Cabasal, president of the National Federation of Tobacco Farmers and Cooperatives Inc. (NAFTAC) congratulated the NTA for its programs and projects which he said are helping the farmers improve their lives.

Farmer awardees Banasan (Virginia Category), Quiton (Burley), and Ramos (Native) delivered their separate messages in behalf of the tobacco growers in each leaf category.

The contest recognizes the continuing efforts of tobacco growers who show innovativeness, efficiency, compliance with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), and who protect the environment and demonstrate application of science and technology-based knowledge, during tobacco production and getting the maximum income from their labor.

The awardees were selected by the Branch Technical Committee headed by the Branch Manager. Results were validated by the National Technical Committee and endorsed to the National Advisory Committee chaired by Administrator Seares for approval.

The TGY contest also honors extension workers who assisted the provincial winners (see caption of photo below for list of awardees).

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Assisting extension workers of TGY Winners with FTSD Manager Imelda N. Riñen, center: (L-R) Timoteo C. Dorol Jr. (TPRO I, Isabela); Roberto F. Pedro (TPRO I, Cagayan); Christopher S. Cabanog (Agriculturist I, Vigan); Rosemarie T. Soriano (TPRO I, Ilocos Norte); Precilla R. Lagadon (TPRO I, Ilocos Norte); Marie Beth B. Palabay (TPRO I, La Union); Ruby A. Dacanay (TPRO I, La Union); Sinfrosa N. Valmonte (TPRO I, La Union); Ms. Riñen; Marina G. Pine (Agriculturist I, Pangasinan); Yolanda S. Ignacio (TPRO I, Pangasinan); Edna C. Zingapan (TPRO I, Cagayan); represented by Josefa P. Correo); Kristin Mae S. Castañeda (TPRO I, La Union); Yolanda L. Espeleta (TPRO I, Occidental Mindoro Extension Office); Susana G. Dangpalan (TPRO I, Candon); Romeo Y. Paculdo (Agriculturist II, Abra); and Vicky L. Ramos (TPRO I, Vigan; represented by Jose A. Taclas Jr.).

N.E. Valdez

TOBACCO GROWERS OF THE YEAR

Virginia Category

Lester P. Pagatpatan

Bunglo, Pinili, Ilocos Norte
Virginia Neutral Flavor
Ilocos Norte Branch



Pagatpatan has been a tobacco farmer for 25 years now and started participating in various NTA projects in 2013.

He said that his diligence and openness to change got him the reward for his farming venture with the help of his hardworking technician, Precilla R. Lagadon, TPRO I of Ilocos Norte Branch, who guided him in his farm activities, especially in adhering to the tobacco production technology.

His on-farm evaluation, production, and cost efficiency as evaluated by the Branch Technical Committee bested other farmer contestants during the contest year. He delivered his clean-baled produce to his market tie-ups, the TransManila, Inc. and later to the Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. He is a diligent cooperater of NTA projects such as hog fattening, rice farming, and Kahuyang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan.

He says that tending to his 0.50-hectare tobacco farm has been a big help in buying farm tools and equipment and acquire other properties; it also helped him and his wife Rebecca in sending his two children Alden and Alyssa to school. (*Divina D. Pagdilao*)



Flor T. Bautista

Ar-arusip, Badoc, Ilocos Norte
Virginia Improved Flavor
Ilocos Norte



Thirty-two-year-old Bautista has been into tobacco production for nine years now. He has been successful in planting NC 2326 tobacco variety for his 0.5-hectare tobacco farm. His extension worker Rosemarie T. Soriano, TPRO I of Ilocos Norte Branch, appreciates his outstanding record on tobacco quality, right attitude, and discipline. Bautista followed the recommended tobacco production technology, and maintained his good relationship with his contracted buyer firm, TransManila, Inc.

