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NTA is set to start the solar-powered irrigation system (SPIS) assistance project this year, a move seen to increase the volume of production and improve quality of tobacco, and reduce the cost of irrigation/pumping.

Imelda N. Riñen, manager of Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), said the proposed SPIS project will consist of a solar water pumping system suitable for irrigating large areas of tobacco farms.

SPIS, a component of the Integrated Demo/Model Farm and Extension Training Laboratory project, has an estimated budget of P7.5 million.

The pilot project for SPIS is set for operation this 2018 in selected areas in Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, Abra, La Union, Pangasinan, Cagayan, and Isabela.

According to Administrator Robert L. Seares, the agency continues to develop and promote farmer-friendly, and ecologically sound and sustainable technologies to increase farm yield, enhance quality, reduce cost, maximize profit, and lighten work, following the approval early this year by the Governing Board of projects to be funded by the Tobacco Fund under Republic Act 4155.

The projects also include tobacco Farm Access Roads to Markets (TOFARM), the Farm Machineries/ Implements Projects, and Tobacco Farmers' Production Assistance.

"With the solar-powered irrigation system, the fuel cost is removed from the equation and water could be accessed anytime during the dry months due to abundance of sunlight that power the solar panels," said Seares.

SPIS, a pet initiative of Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, draws inspiration from solar-powered systems used by the agricultural sector, providing clean energy for irrigation and crop preservation, in other countries.

"Using solar-powered irrigation also helps offset the use of harmful fossil fuels and helps slow down global warming. This is more economical, and more beneficial especially for the remote areas," Seares said.

The solar-powered irrigation systems only require regular maintenance with



TRAINING WORKSHOP. FTSD conducted a training workshop on design and cost estimates of SPIS, on April 2 to 3, at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City for branch and department managers, division chiefs, chief agriculturists, and extension workers who are expected to be involved or detailed in the implementation of the SPIS project in their respective areas. The workshop was aimed at providing participants a good background on the technology of SPIS and enabling them to design a system that will meet the intended water requirement through cost effective means by carefully selecting different system components of SPIS.

Resource speakers were Engr. Alberto E. De Guzman and Engr. Darwin M. Nevares, Senior Agriculturist and Engineer II, respectively, of the Bureau of Soils and Water Management of the Department of Agriculture. The experts discussed on the assessment of water source, determination of system layout and design flow of pump, computation of total dynamic head, pump selection and power estimation, preparation of cost estimates, and operation and maintenance of SPIS. **N.E. Valdez**

the panels cleaned at least once a week.

NTA is in close coordination with the Bureau of Soils and Water Management of the Department of Agriculture in the planning and development of the SPIS, according to Riñen.

This is in accordance with DA Memorandum Order No. 13 series of 2017 which covers the implementation of SPIS.

SPIS Package

The NTA's package of a solar-powered irrigation system will be composed of solar power modules (six-piece solar panel), submersible pump (centrifugal stainless pump), control unit and level controller, cabling and accessories, artesian well, and battery pack. "On a simpler note, a solar-powered pump is like a traditional electric pump with the only exception that it uses solar energy instead of fossil fuel or electricity," said Riñen.

When installed, it has the capacity to pump an average volume of 20-100

cubic meters in the span of 8 to 9 hours, enough to meet the water needs of a 2-5 hectare land during a single irrigation cycle.

One SPIS package for one cluster area (5 to 10 hectares) will cost P615,000, while for a smaller farm cluster area (less than five hectares) will cost P315,000.

The project proposes to implement one integrated demo/model farm (5-10 hectare farm cluster) for each of the eight branch offices. Abra and Ilocos Sur offices may include less than five-hectare farm cluster for a smaller SPIS model. These demo/model farms will serve as a show window for tobacco farmers with the objective of improving their income.

According to Riñen, the sites to be selected must be identified areas that produce quality tobacco with sufficient water source; no history of salty tobacco; no danger of salt water intrusion; and no history of critical pest and disease occurrence.

The solar-powered systems utilize

Pls turn to page 2

MESSAGE

My warmest greetings to the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) to our tobacco farmers, industry stakeholders and to the readers of the *Philippine Tobacco News*.

As the agency mandated to administer and regulate the local tobacco industry, the NTA has been on the frontlines of the government's agenda to look after the welfare of its stakeholders and protect the well-being of our people. Its efforts have brought innovative and beneficial advancements to the field and our country.

Indeed, we shall face numerous challenges as we navigate the delicate balance between the interests of its constituents, industries and the general public. But as long as we continue to collaborate with one another in the fulfillment of our goals, engage in meaningful dialogues and enforce all pertinent national laws, we will succeed in our pursuits.

Rest assured that the government will continue to work with your sector on advancing our common objectives. It is my hope that we can count on you to join this administration as it pursues its agenda of change and as it strives to usher in a healthier, stronger and more prosperous tomorrow for all Filipinos.

MANILA
April 2018


RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE



MALACAÑAN PALACE
MANILA



NTA starts solar-powered... from page 1

open water sources like lakes, rivers, streams, and even creeks. Man-made small water impounding systems could also be used as water sources.

Riñen explained that farmers' organization to be selected for the project should be willing and capable to assume the overall management and maintenance of the SPIS, including the conduct of demonstration activity and farmers classes, and provision of right-of-way for the project.

"Before turning over the project to farmer cooperatives, farmers will undergo training on simple trouble shooting and operation," she added.

FTSD and technical team headed by Engr. Alex L. Borje, Chief TPRO of the Regulation Department, are now conducting area survey and selection of prospective sites, farmers' organizations, farm clusters and farmer leaders and registered tobacco farmers who are the beneficiaries or co-implementors of said project. 🌱



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EDITORIAL

Solar-powered irrigation system for tobacco-rice areas

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) aims to make the Philippines self-sufficient in rice through the construction of solar-powered irrigation systems (SPIS) nationwide as it recognizes the fact that lack of irrigation for the rice lands in the country limits potential rice production levels, making rice importation imperative to meet the requirement of the country's population which continues to grow.

In support to this thrust of the DA, the NTA Governing Board allocated funds from NTA's share from its entitlement from the excise taxes collected from locally manufactured Virginia-type cigarettes to showcase the SPIS technology in the eight NTA Branch Offices. This will enable the tobacco farmers to observe the establishment and operation of the SPIS and appreciate its positive effects on farm productivity. More importantly, adopting the use of SPIS will give the tobacco farmers an opportunity to contribute their share to help lessen the negative effect of using fossil fuel for crop irrigation to the environment, i.e., thinning out of the ozone layer, the cause of climate change.

The tobacco farmers use the same farm area for their rice crop; thus, through this program, NTA aims to increase their productivity and profitability not only by increasing the volume of good quality tobacco they produce but also their other farming ventures, particularly the basic food requirement, rice for their families.

With the introduction/establishment of SPIS, NTA looks forward to further increase the volume of rice production, especially in rainfed areas by making it possible for the farmers to provide the water requirement of their rice crop throughout its critical growth stages, and help attain the target volume of 221,445,000 kilos of rice production per year, as projected by the DA, to feed the growing Filipino population. 🌱

Tobacco trading starts in Ilocos

TOBACCO farmers who benefited from the P210.39 million production and facility assistance from the NTA for tobacco growing are expected to produce about 6.5 million kilos of cured tobacco this year.

