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NTA Abra met with tobacco growers of Brgy. Macarcarmay in Bangued, Abra for the pre-season orientation on tobacco production on September 28. The agency will use the industry roadmap as basis of the agency in implementing more projects and programs for the benefit of the farmers in Abra and the rest of the country.

Marife P. Peralta

NTA agrees to tobacco industry roadmap

AN industry roadmap is very important in assessing the performance, opportunities, and challenges as well as in outlining goals and strategies needed for the tobacco industry.

This was the message of NTA Administrator Robert L. Seares to the representatives of the private sector and tobacco farmers associations during the Consultation Workshop on the Socioeconomic Footprint and Roadmap held at Max's Restaurant in San Fernando City, La Union on October 19.

This is part of a series of consultations and dialogues initiated by the private sector to formulate the Tobacco Industry Roadmap.

The roadmap will serve as the basis of the agency in effecting policies and implementing programs for the benefit and interest of the 65,000 registered tobacco growers in the country and all those that depend on the industry for their livelihood.

"I hope this will make Philippine tobacco production a lucrative venture, as before; elevate the development and growth of the industry as a competitive player in the global market; and establish industry sustainability, which is based on environmentally sound and economically viable plans for the tobacco-growing communities," Seares said.

Tobacco has been the cash crop of the

people in the Ilocos Region and some areas in Region 2. The industry has been generating enormous revenue, in the form of excise taxes, for the national government, with P97-B collection in 2015, which the tobacco-producing local government units use for education, infrastructure, economic, health and welfare programs all over the country.

Seares stressed that NTA must be more responsive to the total needs of the industry, and mobilize its resources necessary to fulfill its mandate.

"That is why we adopted the Farmers First Policy to look after the interest and welfare of our tobacco growers in all our plans and undertakings. Our main concern is always income augmentation, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation and inclusive growth for our farmers," he added.

With the Administrator during the consultation were Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa; Directors Nestor C. Casela, Teofilo R. Quintal, and Wilfredo C. Martinez; some Department Managers; and the Branch Managers of the different provincial

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Tobacco floor prices up

NTA has approved new floor prices for tobacco for the next two trading years, 2018 and 2019.

The new prices for the three tobacco types—Virginia, Burley, and Native—were approved during the continuation of the Tobacco Tripartite Consultative Conference held at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City on September 19.

The price increases came almost two weeks after negotiations on price adjustments between the tobacco farmers and leaf buyers at said tripartite conference on September 6 ended with a deadlock, paving the way for another round of consultative meeting.

For Virginia tobacco, which makes up almost 60% of the total tobacco production area in the country, the floor price per kilogram increased to P82 for Grade AA, P81 for A, P80 for B, P78 for C, P70 for D, P69 for E, P60 for F1, and P57 for F2. The former prices are 81 for AA, P79 for A, P77 for B, P75 for C, P68 for D, P67 for E, P59 for F1, and P56 for F2.

For Burley, the top-grade A rose by P2, bringing the price per kilo to P70 from the current P68. The floor prices for grades B, C, D, E, and F are now P67, P58, P47, P46, and P38, respectively, an increase of P2, except for Grade F which increased by P1, from the current price per kilo.

The floor prices of Native were increased as follows: High-grade, from P70 to P71; Medium 1, from P58 to P60; and Medium 2, from P48 to P50.

However, there would be no increase of floor prices for Rejects, which remain at P46 for Virginia; P28 for Burley; and P40 (L-1) and P25 (L-2) for Native.

Leaf buyers have insisted that there should be no price increase for low grades or rejects for all tobacco types to discourage production of low quality tobacco leaves.

Tobacco is the only industrial crop in the country that enjoys a minimum floor price set by the government. This is based on the prevailing market conditions such as production cost, reasonable margin of profit for stakeholders, and growing conditions.

During said tripartite meeting, the farmers negotiated for as high as P16.77 increase per kilo across all grades, taking into consideration the

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Administrator Seares speaks before farmers and local leaders in Pangasinan (top photo) and hands over a check to a farmer during the ceremonial release of CBAP in Isabela (left photo), with, from left, Atty. Verzosa, Quirino (Isabela) Mayor Juan, and Branch Manager Torres.

Maylene B. Afos

Tobacco growers in 4 more provinces get curing barn assistance

A total of 954 tobacco growers in Pangasinan, Abra, Cagayan, and Isabela received curing barn assistance from NTA. The ceremonial release, spearheaded by the provincial branch offices, was held in different venues in separate schedules in September.

Earlier, some 884 farmers availed of the program in Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte and La Union. This has brought the total of beneficiaries of the NTA Curing Barn Assistance Program (CBAP) to 1,838 from all major tobacco growing provinces in the country as of October 30.

Some 200 tobacco growers in Pangasinan received P7.2-million air-curing shed assistance during the ceremonial release held at the Robert Estrella Stadium in Rosales, Pangasinan on September 14. The release was one of the highlights of the Tobacco Industry Forum organized by NTA Pangasinan, headed by Branch Manager Engr. Cesario G. Sambrana, for local leaders, tobacco growers, and other industry stakeholders.

The one-day event was graced by NTA Administrator Robert L. Seares, Sangguniang Panlalawigan Member Noel C. Bince, Provincial Agriculturist Dalisay Moya, Mayor Constante B. Agbayani of San Fabian, Mayor Silverio Alarcio Jr. of Laoac, farmer leader Saturnino C. Distor, and representatives of leaf buyers in the province.

The farmers either received P20,000 each for repair/improvement or P50,000 each for construction of air-curing shed for Burley/Native tobacco.

NTA implemented the Curing Barn Assistance Program (CBAP) for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 to promote the use of the NTA-prescribed efficient curing sheds; and help the farmers increase their income through the production of properly cured leaf with these prescribed sheds.

In Isabela, 390 tobacco growers received P11-million curing barn assistance from the NTA. The ceremonial release, attended by farmer beneficiaries, was held at the Isabela Provincial Coop Office at Bgy. Alibagu in Ilagan City on September 21.

This was graced by Administrator Seares, Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa, and

Mayor Jossie Maria Bella L. Juan of Quirino, Isabela.

Of the 390 farmer beneficiaries, 160 received assistance for construction while 230 for repair/improvement.

According to Isabela Branch Manager Herman C. Torres, succeeding releases took place at the Branch Office in Brgy. Osmeña in Ilagan City. "We are still in the process of inspecting curing barns of beneficiaries prior to release, targeting to release on the first week of November 2017," Torres said.

In Cagayan, Rep. Randolph S. Ting (3rd District, Cagayan), Department of Agriculture (DA) Regional Executive Director Narciso A. Edillo, and other local leaders joined NTA officials headed by Administrator Seares and Atty. Verzosa in personally distributing checks worth P4.85 million to the first batch of beneficiaries comprising 81 tobacco farmers.

The ceremonial release was held at the Organic Building, DA, Regional Office 02 in San Gabriel, Tuguegarao City on September 22.

Meanwhile, the ceremonial release of P5.84 million curing barn assistance for tobacco growers of Abra was held at the Dolores Civic Center in Dolores town on September 25 with 283 farmer beneficiaries.