What he had gained from tobacco production, plus his income from other activities such as livestock raising (goat, hog, and cow), and onion, corn, and rice farming, helped finance the renovation and improvement of their family house, where he lives with his wife May Joy and two children, and purchase some farm tools and equipment. (*Divina D. Pagdilao*)

Sixty-year-old Lopez started farming when he was 20 years old, because farming has been the only source of income and livelihood for his family. Due to financial difficulties, he only managed to finish elementary education, but this did not dampen his spirit to improve his living conditions through farming.

Aside from being a tobacco producer, he is also a tobacco seedling grower. He supplies tobacco seedlings to his neighboring tobacco farmers who cannot produce their own seedlings. He is a farmer-cooperator of the agency's rice production program.

His motto in life has always been "Try and try until you succeed," and so with his tobacco farming. He keeps on trying and doing some innovations from his farming method, until he gets what is best for his tobacco production venture. But he said, he never veers away from the recommended package of technology and always listens to his assisting extension worker, Christopher S. Cabanog, Agriculturist I, Vigan Branch.

Mario R. Rosario

Bacsil, San Juan, Ilocos Sur
Virginia Improved Flavor
Vigan Branch



Rosario managed to finish his secondary education at Bacsil National High School; however, because of financial difficulty and early marriage, he was unable to pursue a college education. He devoted his time, instead, to farming to sustain his family. Thanks to planting Virginia Improved Flavor, coupled with his diligence and intensive farming, he was able to buy farm equipment, from water pump to *kuliglig* (a two-wheeled trailer pulled by a two-wheeled tractor), and ultimately a tractor.

He was never remiss in his obligation to repay production assistance from the agency. Because of this, he received the "Pagtalkan Award" in 2015, which is given by the NTA to farmers who, because of diligence in the application of the recommended production technologies, are able to fully pay their production assistance even before the set deadlines.

This 49-year-old farmer also rendered active service in their barangay, having been elected barangay councilor for three terms. He is a member of the Bacsil Farmers' Association and was the Vice Chairman of the San Juan Tobacco Farmers' Association.

He and his wife Ruth are blessed with three boys, two of whom have already earned their college degrees.

Bernardo S. Lopez

Pug-os, Cabugao, Ilocos Sur
Virginia Neutral Flavor
Vigan Branch



Lopez, an active member of Pug-os Farmer's Association, was recognized as Outstanding Farmer of Barangay Pug-os in 2000.

His wife Arceli has been very supportive in his farm activities. They are blessed with three children: Rachel, 35, who works as a nurse in Saudi Arabia; Jeffrey Lester, 34, vocational graduate and a farmer; and Lovie Japhet, 25, a nurse at a private hospital in Manila.

Melody G. Del Pintor

San Juan West, Pilar, Abra
Virginia Neutral Flavor
Abra Branch



Del Pintor, or “Lady” to her peers, took up Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Quezon City Memorial College in Quezon City, but found herself, after her marriage to Abelardo del Pintor, into tobacco production. Tobacco growing since then has been the main source of their family income to support various needs of her family and the education of her sons Nicholas and Aldwin, both college students.

She is a farmer-cooperator under the Tobacco Contract Growing System and she actively participates in the various programs and projects of the NTA, such as renewable energy farm project, rice production, and annual cooperator of Tobacco Contract Growing System.

Irene A. Casilla

Narra Oeste, San Fernando City
Virginia Neutral Flavor
La Union Branch



Casilla is not only a caring wife and a loving mother of three children but also a worthy and industrious tobacco farmer.

She has been growing tobacco since 1996.

Aside from tobacco production, she raises goats and hogs to increase their family income. She wants to help his husband earn money in order to raise their children well and be able to send them to school.