This will constitute 14% of the targeted production volume of 45 million kilos for the industry for this crop year, according to Corporate Planning Department Manager Fortuna C. Benosa.

The trading season started on March 8 with the opening of the buying station (trading center) for Virginia tobacco in Sta. Cruz, Ilocos Sur. Trading for Burley/Native tobacco in Region 2 started later in April at the buying station in Reina Mercedes, Isabela.

The Regulation Department, in compliance with the Rules and Regulations on the trading of locally grown leaf tobacco, has issued License to Buy to 36 buying stations in the Ilocos provinces, La Union, Pangasinan, Isabela, and one buying station in General Santos City.

This cropping season, a total of 2,841 hectares of tobacco farmlands cultivated by 4,617 tobacco farmers financed by NTA under the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS).

NTA expects 100% of the crop sold through the contract system this crop year, according to Administrator Robert L. Seares, citing the strict implementation of the total contract growing policy at the start of the planting season.

The P210-million production assistance package of the agency is under the various flagship projects of the agency such as the Integrated Farming and Other Income Generating Activities Project (IFOIGAP) and its latest project, the Curing Barn Assistance Project (CBAP).

Seares said that of the production and facility assistance package, P114.89 million was given to the farmers in the form of cash for land preparation, fertilizers, pesticides, and suckerides.

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

For the implementation of CBAP, a total of 3,934 tobacco growers received curing barn assistance amounting to P95.5 million from NTA. Of the total number of farmers, 2,441 were extended assistance for construction/repair of curing barns and air-curing sheds.

“One of the main thrusts of this 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.

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

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 the income augmentation program of the agency. 🌱



TAGUDIN, ILOCOS SUR

CANDON Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta and Chief Agriculturist Roman J. Raganit Jr. monitored the first day of Virginia tobacco trading at the new TMI trading center in Dardarat, Tagudin, Ilocos Sur on March 8. The first batch of farmers who traded their cured leaves were from the municipalities of Tagudin, Sta. Cruz, Sta. Lucia, Candon and Galimuyod, all in the second district of Ilocos Sur.

Manager De Peralta said that she was satisfied with the preparation of the six buying stations in the district. She is optimistic that with the increase of floor prices of tobacco leaves, especially for high grades, and the implementation of the harmonized leaf grading system in all buying stations, the trading season will turn out well, especially to the tobacco growers who expect another profitable cropping this year.

Juliet C. Jimena, Tobacco Coordinator of the Tagudin LGU, and TMI Chief Agronomist Reynaldo Bagaioisan were also present to observe the first training day. Merly S. Sison (Senior TPRO), Amelia Veronica L. Lacaden (Agriculturist II), and other extension workers of the Candon Branch were also present to assist their farmers. (Photo: Julius Mark Flores) 🌱



CURRIMAO, ILOCOS NORTE

ILOCOS Norte Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz and Chief Agriculturist Luzviminda U. Padayao observed as calibrated weights were placed on a weighing scale at ULPI Virginia Trading Center in Lang-ayan, Currimao on March 8 to check on the accuracy of weighing and measuring instruments in preparation for the tobacco trading season in the province. (Photo: Luzviminda U. Padayao) 🌱

New buying price for green leaf tobacco

THE PMFTC Buying Station and Curing Facility in Claveria, Misamis Oriental has set new buying prices of green leaf tobacco effective April 1 for the current trading year.

The new buying prices was announced by Gilbert Lim, in charge of the buying station, during the tobacco farmers' forum on March 13 at the plant site in Ane-i, Claveria, Misamis Oriental.

The buying price per kilogram of green leaves are P6.50 for ripe, P5.50 for mature, P4.50 for overripe, P3 for mixed leaves, and P1.50 for immature and over-overripe tobacco.

The said farmers' forum, initiated by David Maciel, Hub Manager of the PMFTC Buying Station, was attended by some 200 tobacco growers from different barangays of Claveria.

During the meeting, Homer Bana, municipal administrator of Claveria, informed the farmers of the approval by the Claveria LGU of the P20,000 per hectare production assistance for each tobacco grower. (Ma. Mercedes M. Ayco) 🌱



THE annual **Tobacco Festival**, one of the highlights of the celebration of Candon City's 120th Anniversary of the historic "Cry of Candon" and the 17th Anniversary of its cityhood, promotes the country's enduring tobacco industry. Like in previous celebrations, the National Tobacco Administration, thru the Candon Branch, conducted the Tobacco Quiz Bee, the Search for the Longest Tobacco Leaf, and for the first time the Virginia Tobacco Festival Cup, and co-hosted with the city government the search for Miss Virginia Tobacco 2018.

Hosting of the 1st Tobacco Festival Sportsfest, a success

THE first edition of the Inter-Branch Virginia Tobacco Festival Cup held in Candon City during the Tobacco Festival 2018 festivities on March 22-23 was a huge success, according to Estrella G. De Peralta, Manager of the host Branch, NTA Candon.

De Peralta said that despite the work schedule and the short notice given to the participants, about 226 of them from different branch offices and the Central Office (Quezon City), it still surprisingly turned out to be a success.

"I am very grateful for the support of the Top Management headed by Administrator Robert L. Seares, Deputy Administrator Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa, and the NTA Directors, and concerted effort of the branch managers and their staff, and the NTA Candon staff and personnel involved in the preparation of the sportsfest," she added.

The AgriPinoy Team emerged as the overall Champion among the nine teams that competed in volleyball, chess, and parlor games. Ilocos Norte/FTSD (Batac) Team and the Central Office Team, copped Second and Third Places, respectively.

List of winners: Parlor Games: 1. AgriPinoy; 2. Ilocos Norte/FTSD; and 3. Vigan; Volleyball: 1. Abra; 2. AgriPinoy; 3. Candon; and Chess: 1. Rogelio C. Santiago (Central Office); 2. Eduardo D. Enriquez (Ilocos Norte / FTSD); and 3. Cesario G. Sambrana (Pangasinan).

Administrator Seares, Directors Pedro Mendiola Jr., Nestor C. Casela and Rodolfo F. Salanga graced the awarding ceremonies. Excelsior Mejia, NTA Employees Association President and team captain of the Central Office, commended the Top Management and the host NTA Candon, for the initial success of the sportsfest.

"We would love to see this happen again, next year," he said.



Winners of Longest Tobacco Leaf Contest. Candon City Mayor Ericson G. Singson (3rd from right) handed over cash prizes to tobacco farmers for winning the Longest Flue Cured Virginia Tobacco Leaf contest, Neutral category (4th to 6th from left) Mariano Rodriguez, of Salvador 2nd, Candon City, first prize; Leticia Galima of Oaig Daya, second prize; and Dominador Rodriguez of Salvador 2nd, third prize.