This was graced by Administrator Seares and local officials of Dolores headed by Mayor Robert Victor G. Seares Jr and Vice Mayor Emelito Cortez.

Before the release of the CBAP assistance, some farmer cooperators of the four provinces who were affected by typhoon "Lawin" in October 2016, received calamity aid under the P3.5-million financial assistance from the NTA from April to May this year.

Each of the 709 affected farmers from Pangasinan, Abra, Cagayan and Isabela, received P2,000 for barn repair to help them recover from the damages caused by the typhoon. 🌿

NTA agrees to tobacco industry... from page 1

offices. The farmers sector was represented by the officers of the National Federation of Tobacco Farmers Associations and Cooperatives (NAFTAC).

The consultation was spearheaded by the team of Dr. Rolando T. Dy, Executive Director, and Marie Annette G. Dacul, Senior Agribusiness Specialist, of Cthe University of Asia and the Pacific, who are tasked to conduct studies/surveys for the industry roadmap.

During a meeting with NTA officials in Quezon City last September, the team explained the objectives of the project, which is to analyze the socioeconomic footprint of the industry and to develop "an inclusive, stakeholder-crafted and market-driven industry roadmap that is expected to improve the farmers' income and achieve product diversity."

The said meeting was requested by the UA&P officials to personally ask the assistance of the NTA in obtaining certain data that are imperative to the said study. A field survey and interviews on farmers in tobacco-growing areas started in September. The project was initiated by the Philippine Tobacco Institute.

"I expect that until we finally complete the Industry Roadmap, we still have other stakeholders' meetings as this, to have a unified masterplan for the growth and development of the tobacco industry," Seares said, as he enjoined industry leaders and tobacco growers, to take active part in the undertaking.

The discussion on the Tobacco Industry Roadmap was initiated in consonance with the formulation of the Tobacco Action Plan during the first tobacco industry forum and stakeholders' consultation, attended by Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol, in Davao City last June 15. (Neyo E. Valdez) 🌿

Sustaining the industry amidst formidable challenge

THERE was no other time in the history of the local tobacco industry when it has been faced with so much challenges than it has these days.

This dates back to President GMA's signing of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2003 and its ratification by the Senate in 2005, and, the enactment of anti-tobacco/smoking laws, initiated through the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003 (RA 9211), followed by the Sin Tax Reform Act of 2012 (RA 10351), capped by President Duterte's issuance of Executive Order No. 26, banning smoking in all public and enclosed places nationwide.

Drumbeating of these laws results in significant feats on the aspects of health as: preventing the youth from picking up the habit and the poor not affording health expenses, having been able to assist millions of people under the universal health care and having improved the health facilities and the delivery of services. We thought these may be something to celebrate. May be not, however, when the issue was floated, that with the present tax and price levels, cigarettes continue to be affordable in the country and, for the same purposes as revenue and health, another round of increase in tax for cigarettes may be expected.

With the campaign that is becoming more increasingly aggressive as time passes, the stakeholders are asking: Is it still possible for the local tobacco industry to continue? We know that smoking as a habit is an adult, educated choice. Population will continue to grow and presumably, certain percentage will opt to share with or find enjoyment in the

habit. The demand for tobacco will always be there. The issue therefore will focus on the search for the best quality product, at lowest possible price. This should serve as the compelling reason for the stakeholders to remain steadfast, not only in keeping the industry afloat, but to recover and pursue growth.

Thus, at this point, there is an ongoing assessment of the performance of the tobacco industry, in order to identify the opportunities and challenges, and define goals and strategies needed for its meaningful and relevant development.

To boost the morale of the tobacco farmers, the NTA increased the floor prices of tobacco in the next two trading seasons, despite the hesitance of the tobacco buyers, as this might cause an imbalance in the market. On the part of the farmers, they need to strictly abide by the production technology to ensure production of the quality of leaf tobacco as demanded by both local and world markets.

For the LGUs, motivated to increase production to increase their share from RA 7171 and RA 8240, their cooperation and support are very much needed in maintaining a production volume and quality of tobacco produce as required by the market. Production should be limited to areas which ensure the quality of produce and is assured of a market through the Tobacco Contract Growing System.

On the whole, directions and priorities of the sectors should be unified. All their forces and resources should be mobilized and tapped to sustain and pursue growth for the industry. 🌱

Tobacco floor prices up... from page 1

increase of prices of farm inputs for tobacco production.

But the leaf buyers had earlier wanted a status quo for all floor prices, in order to survive amidst reduced sales of cigarettes as a result of increasing excise tax rates, and lately, the implementation of Executive Order No. 26 that bans smoking in all public places nationwide.

Farmer leader Mario C. Cabasal, president of the National Federation of Tobacco Farmers Associations and Cooperatives (NAFTAC), said they were satisfied with the conclusion of the negotiation for floor prices.

"We need any increase we can get to inspire our farmers to produce tobacco as I can't imagine them working with higher production cost but with reduced profit," said Cabasal.

According to NTA Administrator Robert L. Seares, with the success of the negotiation, the agency will now focus on the reduction of production cost of farmers in their venture, by offering subsidy in the form of production assistance.

The setting of the minimum floor price provides tobacco farmers a guaranteed minimum return on investment of at least 25 percent for expenses. The



NTA officials, headed by Administrator Seares (seated 3rd from right), and tobacco farmers, headed by Mario C. Cabasal (seated 2nd from right), signed the memorandum of agreement for a new set of floor prices for Virginia, Burley, and Native tobacco, during the consultative meeting in Quezon City on September 19.

actual buying price, which is based on prevailing market prices, is usually higher than the minimum floor price.

NTA is authorized to set or fix tobacco floor prices, as mandated by Presidential Decree (PD) No. 627 s. 1974 (for all tobacco types except Virginia), PD No. 1481 s. 1974 (for Virginia), and PD No. 1143 s. 1977 as amended (for Burley), by adopting a tripartite consultative conference. 🌱



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Editor-in-Chief: **Perlita L. Baula, Ph.D.**

Managing Editor: **Neyo E. Valdez**

Writers: Ilocos Norte: **Divina D. Pagdilao, Elaine A. Tinio, Jesusa D. Calano**; Ilocos Sur (Vigan): **Noralyn I. Idica, Tomasito G. Taloza**; Ilocos Sur (Candon): **Orlando O. Galdones, Charlemagne P. Navarro**; Abra: **Ethelwolda C. Bosque, Marife P. Peralta**; La Union: **Candido I. Liangao, Joannaliza D. Ordinate, Kristin Mae S. Castañeda**; Pangasinan: **Alma G. Toralba, Marlon G. Facun**; Cagayan: **Gilbert A. Taguam, Bernadeth C. Tamayao, Elmerante A. Ginez**; Isabela: **Joefrey T. Bautista, Lagrimas B. Beltran**; FTSD: **Felisa R. Aurellano**; IRD Batac: **Imelda C. Parbo**; AgriPinoy: **Sandra Nova M. Vergara**; Central Office: **Perla C. Manzon, Eleanor A. Rapanut, Carol Lynn R. Sambo**

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NTA, Occ. Mindoro officials pledge support to displaced farmers

by Violeta E. Gayona

NTA, the provincial government of Occidental Mindoro, and the municipality of San Jose organized a dialogue with the local tobacco farmers who are displaced, following the closure of operations of the lone tobacco leaf buyer in the province.