She worked closely with her extension worker Sinfrosa N. Valmonte, TPRO I of La Union Branch, from seedbedding to marketing of her tobacco produce. During the contest year, as she has always been doing, she followed strictly the package of technology in the production of neutral flavor Virginia tobacco and Good Agricultural Practices. As a result, she obtained a yield of 1,226 kg from her 0.50-hectare farm, earning her a net income of P42,780. (*Sinfrosa N. Valmonte*)



Leonardo D. Banasan

San Vicente, Lidlidda, Ilocos Sur
Virginia Improved Flavor
Candon Branch



For Banasan, tobacco growing is life as this has been the bread and butter for his family for 35 years now. “My journey as a TGY contestant is a great learning experience, and with the award, I am challenged and will continue producing quality tobacco,” he said.

Aside from tobacco production, he is also involved in various projects of the agency, among them the IFOIGAP-Rice Production managed by the Candon Branch Office. He is also an active member of the Barangay Council, now serving his second term as Barangay Kagawad. He is at present the President of the Association of Senior Citizens of Barangay San Vicente.

He is married to Mary Banua-Banasan and they have three daughters, namely, Mercy, April, and Shiela. The youngest, was a recipient of the NTA Scholarship grant, and currently employed at the Municipal Agriculture Office in Lidlidda.

Bernardo V. Comadre

Camiling, Balaoan, La Union
Virginia Improved Flavor
La Union Branch



Comadre, or Karyo to his friends, once worked as a security guard. His strong desire to engage in farming made him quit his work and ventured into tobacco production. To enhance his knowledge, he participated in the Capability Building Training sponsored by the Department of Agriculture Regional Office I in 2014.

With the guidance of his extension worker, Ruby A. Dacanay, TPRO I of La Union Branch, he followed the required technology in tobacco production and observed Good Agricultural Practices and Integrated Pest Management. He goes to his farm early in the morning and does not go home until he finishes all his scheduled farm activities. As a result of his diligence, he was able to produce 1,573 kilos out of his half-hectare farm, earning him a gross income of P142,922.78 and ROI (Return of Investment) of 131.66%.

Aside from farming, this 44-year-old Barangay Tanod also earns extra income from driving his tricycle to pick up passengers at night. He is married to Perla Nicha Comadre and they have twin daughters namely Kaye and Kate, both Grade 11 students. (*Ruby A. Dacanay*)

Burley and Native categories on next issue

PROJECT UPDATES



Deputy Administrator Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa hands over a check to tobacco grower Thelma Almazan of Paduros, Burgos, Ilocos Sur, as Candon Branch Manager Estrella G. Peralta looks on.

Production assistance for Abra, Ilocos Sur farmers

NTA Candon Branch distributed cash assistance for land preparation and seedlings to 113 farmer-cooperators in the first district of Ilocos Sur. The farmers come from the municipalities of Galimuyod, Sta. Cruz, Salcedo, and Quirino. The ceremonial release held on November 17 at the branch office in the City Hall compound in Candon City was graced by Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa and Reynaldo Bagaioisan of Trans-Manila Inc.

Candon City

This brings the total of beneficiaries to 588 as of said distribution date. Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta said that the branch office has a total of 8,421 beneficiaries who are all cooperators of the NTA contract growing system.

In his message to the farmers, Atty. Verzosa highlighted the tobacco farmers' big contribution to the national economy. He assured them of more assistance from the agency, not only in the distribution of production aid but also in the form of various programs, such as the Curing Barn Assistance Program, and other interventions that help the farmers gain more profit in their farming venture.

Early this month the branch office distributed farm inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides to the farmer-cooperators. The cash assistance for gas/oil and fuelwood will be distributed in the later part of the tobacco production, according to De Peralta. (Orlando O. Galdones)

NTA Administrator Dr. Robert L. Seares distributed production assistance for land preparation worth P1,072,500 to the tobacco farmers of Abra on November 16.

Dolores, Abra

Each of the 418 farmers from the municipalities of Bangued, Pilar, Tayum, Dolores, Pidigan, Villaviciosa, San Isidro, Luba, Peñarrubia, Bucay, and San Quintin received P5,000 per hectare for land preparation during the simple awarding program and orientation of tobacco production held at Dolores Civic Center in Dolores, Abra.