With Mayor Singson during the awarding were Ilocos Norte Branch Manager and Chairman of the Board of Judges Mario E. Corpuz, Cagayan Branch Manager Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda, Candon Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta, Isabela Branch Manager Herman C. Torres, and Tobacco Dust Plant Operations Manager Hermogenes A. Galvez.

For the Topped Virginia category, winners were Evelyn Valdez of Parioc, first prize; Jerry Annaguey of Sto. Tomas, second prize; and Elvie Alcantara also of Allangigan, third prize.

N.E. Valdez



(L-R) Patricia Anne Nichole Bangug (2nd Runner-Up), Jenny Claire R. Raquel (Miss Virginia Tobacco 2018); and Maegan Sanglay (1st Runner-Up)

NTA Candon is Ms Virginia Tobacco 2018

JENNY Claire Reyes Raquel representing NTA Candon, was crowned Miss Virginia Tobacco 2018 in the latest edition of the Search for Miss Virginia Tobacco at the Candon Convention Center in Candon City on March 23.

Nineteen-year-old Raquel bested 11 other contestants which include Miss La Union Patricia Anne Nichole Bangug, Miss National Tobacco Administration 2018 (Second Runner-Up), and Miss La Union Maegan Sanglay, Miss Philippine Tobacco Institute (First Runner-Up).

Raquel, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture 2nd Year student of Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College and resident of Nanguneg, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur, was crowned Miss Saniata ti Ylocos (World) 2018 in Vigan City last February.

Raquel was also adjudged Best in Swimwear while Bangug, the reigning Mutia ti Bacnotan (La Union), Best in Costume. Other minor awards winners were Miss NTA Vigan Tessie Reyes, adjudged Miss Friendship and Miss Photogenic; Miss NTA Candon Delrio Dumawa, Best in Evening Gown; and Miss Ilocos Norte Jansen Marline L. Cortez, Best in Talent. Twelve candidates competed in the event, which was participated in by the different NTA Branch Offices from Virginia tobacco-growing provinces.

Miss Virginia Tobacco 2017 Shawntel Michole A. Cruz (NTA La Union) handed the crown to her successor.

NTA scholar tops Tobacco Quiz

VENUS F. Garrino, an NTA scholar and BEED 4th Year student of North Luzon Philippines State College (NLPSC), garnered First Place in the Tobacco Festival Quiz Bee, held on March 23 at the Candon City Hall lobby.

Garrino, 19, is the daughter of tobacco seedling grower, Alejo Garrino, from Barangay Tablac, Candon City.

Robert Luis G. Gadut, 18, of Darapidap Candon City, and Princess A. Galima of Bagani Tocgo, Candon City, were second and third placers, respectively. Both are Senior High students of Candon National High School.

NTA La Union Manager Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay, chaired this year's Tobacco Quiz Bee, with FTSD Manager Imelda N. Riñen, Regulation Department Manager Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros, NTA Vigan Manager Minerva P. Mizal, Internal Audit Service Manager Dinah E. Pichay, and NTA Abra Manager Esmeralda G. Valera as members.

NTA ISABELA

QUICK GLANCE: BRANCH PROFILE

- Number of Tobacco Farmers/Hectareage: **5,115 FCs / 4,033.99 has**
- Number of Tobacco-growing Municipalities: **30**
- Number of Tobacco-growing Barangays: **196**
- Number of Staff: **22 Regular; 3 Job Orders**

Isabela farmers get P21-M aid for air-curing shed

NTA Isabela Branch recently released a total of P21-million for the repair and construction of air curing sheds, benefiting 890 tobacco farmers in the province.

The farmers each received P20,000 for the repair or P40,000 for the construction of a collapsible air curing shed for the proper curing or drying of tobacco leaves. Of each amount, P10,000 is given free as part of the calamity assistance for those affected by typhoon Lawin in 2016. The remaining amount carries minimal interest charges and is payable in one or two years.

Recipients must be planting tobacco this year and passed other established criteria for the project. For the construction of new curing shed, farmers must be able to provide counterpart funds to finish the construction.

According to Chief Agriculturist Jeofrey T. Bautista, the farmers are very happy that the NTA is now providing this kind of assistance that directly benefits them.

The ceremonial release of the CBAP held on February 20 was presided by Administrator Robert L. Seares, Deputy Administrator Mel John I. Verzosa and Mayor Josie Maria Bella L. Juan of Quirino, Isabela, at the Provincial Cooperative Development Office, Capitol Compound. The succeeding releases were made by the Branch Office in the municipalities of Ilagan, Tumauini, Quirino, Roxas, Aurora, and Reina Mercedes from March 2 to March 15.

Diesel Engine Sets

Meanwhile, 32 units 9 Hp and 59 units 12 Hp of brand-new diesel engine sets were distributed to some tobacco growers in the province. The members of the NTA Governing Board, Wilfredo Martinez, Teofilo Quintal and Nestor Casela, and Branch Manager Herman Torres presided the turn-over ceremony held last April 6 at the Isabela Branch office.

Prior to the release, the units were tested and inspected by the Commission on Audit. The farmers will amortize the assistance for five years.

Director Martinez said that the NTA Board will help the farmers gain higher farm productivity. Director Quintal said that the project is necessary in producing quality tobacco. Director Casela reminded the farmers to pay their dues for the continuous implementation of the project. He likewise mentioned other NTA projects that will be implemented in 2018 and 2019.

NTA started in CY 2011-2012 the Irrigation Support Program providing individual water pumps and implemented the program for three years. The program was temporarily stopped in 2015 due to lack of funds. During the consultation-visit of the three directors last year, the farmers requested that the program be continued, and upon the recommendation of the directors, Administrator Seares and Deputy Administrator Verzosa endorsed the continuation of the project with additional funds to the NTA Governing Board for approval. (*Herman C. Torres*)

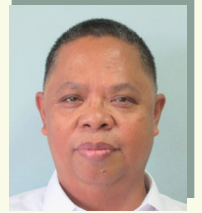


Distribution of diesel engine sets to tobacco growers by (from left) NTA Isabela Branch Manager Herman C. Torres, Director Teofilo R. Quintal, Director Wilfredo C. Martinez, and Director Nestor C. Casela.

Manager's Corner

HERMAN C. TORRES

Manager, Isabela Branch Office



Dying tobacco industry?

THERE is a growing concern whether the tobacco will continue to prosper or it will have its death sooner than expected.

Foremost among the questions asked is, *Is there a marked decline in the number of farmers planting tobacco, not only in the province of Isabela but throughout the country?* On the part of the farmers, the question in their minds is, *Will there be a buyer for their produce amidst the campaign against cigarette smoking on the international, national, and local levels?* Added to this campaign is the NTA's recent declaration that all tobacco planters, to have a sure market for their produce, must secure an agreement or a contract with a licensed tobacco buyer before planting tobacco.

The farmers are very much aware that the taxes collected by the national government from cigarettes had increased, resulting in the decrease of cigarette consumption in the country. The recently passed TRAIN Law (Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion) had again provided increases in taxes for cigar and cigarette products. The aim of our policy makers with these increases is to gather as much income for the government as possible, and ultimately to stop smoking. The government is succeeding with the excise tax collections from tobacco which reached P100-B in 2015.