PMFTC had earlier claimed that the sale of low-branded cigarette products using the produce of the province has weakened in the market, prompting the company to close shop.

For the past five years, the area planted to tobacco and the number of farmers have been decreasing in the province, from 988 hectares in 2012 to 325 hectares in 2017, and the number of farmers from 2,150 to 747 in the same period.

The dialogue was held at the Sikatuna Beach Resort in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro on September 11.

NTA top officials headed by Administrator Robert L. Seares presented the project proposals of planting alternative crops like red onion and white corn, and of livelihood training courses to be jointly financed by NTA and the local government units affected.

Local officials headed by Governor Mario Gene J. Mendiola commended the tobacco farmers for their contribution to the economic and social welfare of the people in the province, through the LGU's share of the excise tax of Burley tobacco, as provided by Republic Act 8240. They were saddened with the cessation of tobacco production and promised the farmers in finding alternative crops and business or livelihood opportunities.

Bituin V. Manguera, President of the Tobacco Farmers Association in the province, had no choice but to embrace every proposal that can help them sustain their economic and living condition. She asked that an honest-to-goodness marketing assistance be provided in addition to the financial and technical supports pledged by the local officials.

San Jose Mayor Romulo M. Festin

said that he is confident that the farmers can recover from the displacement as they already have the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitude that they have gained from their long experience in tobacco production.

With Administrator Seares during the dialogue were Directors Nestor C. Casela, Teofilo R. Quintal, Pedro J. Mendiola; Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, manager of the Industrial Research Department; Imelda N. Riñen, manager of the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD); Alona A. Manganaan, Executive Assistant IV; and Felisa R. Aurellano, Community Development Officer III, FTSD.

The NTA Desk Office in Occidental Mindoro, headed by Violeta E. Gayona, TPRO I, with her staff Yolanda E. Espeleta and Xandra C. Bravo, helped organize the said dialogue. 🌱



(Left photo) Arrival of NTA and local officials (L-R) Administrator Seares, San Jose Mayor Festin, Directors Casela and Quintal, FTSD Manager Riñen, Governor Mendiola, and Director Pedro J. Mendiola Jr. (Center photo) Governor Mendiola talks on alternative crops and business or livelihood opportunities for the tobacco growers (right photo) who attended the dialogue.

Roberto R. Bonoan

Livelihood training course ready for tobacco farmers, dependents

NTA will start giving training courses for tobacco farmers and their dependents through the agency's Livelihood Assistance Program in November.

A total of 1,100 trainees are expected to complete the courses which will 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.

"We implement livelihood activities to augment farmers' income to enable them to support the basic needs of their families," NTA Administrator Robert L. Seares said.

"With these livelihood training courses, we expect our farmers to participate dynamically in the improvement of their economic and

living conditions and raise the quality of life of their own families," he added.

The four training courses, spearheaded by the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), are Sari-Sari Store or Rolling Store Management; Agro-Mechanic; Noodle, Bread and Pastry Making; and Food Processing.

FTSD Manager Imelda N. Riñen said that after the training, the participants can avail of livelihood assistance package from the NTA to help them set up their own businesses.

NTA has invited resource persons from different training providers such as the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and state universities and colleges in the province where the training is held.

The provincial branches will host the training on the first course Sari-Sari Store or Rolling Store Management on the following schedule: Candon Branch,

November 8 and 9; Isabela Branch, Ilagan City, November 15-16; Cagayan Branch, Tuguegarao City, November 23-24; Pangasinan Branch, Rosales, Pangasinan, November 27-28. The provincial branches in La Union, Abra Ilocos Norte, and Vigan City will conduct the training on separate schedules in December.

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

FTSD also conducted livelihood trainings on food business, agribusiness, crafts, and health and wellness to 1,234 members of farmers' cooperatives, particularly the tobacco farming families, in 2014. 🌱

NTA ILOCOS NORTE

QUICK GLANCE: BRANCH PROFILE

- Number of Tobacco Farmers/Hectareage: **5,152 FCs / 2,508.2 has**
- Number of Tobacco-growing Municipalities: **17**
- Number of Tobacco-growing Barangays: **177**
- Number of Staff: **22 Regular; 11 Job Orders**



(L - R) Outstanding Extension Worker Marzel E. Manzanar, TGY awardee Noel A. Guillermo, NTA Ilocos Norte Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz, TGY awardee Edgardo P. Gabbac, and Outstanding Extension Worker Concepcion R. Quiocho during the TGY awarding ceremonies at the NTA Central Office in July.

TGY Ilocos Norte awardees: Models of industry and diligence

TOBACCO Grower of the Year awardees under the Ilocos Norte Branch are model farmers for the tobacco growers in the province, particularly during the crop year 2015-2016.

Edgardo P. Gabbac and **Noel A. Guillermo** easily had the advantage over the other farmer nominees because of their outstanding achievements in tobacco production.

Gabbac, 46, of Camandingan, Batac City, entered the TGY contest with his area of 0.51 ha planted to Virginia Neutral Flavor, which gave him a yield of 1,267.4 kilos (2,485.1kg/ha), 76.51% of which were high grades (AA, A, B, C), according to his contracting buyer firm Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. (ULPI).

His assisting technician, Concepcion R. Quiocho, TPRO I of NTA Ilocos Norte, described Gabbac as an industrious and diligent farmer who strictly adheres to the recommended tobacco production technology, from seedbedding using the recommended seedling variety, to post-harvest and marketing activities.

Before his nomination, Gabbac has been a loyal farmer-cooperator of various NTA projects. He joined the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS), Rice Production, Kahuyang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan, and Farmers Organizational Development.

He is blessed with a loving and industrious wife Mary Jane and two pretty daughters who are both enrolled in college.

To augment his income, Gabbac also plants rice and vegetables and raises livestock in their backyard.

Guillermo, 33, of Sta. Magdalena, Sarrat, Ilocos Norte, has been a farmer-cooperator of the TCGS for 17 years now. For his good performance in tending to his crop, Virginia Improved Flavor, and good attitude in dealing with his buyer firm ULPI as a farmer cooperator, his assisting technician, Marzel E. Manzanar, TPRO I of NTA Ilocos Norte, nominated him to the prestigious contest.

His On-Farm Evaluation by the TGY Branch Technical Committee was superior over the other contestants. He got a yield of 2,772.91kg/ha, 78.95% of which had high grades (AA, A, B, C), and were bought by ULPI at an average price of P80.05/kilo.

Guillermo was very thankful to his brothers, for supporting his farming ventures and, especially to his latest inspiration, Zarah Rolda, whom he married recently.

Like Gabbac, he also plants rice and vegetables and raises livestock in their backyard to augment his family income. (*Divina D. Pagdilao*)

Manager's Corner

Mario E. Corpuz

Manager, Ilocos Norte Branch Office



With utmost dedication and responsibility

NTA Ilocos Norte has been playing its role and continues to pursue excellence in the development of the tobacco industry in the province. As the NTA Quality Policy directs, Ilocos Norte Branch is committed to provide clientele customers with "distinct quality" services not only to our directly assisted farmers but the entire tobacco community, in Ilocos Norte, in particular, and the country, in general.