According to NTA Abra Branch Manager Esmeralda G. Valera, the Branch Office has distributed a total of P2,745,600 production assistance for land preparation and gas/oil requirements of the tobacco growers.

Manager Valera, along with Dolores Councilor Robert Ardaniel and other local officials, assisted the Administrator during the distribution. (Marife P. Peralta / Melanie R. Parel)

Tobacco contract growing seminar in Pangasinan, Ilocos Norte

NTA Pangasinan, in coordination with the local government of San Fabian and Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. (ULPI) conducted an orientation-seminar on Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS) project in the province.

San Fabian, Pangasinan

The one-day event, graced by NTA Administrator Robert L. Seares and Branch Manager Engr. Cesario G. Sambrana, was held at the San Fabian Sports Center in San Fabian, Pangasinan on December 6. Around 170 farmer-beneficiaries from the different barangays of the municipality of San Fabian attended.

The resource speakers were Engr. Roger T. Madriaga, Chief Agriculturist, and Elizabeth Q. Biala, Supervising TPRO, of NTA Pangasinan; and Melanie Rivera and Edgar Torres, Production Manager and Agronomy Department Manager, respectively, of ULPI.

The speakers discussed the guidelines on unified tobacco production technology, programs and policies of the leaf buyer, and marketing agreement with focus on the role of NTA as the core agency, and the contract between the tobacco farmers and the buying firm.

Administrator Seares urged the farmers to follow the prescribed technology in producing quality tobacco required by the market. He reminded them to seek first a marketing contract with the leaf buyer before venturing into tobacco production, in line with the total contract growing policy of the agency.

San Fabian Mayor Constante B. Agbayani assured the farmers of the LGU's support in the tobacco production by the provision of farm machineries and implements and other programs and projects for their benefit.



Administrator Robert L. Seares assures local tobacco growers of government support during an orientation seminar on TCGS project. With the Administrator are (L-R) San Fabian Mayor Constante B. Agbayani, NTA Pangasinan Branch Manager Engr. Cesario G. Sambrana, and Municipal Agriculture Officer Juan Juguilon Jr.

Melanie Rapiz Parel

NTA Ilocos Norte conducted a series of orientation seminars to the farmer-cooperators (FCs) under the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS) from November to December 2017 at the branch office auditorium in Batac City.

Batac City

Among the topics discussed in the seminars were the responsibilities of farmer-cooperators, buyer firms and NTA towards the TCGS project, in relation to the market-oriented tobacco production technology; good agricultural practices, sustainable tobacco production; and various NTA projects that benefit the tobacco growers.

Administrator Robert L. Seares graced the orientation on November 17, which coincided with the distribution of production assistance to the TCGS farmer-cooperators and financial assistance to the scholars under the Scholarship Program of the agency.

Administrator Seares, along with NTA Director Nestor C.

See next page



With Roman J. Raganit Jr. (in bull cap and maong jacket) in this inspection photo are Loreto S. Reyes, Administrative Officer III; Adonis D. Lazo, TPRO III; and Rosella A. Dosono, Agriculturist I. NTA Candon

Inspection of curing barn construction

THE Operations Group of NTA Candon, headed by its new Chief Agriculturist Roman J. Raganit Jr., inspected the ongoing construction of the curing barn of farmer Rosalinda A. Caoili in Brgy. Nalasin, Santiago, Ilocos Sur on December 8. Caoili, is one of the first batch of 52 tobacco growers of the second district of Ilocos Sur (area coverage of NTA Candon) who availed of Curing Barn Assistance Program (CBAP) for the construction of new flue-curing barn for Virginia.

Santiago, Ilocos Sur

According to Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta, the branch office has released the CBAP assistance in four batches as of December and one more batch will be served in January next year.

“The inspection of constructed curing barns was done when 40% of the new barn was already finished so that the 50% financial assistance can be released,” she said.

The Operations Group also conducted inspection of construction in other areas in Santiago on said date.

