

NTA is implementing a multi-sectoral tobacco contract growing in Ilocos Norte beginning crop year 2018-2019.

Nestor C. Casela, a member of the NTA Governing Board, said that the Provincial Government and some tobacco-growing municipalities in Ilocos Norte are now directly involved in the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS).

“This is the first time that the agency has included the local government units (LGUs) in all aspects of the contract growing which is being piloted in Ilocos Norte,” he said.

He announced that farmers, buyers, local government units and NTA are expected to sign a memorandum of agreement on November.

“We expect that the other LGUs, which have multi-million shares from the tobacco excise tax collection of the government, in other tobacco-growing provinces will see the benefit of this

Multi-sectoral tobacco contract growing set up in Ilocos Norte

project,” Casela added.

Tobacco contract growing, in the traditional setup, is exclusively between the private buying firms or the NTA and their respective farmer-cooperators.

TCGS, the agency’s flagship project for quality tobacco production, is a market-oriented and technology-based production system, addressing specific volume and quality requirements of the market.

To raise awareness with farmers about the project, the Ilocos Norte Branch Office, in coordination with the LGUs and buyer firms, started conducting series of information drives and face-to-face meetings with local tobacco growers and farmer groups.

Casela joined the orientation of farmers held at the Pinili Ampitheater in

Pinili, Ilocos Norte on October 10.

According to Branch Office officer-in-charge Luzviminda U. Padayao, Pinili is one of the first nine tobacco-growing municipalities who have committed to join the multi-sectoral TCGS.

“We are implementing the traditional TCGS in only four municipalities in the province,” she said.

The parties in multi-sectoral TCGS shall also comply with the three components of the contract: technical, financial and marketing.

“NTA and the buyer firms will provide the technical, production and marketing assistance, and proper documentation of tobacco,” said Casela.

He added that the Provincial Government will provide farm machinery

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Tobacco output to hit 42 MMT this year

TOBACCO production may reach 42 million metric tons (MMT) this year, higher than the 40 MMT projected in June.

Regulation Department Manager Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros gave the projection in an interview with the media at the sidelines of the “Alternative Tobacco Product Regulations: The Role of the Consumers” press conference in Makati City on September 14.

He said that while the new figure is higher than the original, it still falls short of the 48.179 MMT posted in 2017. This volume was valued at P3.65 billion.

Ambros blamed the decline on the strict nationwide smoking ban, which further reduced cigarette consumption and affected tobacco leaf output, as well as the higher excise taxes imposed on tobacco products.

There is a big reduction in cigarette and cigar production from 90 million sticks in 2013 to 60 million sticks in 2017 due to strict regulations and higher excise taxes.

While this would cause the number of tobacco farmers and areas to drop, Ambros said the government was implementing measures to help the displaced farmers “because it is our mandate to protect them.”

“The government has funds to provide them assistance. We give them alternative

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Ready for the next planting season. NTA Candon held a meeting with small group of farmers under a mango tree in Bantugo, Nagbukel, Ilocos Sur on September 4.

According to NTA Candon Manager Estrella G. De Peralta, the branch office as in other NTA branch offices, usually conducts the information and education drive in August and September, either by municipalities or by clusters of adjacent tobacco-producing communities (barangays), depending on how the operations unit of the branch office devises strategies based on the production schedules. Included in the discussion during these meetings are the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS), with focus on the updates in the package of technologies, financial assistance and other production support, and local government assistance.

“Our farmers need to be provided with the necessary information and guidance to produce quality tobacco. Farmers’ income would always depend on the quality of their produce,” she said. (Photo: Janette P. Casiño)

Pushing contract growing at the LGU Level

NTA needs all the help it can get to serve the tobacco growers. We see no other approach better than forging partnerships with the local government units (LGUs) in implementing projects and programs to advance the welfare of tobacco farmers and their communities.

Administrator Robert L. Seares has been appealing to LGUs who are receiving millions of pesos of funds from tobacco excise tax shares to give more assistance to the tobacco farmers. Right now, our Branch Offices have been working closely with the LGUs in promoting the effective utilization of the funds for the purposes provided by law.

While some LGUs have been giving the biggest portion of their excise tax fund to provision of farm implements, production assistance, and conduct of livelihood training programs, they are not involved in quality tobacco production.