Amidst interventions of issues and challenges, like aggressive global campaign against smoking and imposing high taxes on cigarettes, including unfavorable weather conditions that the province is experiencing, the Branch Office extends technical and extension support to our major clientele, the farmers. It confronts the negative effects of the intervening challenges, and continues to encourage responsible farmers towards quality tobacco production. While it is sad to note that some farmers are moving out of the tobacco scene, the Branch Office finds ways to uplift the industry, such as the reduction of lower quality grade tobacco being produced. This is a result of the education campaign and updates given by NTA to stop tobacco production in marginal areas. Guided by the corporate priorities of the agency, we plan and implement different projects with utmost dedication and responsibility.

Being the highest official of the NTA Ilocos Norte is more than an experience. It initiated and brought higher levels of camaraderie and leadership. I regard the employees and staff as professionals. There are individual differences but we view this from a wider perspective, directed to a common goal, in order to elicit the best output from the staff. With this perspective under my leadership, NTA Ilocos Norte was adjudged as the Best Branch Office in CY 2008-09.

I don't really claim that I am better than the former branch managers, but I believe, it was my "destiny" to win over the other branches in my time. With this award, the Branch Office continues to strive and pursue excellence in providing technical assistance to our farmers, establishing good linkages with other government entities and private companies, in whatever conditions we may get into.

Collection of production assistance is a tangible measure of performance, and the Branch Office acknowledges employees who are achievers. Extension workers, who are able to collect 100%, remit the same on a set date or before due date, are awarded with Certificates of Appreciation. This is one way of recognizing their efforts and boosting their morale to perform and excel in their field work. This also serves as a challenge for those with lower collections to perform better in the succeeding crop years. As a manager, I believe that praising, recognizing or rewarding employees' progress motivates and builds up their confidence.

I always remember in the earlier days of my professional life, when there were times that we don't get what we desire. Failures should never dampen anyone to pursue a goal. Ups and downs are part of life, but we should turn every failure into greater opportunities to soar high and achieve greater heights.



NTA Ilocos Norte Branch **Milestones & Achievements**

by Divina D. Pagdilao

THE NTA Ilocos Norte Branch has been under the stewardship of Mario E. Corpuz, Career Executive Service Eligible, Department Manager III, since August 2005. Under his leadership, the Ilocos Norte Branch Office was awarded as Best NTA Branch Office in 2009.

Before Corpuz, the office was led by equally dynamic and hardworking leaders, namely: Rafael T. Cabanawan (April 1989 – January 1990); Nestor C. Casela (January 1990 – May 2004); Candelario P. Corpuz (Officer-in-Charge, May 2004 – February 2005); and Rodrigo T. Pagtulingan (February 2005 – August 2005).

The NTA Ilocos Norte is uniquely situated among the different branches of the agency, as it serves two other departments namely: Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD) and Industrial Research Department (IRD), thus making Mr. Corpuz as the titular head. This is so, because he manages the administrative and financial concerns of the officials and employees of the said departments.

The Operations Division of the Branch is headed by Luzviminda U. Padayao, Chief Agriculturist. The other senior staff of the division are Alexis B. Jamias, Supervising TPRO; Saturnino A. Agatep, TPRO III, Area I (covering Badoc, Currimao, Nueva Era, and Pinili); Myrna D. Salut, Senior TPRO, Area II (covering City of Batac, Banna, Paoay, and San Nicolas); and Engr. Jesusa D. Calano, TPRO III, Area III (covering Bacarra, Dingras, Marcos, Pasuquin, Piddig, Sarrat, and Vintar). They act as Team Leaders to TPROs and Agriculturists deployed in their respective areas.

With the leadership and guidance of the Branch Manager, the Branch extension workers do their best to implement the different projects, assist tobacco-rice farmers, and establish good rapport with other government agencies and nongovernment organizations in their respective areas of assignments.

Project Updates

Validation of areas planted to tobacco

For Crop Year 2016-17, the Operations Unit was able to validate 177 barangays in 17 municipalities. To date, there are 5,152 farmers with a total area of 2,508.2 hectares with a reduction of 13.91 % and 14.21%, respectively, from Crop Year 2015-2016.

Registration of Tobacco Farmers

Farmers were interviewed regarding their socioeconomic profile and their ID pictures were taken for the preparation of their ID cards as tobacco farmers.

IFOIGAP Tobacco Contract Growing System

There are three types of tobacco grown in Ilocos Norte: Virginia (Neutral and Improved Flavor), Burley-Improved, and Native (LPI 2 and LPI 6) tobacco.

In CY 2016-17, there were 1,413 farmer-cooperators (FCs) with 611.77 hectares that joined the TCGS. Of this, 491 FCs with an area of 234.05 hectares availed of the production assistance extended by NTA, while 922 FCs with 377.72 hectares, availed of financing from other sources like buyer firms, local government

units (LGUs), or cooperatives. There was a notable increase in the number of FCs joining the project in the past two years, from 1,090 in 2014-15 and 1,350 in 2015-16, or an increase of 29.90% and 23.85%, respectively. However, the area in CY 2015-16 was higher by 97.63 hectares or 15.95% higher than in CY 2016-17.

IFOIGAP Rice Production

The NTA extends production assistance to tobacco-rice farmers, specifying the right kind of fertilizer that is suited for rice and for the next crop, which is tobacco. The project augments the financial needs of farmers for rice production expenses.

For the Integrated Farming and Other Income Generating Activities (IFOIGAP) Rice Wet Season (WS) 2017, there are 325 FCs with an area of 232.5 hectares. Project monitoring for its smooth implementation was done by field visitation and farmer's interaction.

In the previous season, there were 320 FCs with 220 hectares in WS 2016, 334 FCs with 246.5 hectares in WS 2015 with a collection performance of 94% and 94.51%, respectively.

Renewable Fuelwood Energy Farm Development Project

The first component of this project is the Synchronized Tree Planting (STP). This year, the Branch Office had produced and distributed a total of 250,000 seedlings of four tree species to various government and nongovernment organizations or groups of individuals who share the same vision in greening the environment. Based on the records of the Operations Unit, there were 78 greening sites and 11,371 planting volunteers in this year's activity.

The STP component of the Renewable Fuelwood Energy Farm Development Project in Ilocos Norte has been implemented since 2013, as part of the anniversary celebration of the agency. NTA Ilocos Norte has distributed seedlings of *ipil-ipil*, *gmelina*, *madre cacao*, and mahogany. The seedling distribution per year is as follows: 250,000 in 2017; 150,000 in 2016; 150,000 in 2015; 100,000 in 2014; and 80,000 in 2013.

The second component is the Kahuyang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan (KPP). This year, the project covers 358 farmers with an area of 378.50 hectares. As in previous years, some FCs produce their own tree seedlings while others buy their requirement from seedling growers who are farmer cooperators of NTA.

Tobacco Grower of the Year (TGY)

Antonio V. Salmasan was one of the four National Winners of the Tobacco Grower of the Year, Virginia-Improved Category, CY 2014-15. He was the TGY Virginia Improved Category Provincial Winner of Ilocos Norte in CY 2012-13, thus qualifying him to the National TGY contest. He was assisted by Rhonnelle P. Sulicipan, TPRO I.