NTA implemented CBAP for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 to promote the use of the NTA-prescribed efficient flue-curing barns and air-curing sheds, and help the farmers increase their income through the production of properly cured leaf.

Availers of CBAP are required to use Venturi or anawang furnace system for Virginia tobacco farmers and semi-permanent structure for Burley and Native tobacco farmers. *(Rosella Agoyaoy Dosono)*

Tobacco contract growing... from page 8

Casela, handed a total of P3,714,450 worth production assistance to 573 farmer-cooperators. The amount also includes seedling acquisition and land preparation.

NTA Ilocos Norte Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz, said that there is a continuous process of technology development on tobacco production for quality leaves.

On November 22, some 100 farmer leaders attended the Tobacco Stewardship Seminar, which was aimed at discussing sustainable tobacco production and the effective application of CPAs with their mode of action and target insects.

Director Casela and a representative of Stockton Phils, Inc. graced the one-day activity.

The orientation seminars in December were held on December 11 with Rey Bagaoisan of TransManila, Inc. as resource person and on December 12 with Mario Lagmay of Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. as resource person.

A total of 407 farmer-cooperators attended the two seminars.

Topics discussed during the seminars were sustainability of tobacco production, good agricultural practices, implementation of the Agricultural Labor Practices, recommended varieties, suitable land with sufficient supply of irrigation water, and recommended production technology with emphasis on fertilizers and Crop Protection Agents.

Also included are topics on proper classification based on stalk position, degree of injury and color and strict adherence to contracts with the buying firms. *(Divina D. Pagdilao / Melanie R. Parel)*

NTA scholars are now registered agriculturists

by Marife P. Peralta & Marlon G. Facun

FIVE NTA scholars from Abra are now registered agriculturists after passing the Agriculturist Licensure Examination given by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) on November 28-30.

Four of the scholars are graduates of Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from the Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology in Lagangilang, Abra. They are Christine E. Elveña of Gaddani, Tayum; Jefre M. Torres of Bagalay, Tayum; Emmanuel N. Valera of Poblacion, Pilar; and Joe Jayson A. Zales of Villaviciosa. The other scholar, Ryan Jay Z. Sape of Pidigan, is a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Major in Agronomy from Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur.

The new agriculturists are part of the scholars of the agency under NTA Abra who finished their respective courses in School Year 2016-2017.

Valera, speaking in behalf of the successful graduates, thanked the NTA “for helping us in achieving our dreams.”

He said: “I am very thankful that I belong to those who passed among the thousand board takers. Nothing is really impossible when you believe in yourself and especially in Him that you are going to pass the exam. And I did it.”

In Pangasinan, NTA scholar Rose Anne S. Dismaya of Angio, San Fabian, Pangasinan also passed the Agriculturist Licensure Examination last November. Dismaya finished Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Major in Horticulture, at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University South La Union Campus in Rosario, La Union in 2017.

According to Dismaya, daughter of tobacco grower Rustico L. Dismaya, being poor is not a hindrance in fulfilling her dreams and she really appreciates the scholarship grant she got from the NTA. She is now working at the Department of Agriculture office in San Fabian, Pangasinan.

Other Board Passers

Jervy D. Resurreccion, NTA scholar from Pindangan Sison, Pangasinan passed the CPA Licensure Examination given by the PRC last May.

This son of a tobacco grower from Pindangan, Sison, Pangasinan, finished Bachelor of Science in Accountancy from the Urdaneta City University in Pangasinan in 2016.

Meanwhile, Florence G. Nolasco, Administrative Officer III of Vigan Branch, reported that four out of the 14 NTA scholar graduates under the Branch Office passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers.