This strategy of partnership can take even greater traction if LGUs are directly involved in TCGS. And this can be more effective if executed using the “steering and rowing” approach, with the NTA doing the steering of quality production and the LGUs doing most of the rowing towards a common direction.

This type of approach will be tested with the multi-sectoral

tobacco contract growing now being implemented for the first time in Ilocos Norte beginning crop year 2018-2019.

NTA and the buyer firms provide the technical, production and marketing assistance and proper documentation of tobacco. The Provincial Government, on the other hand, provides farm machinery and implements, and the LGUs involved will provide farm inputs and assist in monitoring the proper documentation of tobacco production during trading.

With direct involvement, LGUs are not merely receiving the fund and giving back to the farmers with their own projects and programs for their welfare, they are now a part of innovative way to promote quality tobacco production, which has been the reason of their handsome share of fund from the tobacco excise tax.

Helping tobacco farmers produce quality tobacco surely redound to the advantage of the LGUs. So we expect that Ilocos Norte’s initiative will be replicated in other tobacco-producing provinces.

We are all stakeholders of this industry, so we have to help one another, but give our best effort for the farmers, being the backbone of the industry. 🌱



Director Nestor C. Casela explains the benefits of multi-sectoral contract growing to Pinili farmers.

Ilocos Norte hosts FPA-accredited researchers’ meeting

THE NTA Project Review and Evaluation Committee for Protocol Research met with researchers of the agency who are Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA) accredited and those aspiring for the same accreditation on the standardized research protocol on August 14 at Ilocos Norte Branch Training Hall in Batac City.

Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, Industrial Research Department Manager and Committee Chairman, cited the contributions of the accredited researchers in instituting new inclusions to the unified package of technology in tobacco production.

He said that FPA-accredited researchers are the first implementers in the conduct of bio-efficacy test of any production input that is intended for use in the quality tobacco production.

“Apart from the bio-efficacy test, they will give us the scientific way of proving the effectiveness of the product in terms of each effect in growth, yield and physical-chemical quality of leaf including residue. The data generated from the test protocol will be used by proponent company in the registration of the product with regulatory agencies, like the FPA for inorganic and Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) for organic,” he said.

The meeting, facilitated by the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), dealt also on several issues such as the general procedure in treatment considerations for granular-soil inorganic, soil and foliar liquid, organic, and flower-inducer fertilizers; data-gathering standards, and MOA provisions with requesting companies.

The five NTA researchers currently accredited with FPA are Engr. Warlie V. Oribello, Sr. TPRO, La Union Branch; Amelia Veronica L. Lacaden, Acting Senior TPRO, Candon Branch; Engr. Randy I. Abella, Senior Science Research Specialist, FTSD; Avelina O. Guzman, TPRO III, FTSD; and Ariel Calica, TPRO I, La Union Branch.

Those aspiring for accreditation are Roman J. Raganit Jr., Chief Agriculturist, Candon Branch; Marife P. Peralta, TPRO, Abra Branch; Engr. Elmerante A. Ginez, Agriculturist II, Cagayan Branch; Myrna P. Galaraga,

Multi-sectoral tobacco contract ... from page 1

and implements, and the municipalities involved will provide farm inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides, and will assist in monitoring the proper documentation of tobacco production during trading.

“On the part of the farmer-cooperators, they will deliver the stipulated volume of production per hectare and deliver only usable or quality leaves, and pay all his obligations to the agency and their contracting firms,” he said.

According to Padayao, the meeting in Pinili increased farmers’ knowledge about the project and encouraged them to work closely with the branch office and the LGU for assistance.

Package of technology with highlights on updates, roles and responsibilities of the contracting parties, provisions and sanctions of the Memorandum of Agreement, including giving of subsidies, price of tobacco and marketing activities, were also discussed in the open forum.

Municipal Agricultural Officer Philip M. Galang represented Pinili Mayor Samuel S. Pagdilao Jr in the meeting, which was attended by 83 tobacco growers from 15 barangays.

Also present in the meeting were Saturnino A. Agatep, TPRO III of Ilocos Norte Branch, and representatives from Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. 🌱



NTA was granted its ISO 9001:2015 certification two months after passing the Surveillance Audit for Quality Management System (QMS) by the Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS).