In the local industry level, the Isabela Leaf Tobacco Company, Inc. (ILTC), the biggest buyer of Native Cigar Filler tobacco in Region 2 declared a crop holiday in 2016 due to absence of market for their tobacco. This year, Compañía De Filipinas (CDF), more commonly known as Tabacalera, the company that had been in the tobacco business for more than 100 years, stopped its operation because of its difficulty in finding a market for its product and inability to make its operations profitable.

With all these things happening, it seems that the industry will have a very rapid natural death.

However, the recent action of the Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. (ULPI) showed that there are still bright prospects for the tobacco business. They bought all the Native tobacco stocks of ILTC and announced to the farmers that they need a bigger volume of Native Cigar Filler tobacco next year. Thus, the vacuum left by ILTC and CDF will be filled by ULPI, which is targeting five million kilograms of Native Cigar Filler next year. For the Burley type, ULPI will be targeting 14 million kilograms in Region 2. Overall, the targeted total volume for Burley and Native Cigar Filler next year will be even higher than the highest recorded volume accepted by the Branch Office.

Aside from the Burley and Cigar Filler Tobaccos, ULPI is growing shaded Cigar Wrapper Tobacco in the province. This year, a newly introduced sub-type, the broadleaf or "poor man's" wrapper, was planted in about 400 hectares which will be expanded next year. The company is likewise continuing its research on the viability of producing the Virginia Tobacco in the province.

So who says the industry is dying? 🍃

NTA Isabela Branch

ISABELA Branch is unique from the other Branch Offices as it is the only Branch Office where Native Cigar Wrapper tobacco is currently grown. This shade-grown wrapper tobacco is called the Connecticut Wrapper. The project area which started at four hectares had now grown to about 41.55 hectares in 16 locations covered by three municipalities, namely, Aurora, Reina Mercedes, and San Mateo.

This year, another type of Native Wrapper tobacco is grown which Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. (ULPI) calls the broadleaf tobacco, or the “poor man’s” wrapper tobacco. This is an open-grown tobacco, stalk-cut and air-dried. This first year of implementation, about 320 hectares were planted by 404 farmers and 65 hectares planted under direct company (corporate) supervision.

Topped Burley tobacco is now the major tobacco type grown in the province. Cigar Filler tobacco, which was the previous dominant tobacco type in the region, is still planted in the province but with lesser area than its previous hectareage. The shift in tobacco type planted is due to the changing market preference.

This year, ULPI is again testing the viability of Virginia tobacco in the province. The company committed to purchase 10,000 kg of Virginia tobacco this year from their contracted areas in Isabela. There were field trials for Virginia tobacco in the past but up to now, planting of the crop has not expanded to commercial scale. The Virginia tobacco under direct company supervision will be flue-cured but those planted under the farmer’s field will be cured under the sun (sun-cured).



Project Updates and Activities

THIS Crop Year 2017-18, the following activities and projects are being implemented by the Isabela Branch:

Registration of Tobacco Farmers

The Branch Office has 5,115 registered tobacco farmers with an aggregate area of 4,033.99 hectares planted to Burley (full flavor), Native (Cigar Filler and Wrapper), and Virginia (flue-cured and sun-cured).

Tobacco Type	No. of Farmers	Area Planted (has)	Expected Production (kg)
Burley, topped	4,010	3,206.68	7,375,000
Native, Cigar Filler	663	386.04	1,458,000
Native, Wrapper, shade grown	16	41.55	74,000
Native, Wrapper, open grown	411	388.31	892,400
Virginia	15	11.21	20,000
TOTAL	5,115	4,033.99	9,819,400

The Isabela Burley Tobacco

by Herman C. Torres

THE production of Burley tobacco in Isabela started in 1981 as a joint experimental effort of the then Philippine Virginia Tobacco Administration (PVTA) and Philip Morris Asia, Inc. through its service company, Lancaster Philippines, Inc., (now Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. or ULPI). These entities jointly provided logistics, financial, technical, and manpower support to the project because they saw that the province of Isabela has similar environmental conditions as the Burley tobacco growing areas in the United States.

The project has been very successful as it is now producing quality Burley that substitutes imported leaf for blending. Owing to its good quality, the tobacco leaf is now branded and is known in the industry as the **Isabela Burley**. According to officials of ULPI, the Burley tobacco grown in Region 2 is considered full flavor and one of the best in the global market today, and sought by its customers.

What was started by 12 farmers in 11.6 hectares in Isabela in 1981 had grown tremendously. Burley tobacco is now planted widely in the northern provinces of Isabela, Cagayan, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, and



Ifugao.

Through the years, Burley tobacco continues to be grown in the province. In Crop Year 2008-09, it became the dominant tobacco type planted in areas covered by the Isabela Branch. For the last five years, the average Burley tobacco produced under the Isabela Branch amounted to 9.78 million kilograms valued at P857-M, planted in about 4,000 hectares yearly. It was in Crop Year 2015-16 when the Branch recorded the highest volume of 11.8 million kilograms.

ULPI is targeting a production of 14 million kilograms for Crop Year 2018-2019.

Among those who were assigned to the project during the experimental stage of this crop who are still working in the tobacco industry are the following: Marcelino Biala, Director for Northern Luzon, ULPI; Engr. Roger Madriaga, Chief Agriculturist; Elizabeth Biala, Supervising TPRO; Magdalena Mamuyac, TPRO III; Edna Perlaoan, Yolanda Ignacio and Leodegario Tolentino, TPRO I, all with the NTA Pangasinan Branch Office. 🍅

Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS)

The TCGS under the Isabela Branch, unlike in Region I, is purely financed by the buyer firm (BF-financed). Under this arrangement, NTA recruits farmers subject to the BF’s evaluation and approval, for which the latter provides production assistance. The BF then pays the service fees at the end of the season based on the total volume delivered. This year, the Branch Office recruited about 393 farmers with 303.28 hectares under the TCGS.

Wet Season Rice Production Project

Last year, the project covered 178 hectares, a big increase from its previous level of 130 hectares. This year, NTA allocated for the Branch Office 216 hectares with P5.4-M production assistance.

Tobacco Growers of the Year Contest

The Branch Office is participating in two categories of the TGY Contest, namely, Burley Improved Flavor and Native Cigar Filler. At present, the Branch Office is monitoring 13 contestants



THE **Isabela Branch Office** is located at Barangay Osmeña, Ilagan City, Isabela. Currently, it covers the tobacco growing areas in Isabela and Nueva Vizcaya. This Crop Year 2017-18, there are 4,033.99 registered areas planted to tobacco, scattered in 30 municipalities under the Branch Office's area of coverage.

The Branch Office is currently headed by Herman C. Torres, Department Manager III, and is ably assisted by Chief Agriculturist Joefrey T. Bautista. The Branch has 25 plantilla positions, three of which are recently vacated by retirement.