They are Kevincher S. Ramos of Barbar, San Juan, Ilocos Sur, Bachelor of Elementary Education (cum laude); Jhona Marie R. Sevilleja of Alinaay, Cabugao, Ilocos Sur, Bachelor of Elementary Education; Elisa S. Socias of Quezon, Cabugao, Ilocos Sur, Bachelor of Secondary Education; and Gizelle S. Sayaboc of Sagayaden, Cabugao, Ilocos Sur, Bachelor of Secondary Education. *(with reports from Noralyn I. Idica)*



Four of the six newly licensed agriculturists: (L-R) Emmanuel N. Valera, Jefre M. Torres, Ryan Jay Z. Sape, and Rose Anne S. Dismaya.



Deputy Administrator Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa swears in Chapter Presidents: (L-R) EANTA Federated President Excelsior R. Mejia (Central Office), Luzviminda U. Padayao (Ilocos Norte), Manuel M. Beltran (Isabela), Roberto F. Pedro (Cagayan), Romeo Y. Paculdo (Abra), Loreto S. Reyes (Candon), Alma G. Toralba (Pangasinan), Christopher R. Supang (La Union), Jose A. Taclas Jr. (Vigan), and Randy I. Abella (Research).
N.E. Valdez

Ilocos Norte farmers answer satisfaction survey

by Divina D. Pagdilao

SOME farmer-cooperators under various projects and programs being implemented by the NTA Ilocos Norte, such as IFOIGAP-Rice, Kahuyang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan (KPP), Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS) and Irrigation Support Project were interviewed for the Customer Satisfaction Survey, by a team from Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC), Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur on December 28.

The team of interviewers composed of nine personnel was headed by Dr. Remely Sanidad, Research Director.

They visited farmers in four designated areas: Alay, Badoc; Pagdilao, Pinili; Bulbulala, Vintar; and Ilocos Norte Branch Office.

The farmers were asked by the ISPSC team to rate the performance of Ilocos Norte Branch in terms of the provision of packages of technology, technical assistance, marketing assistance, training/scholarship, availability of extension workers and the overall impact of the project.

To facilitate the activity, the Ilocos Norte Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz, grouped the farmer-respondents, and designated the venues for the interview. Branch extension workers in the designated areas assisted the interviewers.

Dr. Sanidad briefed the farmer respondents on the overview and coverage of survey before her team conducted the interview.

Also included in the survey was the performance rating of the branch office as perceived by researchers, consumers, buying sectors, private sectors and trader clients.

NTA tapped the service of ISPSC, an independent third party that also conducted the Customer Satisfaction

Pls turn to page 12

Employees association elects new officers

THE NTA Employees Association (NTAEA) on December 4 inducted its new sets of chapter presidents with Excelsior R. Mejia, Market Specialist IV of the Market Research and Development Division, Industrial Research Department, as its new National President.

Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa administered the oath of office of the new officers.

In his message, Atty. Verzosa urged the officers to think of the welfare of the employees which they represent and to be active partners of the management in making a change for the agency.

The chapter presidents who were inducted to steer the affairs of the employees association for three years in their respective units are as follows:

Luzviminda U. Padayao, Chief Agriculturist (Ilocos Norte); Jose A. Taclas Jr., TPRO III (Vigan); Romeo Y. Paculdo, Agriculturist II (Abra); Loreto S. Reyes, Administrative Officer III (Candon); Christopher R. Supang, TPRO III (La Union); Alma G. Toralba, Senior TPRO (Pangasinan); Manuel M. Beltran, Supervising TPRO (Isabela); Roberto F. Pedro, Agriculturist I (Cagayan); and Randy I. Abella, Senior Science Research Specialist (Research).

The induction was held two weeks after the retirement of outgoing NTAEA President Leilani Raquel F. Seña.

Mejia emerged winner in the presidential contest during the election of association officers in the central office and branch offices on November 28, besting his lone rival Manuel C. Ramiscal, Economist IV of the Corporate Planning Department.

Also elected were Neyo E. Valdez, Public Relations Office III, vice president; Rosalie P. Catura, Internal Auditor II, secretary; Carmelita V. Albano, Senior Bookkeeper, treasurer; and Rogelio C. Santiago, Supervising Cashier, auditor.