Edgardo P. Gabbac won 1st Place in the TGY contest, CY

2015-16, Virginia-Neutral Flavor Category, assisted by Concepcion R. Quiocho, TPRO I.

Noel A. Guillermo won the TGY Provincial Contest for Virginia-Improved Flavor, assisted by Marzel E. Manzananas, TPRO I.

Other TGY Provincial winners (and their assisting extension workers) in previous years were Tomas Romero for Virginia-Neutral, assisted by Filipinas Q. Ganir (CY 2013-2014); Armando C. Calaycay for Virginia-Improved, assisted by Saturnino A. Agatep (CY 2013-2014); Buenaventura Isla, Jr. for Virginia-Neutral, assisted by Precilla R. Lagadon; and Sonny M. Cacalda for Virginia-Neutral, assisted by Divina D. Pagdilao (CY 2011-12).

“Oras ni Mannalon ti Tabako” Radio Program

The “Oras Ni Mannalon Ti Tabako” radio program returned on air in 2017 in Bombo Radio, DZVR, Laoag City. The program, anchored by Engr. Jesusa D. Calano, has different segments like news updates from the NTA, package of technology, AgriPinoy advertisements and a Question and Answer (Q&A) portion.

Farmers’ Organizational Development

The Branch Office strengthens farmers’ organizations by conducting meetings and information dissemination on the updates of the tobacco industry. Clusters of tobacco farmers met with the extension workers under the supervision and/or presence of senior staff of the Branch Office, in time with the recruitment of farmer-cooperators. Topics during meetings included the campaign for crop shifting from Virginia-Neutral to Virginia-Improved Flavor tobacco production possibly to reduce the production of reject tobacco. Burley and Native tobacco productions were also tackled, depending on the area chosen by the prospective buyer firm/tie-up in the TGCS project.

Regulatory Function

Licensing of Trading Centers (TC) and Field Representatives (FR) is being undertaken by the Branch Office. For Trading Season 2017, three TCs applied and were granted with license to operate and 38 FRs were issued with Certificate of Authority to Buy tobacco in Ilocos Norte.

NTA Scholarship Program

For the Tobacco Growers Dependents Scholarship Program, the Branch Office had been active in recruiting sons and daughters of registered tobacco farmers and for now have successfully served about 60, with 10 already graduated, 27 still in school and the rest either offered with other scholarship grants such as 4Ps, CHED’s Governor’s Scholarship program, and university and college scholarships.

Heidibel C. Balais, a graduate of Bachelor in Elementary Education from the Mariano Marcos State University copped 10th place in the Licensure Examination for Teachers last September 2016. She is one of the six NTA scholars from Ilocos Norte Branch who completed their college degrees in 2016.

Curing Barn Assistance Project (CBAP)

Administrator Robert L. Seares, and Ilocos Norte Governor Imee R. Marcos, assisted by the top officials of the NTA, distributed checks to 187 tobacco farmers in Ilocos Norte for the Curing Barn Assistance Program of the agency.

Irrigation Support Project (ISP)

Manager Corpuz and ISP Provincial Coordinator Engr. Calano validated the different projects proposed under the Irrigation Support Program. These projects were proposed for construction and/or rehabilitation to partly solve the irrigation water requirement for tobacco production.

Pls turn to page 8

RA 7171 benefits tobacco communities in Pinili

THE Local Government of Pinili, Ilocos Norte, through the leadership of Mayor Samuel S. Pagdilao, Sr., has been allocating their share from the collection of excise taxes on Virginia tobacco, pursuant to Republic Act (RA) 7171 (as amended by RA 10351) to different projects that benefit the tobacco farmers and their communities.

The lists of projects to be funded were contained in different municipal resolutions authored and approved by the members of the Sangguniang Bayan, presided by Vice Mayor Rommel T. Labasan last year.

Through Municipal Resolution (MR) No. 010-1619, the LGU has allocated funds for the following programs/projects and activities, among others: provision of fertilizer subsidy; production/provision of organic fertilizers; provision of seed subsidy; cattle dispersal; construction of irrigation canals, SFR/SWIP (in 8 *sanjeras*); rehabilitation of roads/canal linings covering 14 *purok* of Brgy. Valbuena and Pagdilao; improvement/rehabilitation of natural waterways in farming communities; construction of river and flood control projects; provision of pre- and post-harvest facilities; widening of farm-to-market roads (FMRs) per Municipal Ordinance 105-1013; construction of multipurpose farmers pavement at Sitio Balbalay, Sacritan; and construction/improvement of the multipurpose halls of the different barangays.

The resolution also contains the specific activities and detailed budget for each program or project as carefully studied and deliberated by the Sangguniang Bayan.

For the implementation of FMRs, the local officials have taken steps to comply with the provisions of Municipal Ordinance No. 112-1013 in which it states that no FMRs shall be implemented without adhering to the five-meter roadway-width requirement.

Also in 2016, the LGU, through MR No. 016-1619, approved the utilization of the municipality’s share from Burley and Native tobacco excise taxes for 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2013 for livelihood projects (such as but not limited to cattle fattening and dispersal) of pre-identified tobacco farmers from the list of farmers prepared by the Municipal Agriculture Office.

In 2015, the Sangguniang Bayan approved MR No. 351-1316 for the implementation of programs and projects which include the improvement/rehabilitation of flue-curing barns.

Per Municipal Ordinance No 147-1316, approved in 2014, authored by SB Member Maynard Francis R. Bumanglag, the LGU granted financial assistance to farmers whose flue-curing barns were damaged by fire and other fortuitous events. This was also the basis for the grant of financial assistance to farmers affected by Super Typhoon Lawin that damaged crops, houses, curing barns and other properties in 2016.

Based on the 2016 validation by the Ilocos Norte Branch, Pinili had 1,365 registered tobacco farmers with an aggregate area of 741 hectares in its 25 barangays. (Divina D. Pagdilao)



Tobacco farmers of Brgy. Bungro pose with Mayor Hon. Samuel S. Pagdilao, Sr., LGU Consultant Dr. Anunciacion D. Pagdilao, and Municipal Agriculture Officer Philip Galang (3rd, 2nd and 1st from left, respectively) after receiving their water pumps, funded by municipal share of RA 7171. MAO

by Engr. Jesusa D. Calano

AS the roosters crow at the break of dawn, the life of an extension worker begins to roll.

Before getting up, that's the time for me to thank the Lord for a new day and ask for guidance on what lies ahead. Having a family of my own, I make sure everything and everyone in my household is taken care of before I go out for a scheduled field work. With my rugged-looking outfit and a helmet, I ride on my motorcycle with eagerness and drive carefully to fulfill my assigned task for the day.

"Manong, kumusta 'tay tabakoyo? 'Inta man kitaen."

"Sinurotyo met la'ng tay husto a sukati ti abono iti kada puon?"

"An'a ti problema, tata?"

These are just some of the common questions I ask farmers when I stop and talk to them, usually on the road. Technically equipped, I give pieces of advice on matters of tobacco production.