BRANCH OFFICE STAFF

Front Row (Seated L-R): Garnet Mae B. Menor (*Secretary I*), Leah M. Ramones (*Computer Operator II*), Zosima G. Caday (*Cashier III*), Lorelie B. Figarola (*Accountant III*), Herman C. Torres (*Department Manager III*), Joefrey T. Bautista (*Chief Agriculturist*), Manuel M. Beltran (*Supervising TPRO*), Rogelio T. Tarun (*Administrative Officer III*); **Second Row (L-R):** Alberta L. Dumelod (*TPRO I*), Bella M. Daguro (*Agriculturist II*), Karla Mae E. Cardona (*TPRO I*), Timoteo C. Dorol, Jr. (*Agriculturist I*), Perpetuo C. Dalloran (*TPRO III*), Victor L. Salvador (*TPRO I*), Teodulo B. Benitez Jr. (*TPRO I*), Lagrimas T. Beltran (*TPRO I*), Gavina C. Domingo (*TPRO I*), Natividad B. Baquiran (*TPRO I*); **Back Row (L-R):** Benjamin C. Lacuesta (*Driver II*), Orlando D. Llantada (*TPRO III*), Jayson Darwin T. Leones (*Job Order Driver*), Cesar P. Cambas (*Agriculturist I*), Rodolfo M. Partido (*Job Order Utilityman*).



(9.73 hectares) for the two contest categories.

Trading and Regulations

The regulatory function of the Isabela Branch is limited to the licensing of tobacco buyers in its area of responsibility. This Crop Year 2017-18, only ULPI will be operating its buying operations in the province. ULPI is a licensed buying station for Burley, Native and Virginia Tobacco, and also a licensed Wholesale Tobacco Dealer for the same types.

The Isabela Leaf Tobacco Company, Inc., maintains its WTD license while disposing its tobacco leaf inventory. The CDF Tabacalera is still currently disposing its last tobacco stocks and already has secured a license to export tobacco leaf.

Renewable Fuelwood Energy Development Program and Restoration of Ecological Integrity (RFEDPREI)

The Branch Office started the project in 2014 with its bamboo plantation. The tree planting component of the project was implemented a year after.

The accomplishments as of last year are shown below.

ITEMS	2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
KPP BAMBOO					
Farmers	130	89	81	22	322
Area (ha)	187.50	212.25	203.50	40.00	643.25
Assistance (Million P)	9.040	8.969	9.206	1.809	29.021
KPP TREE					
Farmers	-	25	26	43	94
Area (ha)	-	43.00	36.50	100.00	179.50
Assistance (Million P)	-	0.740	0.947	1.888	3.575
Synchronized Tree Planting					
Planted tree seedlings	300	115,190	113,413	201,298	430,201

Curing Barn Assistance Project

Under this project, 399 farmers were given P2,000 each for calamity assistance for damages incurred during Typhoon Lawin in October 2016.

In addition, 160 farmers received assistance for the construction of air curing shed in the amount of P40,000 each, while 730 farmers received P20,000 each for the repair of their air curing shed this season.

Farmers' Organizational Development Project

This project at present focuses on the provision of livelihood trainings for the tobacco farm families. In partnership with the ISAT-TESDA (Isabela School of Arts and Trades – Technical Education and Skills Development Authority), the Branch just conducted trainings on Noodles, Bread and Pastry Making and the Training on Food Processing (see related news below). In the pipeline this year is the Training on Agro-Mechanics which will be conducted by ISAT-TESDA in June 2018.

Tobacco Growers Scholarship Program

The Branch Office had supported the college education of 135 deserving sons and daughters of bona-fide tobacco farmers in the province. Fifty scholars had already graduated, including three honor graduates (cum laudes), 40 or 80% of which are now employed.

Isabela farmers, dependents learn bread and pastry production

NTA Isabela, in partnership with the Isabela School of Arts and Trade – Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (ISAT-TESDA), conducted training on Noodles, Cakes and Pastries Production, in the Branch Office in Ilagan City on February 21-23.

This is one of the four training courses for tobacco farmers and their dependents through the agency's Livelihood Assistance Program. The other courses are Sari-Sari/Rolling Store Management, Agro-Mechanic Course, and Food Processing.

The 33 trainees, who are the wives and/or children of tobacco farmers from the different municipalities in the province, were trained in using modern baking techniques, equipment, tools and utensils and other baking appliances; and cooking and preparing their own products, including decorating and storing bakery or pastry products, and different presentation methods, sanitation and safety.

According to Manager Torres, bread and pastry production is a potential source of income for tobacco workers and their families

Pls turn to page 8

by Garnet Mae B. Menor

THEY say that being an extension worker is a difficult job because he or she has to perform many functions. More than giving assistance to the farmers, an extension worker is expected to have the patience and teaching ability of a teacher, the discipline of a good soldier, the persuasiveness of a local leader, and understanding of a social worker.

Having these qualities help the extension worker to succeed in carrying out developmental programs for the agency.

Timoteo C. Dorol Jr., TPRO I, is one of the experienced extension workers of the Isabela Branch who embody those qualities and know so much about extension works.

For this article, I visited him in their house in San Fabian, Echague, Isabela or about 50 kilometers from our Branch Office in Ilagan City. There I met his very accommodating wife, Nida, and two children, while Tito Jun, as I fondly called him, was getting ready for the day's field work.

He said he is not comfortable having interviews, so he offered that I go with him to the field to see how he works while I conduct the interview.

Tito Jun's area of extension work covers a total of 461 hectares tilled by 515 farmers in the different barangays of Mallig and Quezon, Isabela.

The weather was gloomy that day so instead of using his motorcycle, he used his car for the field work.

While inside the car, I asked him what the challenges are in his work as an extension worker.

"The most difficult part is monitoring many different projects being implemented in many different towns and barangays," he said. He then told me the challenges he has to encounter in monitoring, trying

COPING with many roles in extension work

to have me visualize how he conducts field work in his assigned areas in different barangays in one day of field work.

"I remember during my early years of field monitoring without motorcycle. The distance between one barangay to the other is almost 8 kilometers. Imagine how difficult it was then, especially during bad weather."

Tito Jun has been working as an extension worker since 1990, and he knew from his own experience the problems involved in extension work and knew how to cope with them.

He shared to me that the best thing about an extension worker is having close interaction with the rural folks. On top of assisting them in the farm, he is making necessary changes happen in their community, and motivating them to improve their living standards. In return, when he is out in the field, these people make him feel like he is one of their "kapamilya."

"I always treasure this feeling of getting along with the ordinary people, developing social attitude and building a rapport with the farmers whom I serve," he added.

When we arrived in a small barangay in Mallig, Isabela, I expected we would be spending a lot of our time with the farmers in that area. When he came down



from the car, however, he only had a brief chat with the farmers, and we were on the road again. Then, he told me that the farmers treat him as family so they tell him whatever problems they encounter in the field. He listens to them and offers some advice or practical suggestions which will enable them to attain their farming goals.

We arrived at the next location, at barangay Turod in Quezon town, where he stayed longer than in the first barangay. Here I observed closely how Tito Jun interacts with the farmers, and how he spends his day as an extension worker.