Mejia said that he will continue the programs and projects initiated by his predecessor, for the benefit of the members of the association. He served as secretary of the association from 2004 to 2017.

He had a big part in the negotiation of the new Collective Negotiation Agreement which was signed by the Management Negotiating Panel headed by Administrator Robert L. Seares and the NTAEA Negotiating Panel headed by Seña.

Mejia will represent the NTAEA for second level employees to the Human Resource Merit Promotion and Selection Board of the agency. 🍌

NTA holds TGY awards... from page 5

Branch Managers Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay of NTA La Union and Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda of NTA Cagayan hosted the awards night.

2017 year-end convocation

NTA held its year-end convocation immediately after the Tobacco Growers of the Year awarding ceremonies, with Administrator Seares, Atty. Verzosa, members of the NTA Governing Board, provincial branch managers and staff, and farmer-awardees joining the Central Office employees in the celebration.

Other highlights of the annual activity were group dance performances by the different departments and branch offices (as one group), awarding of winners in the 3-on-3 basketball, and raffle.

The convocation began with the ballroom disco which revved the crowd up before the fellowship hosts Neyo E. Valdez, Public Relations Officer III, and Melanie R. Parel, Information Officer, both of the Office of the Administrator, welcomed everyone.

Adjudged top performers during the dance presentation were Renelyn C. Ortiz, Clerk of the Regulation Department, and Jose N. Albaos, Janitor,

of the Office of the Administrator. Regulation Department officer in charge Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros and Ethelwolda C. Bosque, Secretary I of NTA Abra received cash prizes as Faces of the Night winners.

Administrator Seares, Atty. Verzosa, and NTAEA President Excelsior R. Mejia handed out cash prizes to the Red Team, champion of the 2017 Administrator's Cup 3-on-3 Basketball, which was held on scheduled dates in December. Members of the team were Jay Martin, Anthony Pagba, Salter Joseph Elizalde, Victor Rivera, Kathlyn May Tejano, and Jojie Boy Bumanglag. 🍌

OMT Abra has new anchor

THE “Oras ni Mannalon ti Tabako (OMT)” Radio Program of the agency at the DZPA Bangued, has a new anchor in Marife P. Peralta, Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer, of NTA Abra. She had her first official broadcast of OMT, broadcast every Sunday at 7:00-7:30 p.m., on November 19.

Peralta, a licensed agriculturist, replaced veteran OMT anchor Nora A. Corre, who moved to NTA AgriPinoy Food Processing Facility in Narvacan, Ilocos Sur as the Project Manager-designate.

“I see in her the potential of a good communicator, a fast learner and she’s ever willing to sacrifice for the sake of learning,” said Corre of Peralta. She revealed that during the last two cropping seasons, she asked Peralta to help her in the booth as assistant, working on the console and even trained her to write a script.

Peralta, of Bangcagan, Bucay, Abra, is a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from Abra State Institute of Science and Technology (Lagangilang Campus). As a writer of the *Philippine Tobacco News*, the agency’s official bi-monthly industry newsletter, she is designated as one of the two information officers of Abra Branch.

She admitted that she was hesitant to take over the program at first, knowing that she has lots to learn, and big shoes to fill because her mentor, Corre, is “a very good anchor.”



“I am thankful to Ma’am Nora (Corre) for the opportunity to learn, and to our Branch Manager, Ma’am Esmeralda Valera for her support and the trust that I can do the job,” she said.

The OMT Radio Program for Abra is one of the six radio programs for OMT for 2017-2018 tobacco cropping season.

From November 2017 to May 2018, NTA has weekly radio programs in DZVV Vigan, DZTP Candon, and DZPA Bangued; and bi-weekly programs in DZSO San Fernando City and DZVR Laoag City (see below for schedules).

Since its relaunching in crop year 2011-2012, OMT has been helping the agency in upgrading the knowledge and competencies of tobacco farmers on quality production. OMT, a component of the agency’s Communication Support Program, also serves as a venue to clarify issues, particularly on tobacco prices and grading system during the trading season.