My role includes giving practical suggestions and helping farmers overcome their problems, whether it be personal or regarding tobacco production. However, not all have a gratifying response as the others. To me, it is normal, as some farmers have their own peculiarities. I would just shrug off their reactions, and still talk to them in a polite manner and good humor.

On my way to monitor the activities of my farmers in the field, some unexpected hassles may cause delay on my day's mission, such as having a blowout tire that I need to fix right on the spot. Unmindful of the heat, I would just walk alongside my motorcycle, looking for the nearest vulcanizing shop. But things like this will not dampen my enthusiasm to finish my work for the day.

While taking a rest at a farmers'



A day in the life of an extension worker

Riding on a motorcycle means a lot to extension workers like Engr. Calano in fulfilling their tasks

residence, farmers sometimes offer to have lunch with them. Conversations center not only on the tobacco industry or farming activities, but also on personal matters such as life in the family. I have been with this job for many years now, and I have gained deep understanding of their plight. I have learned the importance of listening to their personal concerns to easily win their heart and establish good or friendly relationship with them. Social responsibility would also mean being a *ninang* (godmother) to a farmer's child.

I continue my work after taking a brief nap, about 15 minutes or less, just in time before the weather cools down a bit in the afternoon. Then I have to go back to field work and accomplish my task for the day.

I leave the farm with my motorcycle with contentment, fulfillment and joy in my heart, and sometimes with something to bring home, usually a bag of *pabaon* (sendoff gift), vegetables most of the time,

hanging on either side of the handle bars.

At night, before I close my eyes to sleep, I usually reflect on what transpired during the day. Again, I give praise and thank the Lord for enduring another day of field work.

The life of an extension worker is likened to a soldier, well prepared and fully equipped to war, and when his tour of duty or mission is ended, he only feels fulfillment as soon as he reaches home to be with his family again.

In the morning, imbued with the zest and vigor for challenges every day, I always prepare for my job with a positive outlook. 🌱

Engr. Jesusa D. Calano has been with NTA since 1991 and was promoted to her current position Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer III in 2015. She lives with her family in Suyo, Dingras, Ilocos Norte.

BRANCH OFFICE STAFF



Front Row (L-R): Divina D. Pagdilao (*Agriculturist I*), Zenaida P. Tabije (*Secretary I*), Myrna D. Salut (*Senior TPRO*), Luzviminda U. Padayao (*Chief Agriculturist*), Mario E. Corpuz (*Department Manager III*), Elaine A. Tinio (*Administrative Officer III*), Adorlina S. Torres (*Computer Operator II*), Filipinas Q. Ganir (*TPRO I*), Milagros C. Magcaleng, (*TPRO I*); **Second Row (L-R):** Emelda L. Manzanas (*Agriculturist I*), Precilla R. Lagadon (*TPRO I*), Engr. Jesusa D. Calano, (*TPRO III*), Concepcion R. Quiocho (*TPRO I*), Crisanta D. Agloco (*TPRO I*), Rosemarie T. Soriano (*TPRO I*); **Third Row (L-R):** Eduardo D. Enriquez (*Driver*), Saturnino A. Agatep (*TPRO III*), Rhonelle P. Sulicipan (*TPRO I*), Alexis B. Jamias (*Supervising TPRO*), Valentin L. Valdez (*Accountant III*), Rommel E. Calautit (*Agriculturist I*), and Marzel E. Manzanas (*TPRO I*).

Milestones & Achievements

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Sufficiency of water for irrigation is one of the factors affecting quality of tobacco. The Branch Office implements the project in full coordination with the LGUs in the province.

Linkages

The Branch Office has established good partnership with different LGUs and other organizations, both government and private sector. This was achieved by a symbiotic relationship, providing data required by other offices and proper coordination of NTA with top officials of the various sectors regarding project implementation.

Recently, the NTA Ilocos Norte was awarded with a Certificate of Appreciation by the office of the City Agriculturist of the City of Batac for its support during the conduct of the City Farmers' Festival last May 2017. 🌱

NTA holds info drive on tobacco production

Alilem, Ilocos Sur

by Orlando O. Galdones

NTA Candon, headed by Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta, conducted an information drive on tobacco production in the tobacco-growing municipality of Alilem, in upland Ilocos Sur on September 26.

Present during the one-day meeting attended by 29 local tobacco growers, held at the Municipal Hall Multi-Purpose Bldg., were Alilem Mayor Mar Ruel Sumabat, Sangguniang Bayan Members Efren Dummao and John Eleng, Municipal Agricultural Officer Anabel Lorenzana, and Agriculturist Veronica Arzabal.

Mayor Sumabat assured the local tobacco growers of the LGU's support in the form of farm inputs and implements such as water pumps and hose, curing barn and tractor. He also emphasized that the farmers must adhere to quality tobacco production as required by NTA and leaf buyers, and to ensure the accurate documentation of their tobacco during the trading.

For this cropping season, Alilem had 68 registered farmer cooperators representing 51.2 hectares of tobacco farms in the area.

Orientation for farmers in the provincial branch is conducted either by municipalities or by clusters of adjacent tobacco-producing communities, depending on how the extension workers devise strategies based on the production schedules.

The Branch Office also brings the "Balik Tabako" program in any of these orientation activities. The program reembraces tobacco farmers who have stopped planting the crop to plant again for another crop year.

Also included in the discussion during the meetings are the two institutional projects of the agency, the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS) and the Rice Project Wet Season, with focus on the updates in the package of technologies (POT) for both tobacco and rice crops.

According to Manager De Peralta, the conduct of information and education drive continued in the second district throughout the period, with emphasis on Good Agricultural Practices in the succeeding interactions with the farmers.

As of October 30, the Branch Office had registered 8,406 farmer cooperators from 306 barangays of the 22 municipalities (including Candon City) representing a total area of 6,915.71 hectares, in the second district of Ilocos Sur. 🌱



Aringay, La Union

by Kristin Mae S. Castañeda

NTA La Union met with 24 members of the Association of Barangay Captains in Aringay, La Union on September 11 to facilitate information dissemination regarding updates and concerns on Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS).

The meeting was presided by ABC Leader Andres L. Mercado, chairman of Brgy. Sta. Cecilia.

Also in the meeting were Aringay Mayor Eric O. Sibuma, Municipal Agriculturist Manuel A. Ugaban, and Delfin V. Cavinta, secretary of Aringay Tobacco Growers Association.

Mayor Sibuma expressed his support to the tobacco farmers and the TCGS project of the agency. He said that the local government will allot a portion of its budget from the town's share of excise tax (RA 8240 for Burley/Native and RA 7171 for Virginia) to support tobacco farmers through the provision of production assistance during the cropping season.

Engr. Alberto C. Casison, Agriculturist II, and Joannaliza D. Ordinante, TPRO I, shared updates on the TCGS, with emphasis on quality production of topped Virginia and Burley tobacco leaves, which according to buyer-trading centers, have higher market demand this season.

Engr. Casison is the supervisor of Area IV which covers Rosario, Sto. Tomas, Agoo, Tubao, Pugo, and Aringay.