He said that he was grateful that the agency has recognized his hard work. He was cited as Model Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer in NTA Isabela in July 2008. His farmer-contestants garnered 1st place in the Search for the Tobacco Growers of the Year (Burley-topped Category) in 2014 and 2016. For assisting the outstanding farmers, he received plaques of recognition.

Towards the end of the trip, Tito Jun said that the job of an extension worker is only for those dedicated and enthusiastic workers. The extension workers like him should be aware of the difficulties in the job, have prepared for the job, and see fulfillment in government service. 🌱

NTA Isabela has new secretary, extension workers



Menor



Cambas



Cardona

NTA Isabela welcomed three new appointees to the Branch Office at the start of the current trading season.

Branch Manager Herman C. Torres said the appointments of **Garnet Mae B. Menor**, Secretary I; **Cesar P. Cambas Jr.**, Agriculturist I; and **Karla May E. Cardona**, TRPO I on December 7, 2017 were confirmed by the Civil Service Commission in January.

Before her appointment, Menor served as Farmer's Relation Unit Supervisor of Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. (ULPI) for five years. She replaced Leah M. Ramones who was promoted to Computer Operator II.

Cambas, a licensed agriculturist and a BS Agriculture cum laude graduate of Isabela State University (Echague Campus), was a former Agronomy Coordinator of ULPI. He succeeded Bella M. Daguro who was promoted to Agriculturist II.

Meanwhile, Cardona a former NTA Scholar and a licensed agriculturist, served as Job Order Secretary for a year before her regular appointment. She graduated cum laude from Isabela State University-Cabagan Campus with a BS Agriculture degree.

The new appointees took their oath of office before Department Manager III, Herman C. Torres on February 8 at the Branch Office in Ilagan City. 🌱

Isabela farmers. ... from page 7

by making donuts, siopao, empanada, and pandesal and selling them in their barangay. The participants received a Certificate of Training leading to National Competency II if they complete the required days for a National Certificate and pass the competency assessment.

The livelihood assistance program, spearheaded by the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD) under the agency's Farmers Organizational Development Program, is aimed at improving the economic and living conditions of tobacco growing communities by providing continuous education and training support and livelihood assistance to the tobacco farmers and their families.

The resource persons/trainers were Sherilyn Silva and Corazon Talon, both instructors of ISAT-TESDA Ilagan. (*Garnet Mae B. Menor*) 🌱

Capability enhancement of the Quality Assurance Lab

INTRODUCING THE ROTARY SMOKING MACHINE & CONTINUOUS-FLOW ANALYZER

by Kris Knowell L. Nugao, NTA-IRD

NTA is committed to enhance capabilities and mobilize resources for the development of the tobacco industry. One of the agency's powers and functions is "to conduct agricultural and industrial research and establish, operate and maintain experimental stations." It is only but fitting that the NTA, as the sole government body overseeing the tobacco industry, spearheads analysis and research programs.

The Industrial Research Department (IRD), headed by Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, serves as the center for standards development, quality assurance for tobacco and tobacco products, development of other industrial uses of tobacco, and the market research and development arm of the agency. One of its four divisions, the Techno Laboratory Services and Instrumentation Division (TLSID), procures equipment to aid in carrying out its functions through the "Capability Enhancement for Quality Assurance" project.

TLSID services the laboratory requirement of the IRD's Quality Assurance Division and the Farm Technology and Services Department in Batac City, and conducts chemical analyses of tobacco leaves and tobacco products in support to product research and operation needs.

To upgrade its existing laboratory facility, TLSID acquired the **Rotary Smoking Machine (RSM)** to complement its linear smoking machine. The rotary smoking machine poses a number of advantages over the linear smoking machine. Aside from being more space efficient, the rotary smoking machine does not use thread or string as "marker" to end puffing. Instead, it



Installation, test run, and calibration of the Continuous-Flow Analyzer last January 24 at the NTA Quality Assurance Laboratory building. (L-R): Myrna O. Lozano (Chief SRS), Supplier's service engineer, IRD Manager Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, Carmelita Albano (Senior Book-keeper), Kris Knowell L. Nugao (Lab Analyst), Rolando dela Cruz (SRS II), and Jianne Gabriel (Chemist). INSET: The installation, test-run, and calibration of the Rotary Smoking Machine conducted by service engineers on January 19 at NTA Quality Assurance Laboratory building.

makes use of a thermal detector. It is easier to clean due to its lower surface area. Moreover, it saves calibration time because only one cigarette holder needs to be calibrated as compared to the linear smoking machine wherein, at the very least, three cigarette holders need to be calibrated.

Smoking machines were developed because of the rising need for tobacco product development and analysis, particularly smoke chemistry analysis, which was instigated by the aggressive global campaign against smoking.

The NTA smoking machine was designed in accordance with ISO 3308 (Routine analytical cigarette-smoking machine – Definitions and standard conditions), ISO 4387 (Determination of total and nicotine-free dry particulate

matter using a routine analytical smoking machine), and ISO 8454 (Determination of carbon monoxide in the vapor phase of cigarette smoke – NDIR method).

Through the smoking machine, NTA now has a way of determining the condemned "prime evil" content of cigarette smoke which are tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide.

The other latest acquisition of the TLSID is the **Continuous-Flow Analyzer (CFA)**.

Continuous-flow analyzers cater to numerous, varying applications including clinical and industrial analysis. The NTA continuous-flow analyzer is designed specifically for analysis of nicotine (CRM N° 35), reducing sugars (CRM N° 38), and chloride (ISO 15682) content of

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Admin Department holds 1st HR confab

To provide updates on various issuances on appointments and other human resource (HR) actions, the Administrative Services Division of the Administrative Department organized the First Human Resource Conference held March 19 to 20 at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City.

The two-day conference was attended by the managers and senior staff from various departments and branch offices of the agency.

The Resource Speaker, Director Noel V. Salumbides of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) NCR Field Office,

Office of the President, gave the NTA officials an orientation on the 2017 Omnibus Rules on Appointments and Other Human Resource Actions (ORA-OHRA) and the Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (PRIME-HRM).

Administrative Services Division Chief Perla C. Manzon, HMRO V, said that the orientation serves as a forum in addressing issues concerning appointments and other human resource actions in the agency.

The 2017 ORA-OHRA were issued by

the CSC to different bodies of government through Memorandum Circular No. 24, Series of 2017.

The guidelines in the implementation of PRIME-HR among the various government agencies are outlined in CSC Memorandum Circular No. 3, Series of 2012.

Among its objectives are the assessment of the HRM practices and capabilities of agencies, empowering agencies in the performance of HRM functions, and promotion of and rewarding excellent human resource management practices.

Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur tobacco growers receive farm equipment, machineries

LOCAL officials of Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur handed out farm equipment and machineries to the first batch of tobacco-rice farmers on April 9.

Mayor Edgar C. Florendo, along with Sangguniang Bayan Members Isidro Cabantac, Paz Vita Cabatu, Kristine Ifurung, and Adriano Villanueva, distributed 36 electric pumps, 11 units of *kuliglig*, and 1 unit thresher to the farmer beneficiaries. Sangguniang Panlalawigan Member Atty. Pablito Sanidad and staff from NTA Candon assigned in Sta. Maria, headed by Senior TPRO Merly S. Sison, witnessed the distribution held at the town plaza.