The certification was announced by Fortuna C. Benosa, Corporate Planning Manager and Quality Management Representative (QMR), during the Monday flag ceremony on October 15 at the Central Office in Quezon City.

Certified as meeting the upgraded ISO requirements are the management system for the provision of Research and Development; Regulatory Services; and Technology Assistance, Extension and Production Support Services. It covers the NTA Central Office, including the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD) and Product Development Division of the Industrial Research Department (IRD) in Batac City. It is valid from September 19, 2018 to September 2019, and remains valid subject to satisfactory surveillance audits.

NTA now joined 38 other government agencies, provided technical assistance by the Development Academy of the Philippines, that successfully developed, expanded, and transitioned their respective Quality Management System (QMS) certifiable to ISO 9001:2015 standard.

Benosa recognized all the employees, particularly the members of the NTA QMS Core Team, Task Force Chairpersons, and Secretariat, for their successful hurdling of the ISO 2015 requirements and exhorted them to continue ensuring external and internal customer satisfaction. She asked them to sustain their efforts and serve citizens better.

With Benosa in the QMS Core Team are Ma. Teresa B. Laudencia, Deputy QMR and the Task Group Chairpersons



CorPlan Manager Benosa announcing the audit result

Imelda N. Rinen (Technology Development, Extension and Production Support Services), Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan (Research and Development, Control of Frontline Services), Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros (Regulation), Dinah E. Pichay (Internal Quality Audit), Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay (Branch Operations), Priscilla S. Esguerra (Management Information Systems), Excelsior R. Mejia (Customers Satisfaction Determination), Perla C. Manzon (Documents and Records Control), Michelle P. Nacpil (Training and Education), and Edgardo C. Guia (Quality Workplace). Administrator Robert L. Seares and Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa are Overall Chairman and Operations Chairman of the Policy and Steering Team, respectively.

NTA Central Office and FTSD have maintained the standardization clauses under the ISO 9001:2008 since its certification in September 2016. Some of the key updates of ISO 9001:2015 include the emphasis on risk-based thinking to enhance the application of the process approach, improved applicability for services, and increased leadership requirements.

NTA conducted on July 11 the management review of the implementation of the agency's Quality Management System (QMS) for ISO 9001:2015 for areas where improvement is needed or desired in order to improve the processes and customer satisfaction.

It passed the Surveillance Audit for Quality Management System (QMS) and recommended for ISO 9001:2015 certification on July 20. 🍀



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Tobacco Growers of the Year

Provincial Winners, Virginia Category * Crop Year 2017-2018



Margarita Surrel (left) and her assisting extension worker Estrelita E. Nabua

Margarita F. Surrel

Bulbulala, Balaoan, La Union

MARGARITA F. Surrel of Bulbulala, Balaoan, La Union maybe a part of an ageing farmer population, but she is also something of a rarity: a full-time tobacco grower at 72 years old.

And Donya Matda, as she is fondly called, doesn't like a wishy-washy work when it comes to tobacco production, from seedbedding up to gathering, curing and marketing of her leaves.

During tobacco season, she would wake up early and attend to her plants in the farm with her 62-year-old husband Apolonio. She supervised every detail in applying fertilizers, pesticides, and suckercides.

She is very meticulous in selecting the date for transplanting. Movements or positions of the stars and moon in the sky must be considered. And, of course, she must see to it that she observes the prescribed production technology in the process. She must have her own style but she also listens to good farming advice from her extension worker, Estrelita E. Nabua, TPRO 1, of NTA La Union.

Her work attitude and style never fails her. Her neighbors in the farming community would love to admire the quality of her tobacco leaves.

During crop year 2017-2018, she registered an ROI of 156.51% of her 0.58-hectare farms. This gave her the nomination for the TGY Contest and eventually won the provincial level for Virginia Improved Category. (*Estrelita E. Nabua*) 🌱

Elmer R. Abat

San Felipe, San Juan, La Union

AFTER finishing high school, Elmer R. Abat devoted his time in farming. But it was only after a decade as a farmer when he ventured into tobacco farming. For seven years now, he has been planting tobacco to his 0.52-hectare farm in Sitio Candaroma, Barangay San Felipe in San Juan, La Union. He usually works double time in the field, going to the farm early and going home late.