Casison and Ordinante also solicited support from barangay captains to watch out for "fly-by-night" buyers in their respective barangays to eradicate the illegal buying system that is rampant during trading. They explained the importance of selling tobacco to legal buyers such as licensed field representatives who provide certificate of purchase and trading centers which issue purchase invoice vouchers to ensure proper documentation of tobacco acceptances from farmers. The tobacco acceptances, when certified by NTA, will be the basis for the computation and distribution of excise tax shared to municipal government units.

It was agreed during the meeting that the Branch extension workers in the area continue to coordinate with barangay leaders of Aringay, while waiting for the schedules of recruitment meetings to interested TCGS 2017-2018 participants. 🌱

To restart production, an orientation seminar for tobacco growers on Tobacco Contract Growing System spearheaded by Chief Agriculturist Ped Ruben B. Barbero and attended by Danglas Mayor Denise Florence B. Bragas was held at the Municipal Hall in Danglas on October 4. This was followed by a seed-sowing demo for the farmers in Barangays Nagaparan and Abaquid on October 7.

During the meeting, Mayor Bragas encouraged the farmers to go back to planting of tobacco after the rice cropping season, with an offer of support to their tobacco production venture. 🌱

Danglas, Abra

by Marife P. Peralta



FARMERS in Danglas, Abra started growing tobacco again, after they stopped about five years ago. Thanks to the successful information campaign by NTA Abra, with assurance of production and technology assistance, market tie-up, and support from the local leaders.



Tobacco leaf extracts emulsion test in Balaoan

by Candido I. Liangao

RESearch specialists from the Product Development Division of the Industrial Research Department (PDD-IRD) monitored the field testing of Tobacco Leaf Extract Emulsion (TLEE) in Barangay Apatut, Balaoan La Union on the first week of July.

Nelly U. Castro, Supervising Science Research Specialist (now head of Farm Technology Development Division of the Farm Technology and Services Department) and Rosita J. Alcoy, Science Research Specialist I, inspected the performance of eggplants applied with tobacco extract.

The tobacco extract was applied to the eggplant farm of farmer Reynaldo M. Obillo of Barangay Apatut.

During the visitation, the PDD-IRD research specialists observed that eggplants applied with the tobacco extract were free from aphids and other insects except stem borers which were seen to be present on the young shoots. "The field testing of the leaf extract is not yet over as it will be tried again on the next phase," Castro said.

The tobacco leaf extract, a byproduct of tobacco leaves, is being used to control insect pests. It is being tested by the NTA as a control measure for sucking insects because of its organic nature, thus it can be a good substitute for harmful chemicals or lessen the use of inorganic chemicals.

La Union Branch Chief Agriculturist Emma Beth B. Fantasticco; Christopher Supang, TPRO III; OIC Area 1 Supervisor Potenciano H. Apilado; Candido I. Liangao, Agriculturist I; Ruby A. Dacanay, TPRO I; Paulino B. Abenojar, Agriculturist I; and Rosito O. Gambito, TPRO I joined the PDD-IRD team in the farm inspection. 🌿



Testing Manual for Registration of Tobacco Varieties/Hybrids. The Tobacco Technical Working Group (TTWG) of the National Seed Industry Council (NSIC) updated the Testing Manual for the registration of tobacco varieties/hybrids in the country. This was presented during the meeting of the TTWG held at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City on August 31. According to Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, manager of the NTA Industrial Research Department and chairman of TTWG, the hybrids were evaluated for yield, quality, and resistance to disease, and for suitability of the plant in Mindanao during the wet, dry and off-seasons. (Front row, L-R) Joeve Calleja of Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI)-NSIC, Ellen B. Ragusta of PMFTC, Adelaida P. Teneza of Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc., NTA Administrative Department Manager Dr. Cristina C. Lopez, Cagayan Branch Manager Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda, TWG Coordinator Evangeline Y. Isip; (back row, L-R) France Enriquez of BPI-NSIC, Paul Angelo Veluz of PMFTC, Reynaldo Bagaoisan of TMI; IRD Manager Bonoan, and Pangasinan Branch Manager Engr. Cesario G. Sambrana. (Neyo E. Valdez)

OICs designated for Regulation, CorPlan



Ambros



Benosa

ADMINISTRATOR Robert L. Seares designated two division chiefs as officers in charge of the Regulation Department and the Corporate Planning Department under separate Special Orders dated October 3.

Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros was designated OIC of the Regulation Department following the death of former manager Maybelen B. Dictaan on October 2. His new designation is concurrent to his position as Chief Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer of the Tobacco Products Regulation Division.

Ambros, of Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, earned his Bachelor of Laws degree from Manuel L. Quezon University and passed the bar in 2005 and the CES/MATB in 2006. He has been Acting Legal Counsel and Board Secretary since 2006. He started working with the agency in 1997.

Fortuna C. Benosa was designated OIC of the Corporate Planning Department, taking over the position vacated by Rex Antonio P. Teoxon who retired from service on September 7.

Benosa, of Sarrat, Ilocos Norte, has been Division Chief III of the Planning, Programming and Evaluation Division since 1999. As division chief, she has been assisting the CorPlan Manager in the annual programming of the Corporate Operating Budget (COB) of the agency, particularly in the evaluation of the programs and projects for inclusion in the COB. She has a Master in Public Administration degree and started government service in 1985. 🌿

NTA Abra joins Civil Service anniversary celebrations

NTA Abra participated in various activities in the celebration of the 117th Anniversary of the Philippine Civil Service in the province on September 28.

The Branch Office joined other government agencies and different local government units in the 6th PCSA Fun Run in both 3 km and 5 km categories.

A team of Branch Manager Esmeralda G. Valera; Chief Agriculturist Ped Ruben B. Barbero; Anneli Tahra A. Alzate, Accountant II; Melben B. Bejarin, TPRO I, and Jordan C. Turalba, TPRO JO, won 1st Runner-Up award during the 1st Abra Inter-Agency Fun Shoot (Five Stages Pistol Match).

The theme of this year's celebration was "Tugon sa hamon ng pagbabago, malasakit ng lingkod bayani." (Ethelwolda C. Bosque) 🌿

NTA awarded Certificates of Recognition to 10 outstanding writers of its bi-monthly newsletter *The Philippine Tobacco News*. The writers, who are also designated information officers of their respective branch offices and departments, were cited for their number of submissions and quality of work, and dedication and exemplary service as member of the editorial staff.

Topping the list of awardees (Gold awards) were Divina D. Pagdilao, Agriculturist I, Ilocos Norte Branch; Engr. Noralyn I. Idica, TPRO III, Vigan Branch; Felisa R. Aurellano, Community Dev't Officer III, FTSD; Elaine A. Tinio, Administrative Officer III, Ilocos Norte Branch; and Gilbert A. Taguiam, Chief Agriculturist, Cagayan Branch.

Awardees from Ilocos Norte are also writers of the *NTA Personnel Update*, a quarterly publication of the NTA Ilocos Norte, with Tinio as editor-in-chief, and both Pagdilao and Aurellano as contributors. Idica submitted articles, most of which pertain to the operations and activities of the NTA AgriPinoy food processing plant in Narvacan, Ilocos Sur, where she was designated Administrative Officer from October 2013 to August 2017. Taguiam is the anchor for Cagayan Branch of the "Oras ni Mannelon ti Tabako" radio program, also a major project of the Communication Support Project of the agency.