According to NTA Candon Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta, farmers whose crops were damaged by pest or weather comprise the second batch of beneficiaries.

Sta. Maria is among the top 10 producers of tobacco in the province's second district. For crop year 2017-2018, the third-class municipality has 60 farmer-cooperators from 11 tobacco growing barangays, registered under the NTA Tobacco Contract Growing System. (Photo: Helen Teodora D. Peña)



Production assistance for Pagalungan, Maguindanao farmers

THE local government of Pagalungan, Maguindanao, headed by Mayor Salik P. Mamasabulod (in photo, 3rd from left), led the distribution of production assistance to the tobacco farmers, a project funded by the LGU from its share of the tobacco excise tax per Republic Act 8240. The distribution was held on March 14 at the Municipal Gymnasium of Pagalungan.

Each of the 319 tobacco growers who are all registered with NTA received two bags of fertilizers and two liters of insecticides.

The assistance for the local tobacco growers was part of the proposal made by Nelly G. Alba, Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer III of the NTA Farm Technology and Services Department, to the Pagalungan LGU as part of its Capability Building of Tobacco Farmers. Alba and other local officials assisted the mayor during the distribution.

The municipality produced 96,312 kg of cured tobacco valued at P12,185,896. It is the second largest tobacco-producing municipality next to Pikit, Cotabato in Southern Mindanao. This cropping season, a total of 87.5 hectares of farm lands in five barangays are planted to Batek tobacco.

Mayor Mamasabulod said that the LGU will release more assistance to the farmers to "improve their economic and living conditions." A schedule has been set for the distribution of 200 units of 16-liter knapsack sprayers for the farmers. (Nelly G. Alba / Felisa R. Aurellano)



P5.37 M aid for Alubijid farmers

THE local government of Alubijid, Misamis Oriental has allocated P5.37 million for the purchase of knapsack sprayers and inorganic fertilizers to be distributed to Native tobacco growers in the municipality during the meeting of the Excise Tax Committee (in photo), presided by its chair, Alubijid Mayor Alvin Giovanni Labis, on April 17 at the conference room of the Alubijid Town Hall.

The purchase will be funded by the town's share from the excise tax collection for locally manufactured Burley/Native tobacco products pursuant to Republic Act 8240. The Excise Tax Committee also provided local tobacco growers free galvanized iron (GI) sheets for their air curing sheds.

According to Mayor Labis, beneficiaries must be tobacco growers registered with the National Tobacco Administration and a member in good standing of a tobacco-based cooperative.

The tobacco production in Alubijid is second highest, next to Laguindingan, among the tobacco growing municipalities in Misamis Oriental. About a third of the production of Native tobacco in the province comes from Alubijid. (Ma. Mercedes M Ayco)



Farmers' association gets 50 kuliglig. The local government of Bacarra, Ilocos Norte distributed 50 units of *kuliglig* (two-wheeled trailer pulled by a two-wheeled tractor) to 50 loyal members of the North Eastern Bacarra Farmers Association, and two grass cutters and a Kubota tractor model L 5018 with rotavator for the association. Association chairman Nestor Padron received in behalf of the farmers said machinery from Municipal Agricultural Officer William Ulep. The distribution, held on March 27 at the town's agricultural center, was witnessed by officials from NTA Ilocos Norte.

In photo (from left): Engr. Jesusa D. Calano (TPRO III), Mr. Ulep, NTA Ilocos Norte Manager Mario E. Corpuz, Chief Agriculturist Luzviminda U. Padayao, Mr. Padron, and Myrna D. Salut (Senior TPRO). (Jesusa D. Calano)



NTA joins 2nd Umaani Expo in Pangasinan



(L-R) Director Teofilo R. Quintal, Director Wilfredo C. Martinez, and NTA Pangasinan Branch Manager Engr. Cesario G. Sambrana during the forum.

Marlon G. Facun

THE NTA, through its Pangasinan Branch Office, joined the 2nd Pangasinan Umaani Expo 2018, held in Tebag, East, Sta. Barbara, Pangasinan from March 15 to 19.

The branch office showcased the tobacco industry in the agri-industrial exhibit and trade fair through its booth display of the tobacco dust, tobacco extracts and other uses of tobacco, and meat products of the NTA AgriPinoy Food Processing Facility. Information campaign about the agency through its newsletter, flyers and photo exhibits was also included in the three-day exhibit.

Technical Forum on Tobacco, facilitated by NTA Pangasinan headed by Branch Manager Engr. Cesario G. Sambrana,

Agency plans, programs presented at Congress special committee meeting

by Melanie Rapiz-Parel

THE Special Committee on North Luzon Quadrangle of the House of Representatives invited the NTA top management headed by Administrator Robert L. Seares to talk on the agency's plans and programs for the tobacco farmers.

The agency officials also apprised the Committee of how it responds to the problems and concerns of the tobacco growers specifically in Northern Luzon.

The meeting, presided by the Committee Chair, Ilocos Sur (2nd Dist) Rep. Deogracias Victor B. Savellano, was held at the Yñiguez Hall, South Wing Annex, House of Representatives, Quezon City on February 21.

With the Administrator during the meeting were Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa, and the managers of the different branch offices and departments of the agency.

The 20-member HR Special Committee has jurisdiction on matters directly relating to all policies and programs concerning the development of municipalities, cities, provinces and other local communities in the northwest Luzon area. 🌱



(L-R) Deputy Administrator Mel John I. Verzosa, Ilocos Sur 2nd Dist Rep. Deogracias Victor B. Savellano, and Administrator Robert L. Seares confer before the meeting.

was held on March 19. Present to answer questions from the farmers were Teofilo R. Quintal and Wilfredo C. Martinez, members of the NTA Governing Board. After the forum, the Federation of Pangasinan Farmers Associations and Cooperatives elected their new set of officers. Saturnino Distor was reelected President, along with Domingo Hufana, vice president; Virgilio Villon, treasurer; Dario Briones, business manager; and Dominador Salindong, auditor. The officers took their oath of office before Director Quintal.

Lina A. Cera, Quality Assurance Chief of the NTA Industrial Research Department, and her team also conducted the orientation seminar on Burley Harmonized Grading for the tobacco farmers in the province.

Held during the opening day was the awarding ceremony for the farmers and fisherfolk, who were accredited as practitioners of good agricultural practices for high value crops, corn, and fishery. Among the awardees were Angelito D. Lalata of Amamperez, Villasis, and Florentino G. Gallardo of San Miguel, Balungao, who were recognized for quality tobacco production.

The Provincial Government of Pangasinan holds the said expo annually to provide the farmers and fisherfolks an opportunity to update and expand their knowledge on agriculture, and modern technology that they could employ in their agricultural ventures. 🌱

Cagayan Branch, ULPI visit tobacco farms

NTA Cagayan officials headed by Branch Manager Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda joined the field tour of selected tobacco-producing municipalities in the province by the top officials of Universal Leaf Philippines Incorporated (ULPI) on March 6.