The OMT program is under the direct supervision of the branch manager of the covered area. 🌿

“ORAS NI MANNALON TI TABAKO” RADIO PROGRAM

Aired every week:

DZTP Candon – *Monday, 12:00 NN – 12:30 PM*; DZPA Bangued – *Sunday, 7:00 PM – 7:30 PM*; DZVV Vigan – *Saturday, 12:30 PM – 1:00 PM*; DWDA Tuguegarao – *Tuesday, 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM*

Aired every other week:

DZVR Laoag – *Saturday, 12:30 PM – 1:00 PM*;
DZSO San Fernando – *Saturday, 12:30 PM – 1:00 PM*



NTA AgriPinoy facility keeps Class “AA” status

THE National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) awarded anew Class “AA” standards to the Slaughterhouse and Poultry Dressing Plant of the NTA AgriPinoy Food Processing Plant.

This came after the NMIS conducted audit inspection of the food facility in Brgy. Nanguneg, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur on November 21.

The frontliners during the inspection were Nora A. Corre, Project Manager-designate; Ricardo D. Casugay, Head of Operations Division; Arturo Castillanes, Head of Slaughtering Section; Clemencia Franco, Quality Control Officer; Estephany Agustin, General Maintenance Officer; Sogronio A. Baba, Pest Control Officer and Waste Water

Management Officer, and staff from Slaughtering Section.

Dr. Rosario G. Renton of NMIS Region 1 and Dr. Rogelio Peñaroma of NMIS Central Office led the NMIS Inspection team. Richard Cabotage, deputized Meat Inspector of NTA-APP was also present during the inspection.

This is the fourth time that the food facility was given Class “AA” accreditation by the NMIS.

With Class “AA” accreditation, the facility can fully and continuously engage in the slaughtering of hogs and meat processing for domestic trade, subject to surveillance by NMIS in Region 1.

Certification Audit is conducted annually. (Sandra Nova M. Vergara) 🌿

NTA participates in R&D symposium

by Felisa R. Aurellano

NTA joined the 29th Regional Symposium on Research and Development Highlights conducted by the Ilocos Agriculture, and Aquatic Resources Research and Development Consortium (ILAARRDEC) in Mariano Marcos State University in Batac City on November 27-29. The symposium had the theme “Enhancing Research Culture to Achieve AmBisyon Natin 2040.”

Dr. Armando Q. Ganal, Regional Director of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST-I), revealed during the forum that further researches on the other uses of tobacco such as pulping and utilization of wastes for serving and packaging food were included in the highlights of the Regional Research and Development Agenda on Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources.

Technical papers on research and development by various partner-member agencies of ILAARRDEC were presented either orally or as posters. Engr. Felisa R. Aurellano, Community Development Officer III, and Engr. Randy I. Abella, Senior Science Research Specialist (SRS), both from the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), served as Evaluators in the Poster Presentation.

Other participants from FTSD were Nelly U. Castro, Chief SRS; Patricia A. Inocente, SRS II; Fernando L. Andres, SRS II; Chareeze S. Israel, Product Development Officer I; and Erwin B. Rabanal, Research Assistant. Imelda C. Parbo, Sr. SRS, and Donald D. Gorgonio, Research Assistant, from the Product Development Division of the Industrial Research Department in Batac City also attended the activity.

The regional symposium was held simultaneously with the 2nd Farms and Industry Encounter Through Science and Technology Agenda (FIESTA) with the theme “Strengthening the Bamboo and Seaweeds Industries for AmBisyon Natin 2040” in cooperation with the Agricultural Training Institute - Region 1.

NTA joined other cooperating agencies in the Product Exhibits. NTA research projects on the other uses of tobacco, such as the tobacco pulp, novelty items from tobacco handmade paper, tobacco dust, tree seedlings, and vermicast were presented in the Science and Technology booth of NTA. 🌿