Other awardees (Silver awards)



(L-R) Joefrey T. Bautista (Silver), Orlando O. Galdones (Silver), Gilbert A. Taguiam (Silver), Administrator Robert L. Seares, CorPlan Manager Rex Antonio P. Teoxon, Raquel Leilani F. Seña (Silver), Candido I. Liangao (Silver), Divina D. Pagdilao (Gold), IRD Manager Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, Engr. Noralyn I. Idica (Gold), and Felisa R. Aurellano (Gold). Not in photo: Elaine A. Tinio (Gold) and Ronaldo P. Molina (Silver).

Outstanding newsletter writers recognized

were Orlando O. Galdones, TPRO III, Candon Branch; Joefrey T. Bautista, Chief Agriculturist, Isabela Branch; Ronaldo P. Molina, TPRO I, Pangasinan Branch; Raquel Leilani F. Seña, Market Specialist V, IRD; and Candido I. Liangao, Agriculturist I, La Union Branch.

Administrator Robert L. Seares, assisted by newsletter Technical Editors Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan of the Industrial Research Department and Rex. Antonio P. Teoxon of the Corporate Planning Department, handed out the certificates during the awarding held at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City.

The *Philippine Tobacco News*, the publication component of the Communication Support Project, has

been very effective in information dissemination, giving employees, farmers, other stakeholders and the public in general important updates about the activities in the agency.

The newsletter, which was first published in the early years of the agency, was revived in December 2010 under Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza. It started to come regularly as a bi-monthly publication (six issues per year) in 2014.

The publication, managed by the Public Relations Office (PRO) under the Office of the Administrator, is currently headed by PR Consultant Dr. Perlita L. Baula, editor-in-chief, and Public Relations Officer III Neyo E. Valdez, managing editor. 🌿

AgriPinoy News by Sandra Nova M. Vergara

6th batch of trainees for Slaughtering Operations NC II



THE NTA AgriPinoy Training School presented on September 11 the 6th batch of trainees for the Slaughtering Operations NC II, a short butchery/slaughtering course accredited by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The Training School, a component of the NTA AgriPinoy food facility located in Brgy. Nanguneg, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur, was granted the Certificate of Technical Vocational Education and Training by the TESDA, in 2015.

The trainees, under the scholarship program of TESDA, will be under the supervision of Arturo C. Castillanes, certified National TVET Trainer and head of the NTA AgriPinoy Slaughtering Section. The trainees are expected to complete the course (a minimum of 280 hours) on the last week of October. 🌿



Rep. Savellano visits AgriPinoy facility

REP. Deogracious Victor "DV" Savellano of the First District of Ilocos Sur visited the NTA AgriPinoy Food Processing Plant in Brgy. Nanguneg, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur on September 28 as part of his continuous effort to look for possibilities and opportunities for more agriculture-related projects in the province.

The congressman expressed his intention to use the food processing facility for tolling services such as swine slaughtering and poultry dressing. "This plant is in good condition. I hope it will resume operation as soon as possible so we could maximize its capabilities and help a lot of people," Savellano said.

Project Manager Nora A. Corre and Dr. Mikael Benedict G. Crisologo, AgriPinoy Projects Consultant, assisted Rep. Savellano and his party during the plant visit. 🌿

ISPSC tapped anew for customer satisfaction survey

NTA held a coordination meeting with officials from the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) for the conduct of the 2017 Customer Satisfaction Survey, at the ISPSC campus in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur last September 27.

This will be the second time that NTA will tap the service of ISPSC, an independent third party, for the Customer Satisfaction Survey. The purpose of the survey is to solicit feedbacks from the various NTA clients as regards the efficiency and effectiveness of the policies, systems and procedures underlying its different programs, projects, activities and services.

In the 2016 Survey, conducted from June 1 to July 31 last year, farmer-cooperators of the NTA gave an excellent (extremely satisfactory) mark to the programs, projects, activities, and services which they availed of in 2015. The farmers were randomly selected from tobacco growing provinces, namely, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur (divided into Vigan and Candon Branch Offices), Abra, La Union, Pangasinan, Isabela and Cagayan. The same survey also showed that the eight provincial branches are delivering excellent service to the farmers, buying sector clients, and the private sector and trader clients.

As embodied in the Performance Agreement Negotiation (PAN) between the GCG (Governance Commission for Government-owned and -controlled corporations [GOCC]) and NTA, the agency like all state agencies, including GOCCs, must ensure the satisfaction of their respective customers or clientele in order to be relevant and worthy of continued government support.



NTA officials (at the center table, from left) Candon Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta; Fortuna C. Benosa, Division Chief III of CorPlan; and Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros, OIC Regulation Department, discuss the rationale and mechanics of the survey with the ISPSC officials. **NTA Candon**

Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros, OIC of the NTA Regulation Department (acting Corporate Planning Manager during the meeting), headed the NTA officials in the meeting which also included Fortuna C. Benosa, Division Chief III of CorPlan, Candon Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta, Acting Branch Chief Agriculturist Loreto S. Reyes, and Senior TPRO Merly S. Sison.

Atty. Ambros discussed the rationale and the mechanics of the conduct of the survey, adding that the methodology of last year's survey will also be followed this year.

Last year, ISPSC used three sets of survey forms designed by NTA. The first set contains the questions on how satisfied the respondent farmers are in terms of the package of technology, technical, financial and marketing assistance, training and scholarship and availability of extension workers.

The second set asks the respondents (researchers, consumers, and buyers) on how they rate NTA services rendered

along these criteria: courtesy, knowledge of work, response to queries, pertinent information offered, and prompt and speedy service.

The third set asks respondents (traders/private sector) on the rating of the agency in terms of the above criteria, including availability of staff at trading centers, correct billing for research/regulation and monitoring fees, and fair and objective application of rules and regulations.

Dr. Carmelo Beria, ISPSC Vice President for Research and Extension, extended the school's deep appreciation to NTA's recognition of ISPSC's capabilities as proven by NTA's commissioning ISPSC of their services for the survey for the second time. He said that NTA has always been their partner in the school's pursuit of academic excellence.

"Many of our students are beneficiaries of the NTA Scholarship program, and we had reforested our campuses because of the NTA's Synchronized Tree Planting," he added. 🌱

NTA Pangasinan joins nationwide cleanup drive

by Alma T. Toralba & Marlon Facun

NTA Pangasinan joined with Rosales, Pangasinan LGU in the National Cleanup Day organized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on September 27.

This was participated in by local government units, national government agencies, civil society groups/nongovernment organization, the private sector, academe and the religious sector nationwide.

The nationwide cleanup activity was aimed at promoting cleanliness of all public places, coastal areas, rivers, creeks, sewage system, including roads, providing opportunity to boost the spirit of volunteerism among the citizens.

The localized activity spearheaded by Rosales Mayor Susan P. Casareno had the theme "Rosales, Bayan kong Malinis." This was conducted along McArthur Highway from the boundary of Tarlac to the exit ramp of TPLEX at Carmen.

This was supported by the public and private educational institutions, the private sector, nongovernment organizations, local government employees, and national agencies located in Rosales.

The whole month of September of every year was declared as National Cleanup Month by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 244 series of 1993. 🌱



NTA Pangasinan in action