ULPI Vice President Francis Irwin Ang, along with its Regional Directors Marcelino N. Biala (Region 1) and Joel L. Binwag (Region 2) and their production managers, visited the farmers and their tobacco farms in Alcala, Baggao, and Tuao.

According to Riazonda, the field tour gave the ULPI officials a chance to monitor tobacco crops in selected areas and interact with the farmers. "During the interaction, they gave the farmers suggestions for the improvement of their crops based on their field observations and answered queries from the tobacco farmers," she said.

With Riazonda in the field tour were Chief Agriculturist Gilbert A. Taguiam and the Branch extension workers (Agriculturists and TPROs) assigned in the area. The route of the field tour was from Agani/Pared, Alcala, one of the Cigar Filler tobacco-producing municipalities, to Baggao (Masical) and Tuao (Battung), both Burley tobacco-producing municipalities. (Gilbert A. Taguiam) 🌱

Ilocos Norte Branch meets local execs on trading

NTA Ilocos Norte met with chief local executives of tobacco-growing municipalities in Ilocos Norte to discuss trading, particularly on the delivery of tobacco from the farmers to the buying stations or to the wholesale tobacco dealers, and the involvement of principal and secondary field canvassers (FC) in the trading.

According to Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz, the series of dialogues was conducted to address proper recording/documentation of tobacco. Corpuz, along with Director Nestro C. Casela, Chief Agriculturist Luzviminda U. Padayao and other senior officers, met with Batac City Mayor Albert D. Chua on March 2 to discuss trading situations. A follow-up meeting with the mayor, this time with barangay leaders of tobacco-growing communities and FCs residing in the city, was held on April 15.

NTA Ilocos Norte also met on separate dates the mayors and other local leaders of Badoc, Pinili, Dingras, Marcos, Banna, and Sarrat.

According to Manager Corpuz, the mayors were very cooperative in their interactions. "With their cooperation, we expect to increase the volume and accuracy of documenting tobacco, using the Certificate of Purchase (COP), in their respective areas. (Divina D. Pagdilao) 🌱

NTA Records Disposition Schedule approved

by Michelle P. Nacpil, *Administrative Department*

THE National Archives of the Philippines (NAP) has approved the NTA Records Disposition Schedule (RDS) after the review and final validation by the Records Management Evaluation Committee of the NAP Records Management Services Division during a meeting held at the NAP Central Office in Kalaw St., Ermita, Manila on February 26.

The NTA's first-ever RDS contains listing of substantive records of the agency with corresponding retention period which serves as guide in the disposition of records pursuant to the provisions of Republic Act 9470, otherwise known as the "National Archives Act of 2007."

The Administrative Services Division headed by Perla C. Manzon, HRMO V, prepared the NTA-RDS, with the assistance provided by designated Records Officers of the Central Office, and Ma. Teresa A. Pagaragan, NAP Senior Records Management Analyst.

Administrative Department Manager Dr. Cristina C. Lopez and Manzon headed the members of the NTA Records Management Improvement Committee that met with the members of the NAP-RMEC headed by Elizabeth B. Eje.

Also present during the meeting were Regulation Department Manager Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros; Alona A. Manganaan, Executive Assistant IV; Charity P. Garcia, Internal Auditor IV; Jerymy Ann E. Feria, Secretary I; Leah Gina B. Ramboyoung, Records Officer II; and Michelle P. Nacpil, HRMO II. 🌿

AgriPinoy trainees in action

TWENTY-five trainees who are enrolled in Slaughtering Operations NC II of the NTA AgriPinoy Training School conducted their practicum at the Splitting Area of the Slaughterhouse at the training facility in Nanguneg, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur.

The trainees comprise Batch 8 of scholars jointly sponsored by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority and the NTA.

Batch 8 started last March 14. Assessment of the trainees will be conducted at the end of April for the completion of their short course.

According to Nora A. Corre, AgriPinoy Project Manager and Training Director, 69 hogs were available for the practicum. Next batch of trainees will soon follow due to demand of this training course

Those who are interested to enroll in the TESDA-accredited course at the NTA AgriPinoy Training School can visit the training facility at the National Highway, Nanguneg East, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur. *(Melanie Rapiz-Parel)* 🌿



Formal turnover of CNA Certificate from CSC. Administrator Robert L. Seares received from Director Noel V. Salumbides (3rd from left) of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) NCR Field Office, the Certificate of Registration of the Collective Negotiation Agreement (CNA) between management and the NTA Employees Association (NTAEA). The formal turnover was held after the flag ceremony on March 19. The CNA, issued on January 15, 2018 by the CSC, is effective from October 2017 to October 2020. With the administrator during the turnover were *(in photo, L-R)* Charito M. Salazar (Budget Officer IV) and Excelsior R. Mejia (Market Specialist IV and NTAEA president), both members of the NTAEA Negotiating Panel; Administrative Department Manager Dr. Cristina C. Lopez, Internal Audit Service Manager Dinah E. Pichay, and Chief Accountant Milagros C. Tiu, members of the Management Negotiating Panel. *(N.E. Valdez)*

La Union farmers attend seminar-workshops on harmonized leaf grading

by Candido I. Liangao

NTA La Union conducted a series of seminar-workshops on leaf grading for tobacco farmers from different tobacco-growing barangays in the province on separate schedules from February to March.

A total of 621 farmers participated in the seminar-workshops held at the following venues: Food Terminal in Biday, San Fernando City on February 19 (with 65 farmers); People's Hall, San Juan on February 20 (with 40 farmers); Santol Agricultural Office in Santol on February 22 (with 31 farmers); La Union Tobacco Farmers Training Center in Agoo on February 27 (with 13 farmers); and Municipal Hall in Bacnotan on March 1 (with 52 farmers).

Branch Chief Agriculturist Emmabeth B. Fantastico, along with Marcelo T. Pascual, Supervising TPRO, and Elvira N. Sambrana, Senior TPRO, conducted the lectures and leaf grading practicum for the farmers. 🌿

Capability enhancement ... from page 9

tobacco leaf and tobacco products.

According to Myrna O. Lozano, head of TLSID, the two machines, RSM and CFA, are designed to conform to the laboratory standards and procedures set by the Cooperation Center for Scientific Research Relative to Tobacco (CORESTA) and International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

CORESTA is an organization whose members are multinational independent experts, academic and research institutes, laboratories and suppliers of the tobacco industry, including tobacco product manufacturers that have a research and development interest. It responds and resolves noncompetitive issues associated with tobacco production and tobacco product manufacture, control, and use. It has developed over 70 methods for measurement of tobacco parameters and components, smoke chemistry analysis, tobacco products sampling and handling.

These newly acquired state-of-the-art equipment are expected to enhance the capability of the Quality Assurance Laboratory. Amidst the emerging challenges faced by the tobacco industry, NTA hopes to sustain the growth of the industry as a gift to its stakeholders, especially the tobacco farmers. 🌿