He lives by the famous Ilokano maxim: "*Ti makaturog makamukat; ti nasalukag, agbiag* (He who sleeps gathers eyebeams; he who is diligent lives)." He adopted the package of technology recommended by the agency and complied with the Good Agricultural Practices. His free time is usually spent gathering grasses for his goats or spending quality time with his only son.

Because of his hard work, good attitude and quality of produce, his extension worker, Aurelia C. Santos, TPRO 1 of NTA La Union, convinced him to join the Tobacco Grower of the Year (TGY) Contest during the previous crop year. He hesitated, at first, because his wife, his most reliable farm helper, died of kidney failure two years earlier. With the prodding and guidance of her extension worker, however, he decided to join the contest and nailed it. He was one of the six provincial winners of the TGY Contest for Virginia tobacco category. He received the award during the 31st NTA Anniversary Celebration on July 24. (*Aurelia C. Santos*) 🌱



Francis T. Bautista

Ar-arusip, Badoc, Ilocos Norte

FRANCIS T. Bautista, 46, belongs to a family of hardworking tobacco growers in Ar-arusip, Badoc, Ilocos Norte. His father Alejandro is one of the long-time tobacco producers in Badoc and Francis's older brother Flor has been recognized for the quality of his produce, having awarded TGY provincial winner in 2017.

Bautista winning of this year's TGY provincial contest is no surprise. He has long experience with quality tobacco production with his farming family, and has gained knowledge and practice of the recommended package of technology through long years working with the Ilocos Norte Branch Office.

According to Rosemarie T. Soriano, TPRO I, of the Branch, who assisted the Bautista brothers in their farms, Francis is very diligent and receptive toward updates of production technology, the same winning strategies employed by his brother Flor.

During the contest year, Bautista planted the NC 2326 variety in his half-hectare farm. He produced 1,400 kg (2,800 kg/ha), with 99.02% high grades. This earned him a gross income of P223,481/ha and average price of P79.79/kg. He delivered 100% of his produce to his buyer firm, Trans Manila, Inc. (TMI), and a 100% repayment of the production assistance from NTA.

Bautista also plants rice, corn, onion and vegetables, but he gets more income from tobacco farming. He and wife Merida wisely spend what they earned from farming for the education of their three children, one of them now a police officer in Calocan City. They were able to renovate their house, and purchased farm tools and equipment and a motorcycle. (*Divina D. Pagdilao*) 🌱

NTA LA UNION

QUICK GLANCE: BRANCH PROFILE

- Number of Tobacco Farmers/Hectarage: **4,301 FCs / 2,678.05 has**
- Number of Tobacco-growing Municipalities: **16**
- Number of Tobacco-growing Barangays: **126**
- Number of Staff: **36 Regular; 22 Job Orders**

San Fernando City gives aid to local tobacco growers

THE local government of San Fernando City, La Union has allocated their share from the collection of excise taxes on tobacco, pursuant to Republic Act (RA) 7171 and RA 8240 to different projects that benefit the tobacco farmers and their communities.

This year, the city provided production and livelihood assistance to the local tobacco farmers in the form of farm inputs, farm equipment, and cattle/carabao dispersal.

According to Mayor Hermenegildo A. Gualberto, the city government recognizes tobacco farmers as significant contributors to the city's economic development and progress.

"It is high time that these farmers taste the benefits of their tobacco farming efforts and gain progress with the aid of the city government's share of the tobacco excise taxes," said Mayor Gualberto.

Through the joint efforts of the City Agriculture Office, represented by Florycel G. Obeña and Luzviminda G. Valencia, and the City Veterinarian Office headed by Dr. Flosie D. Pang-es, the city government on July 6 distributed 149 bags of basal fertilizer, 36 bags of urea, 134 bags of sulphate, and 720 sachets of insecticides to the local farmers. All of these are recommended for tobacco use by the National Tobacco Administration (NTA).

Another batch of releases (July 20) included 112 stainless knapsack sprayers, 102 black irrigation hoses, and 56 water pump units.

The city government also allocated budget for 42 cattles and eight carabaos distributed to farmers on September 18, in the hope that this will increase livestock population and farmers' income, and disperse the offsprings to more farmer beneficiaries.

All subsidy distributions were supervised by NTA La Union, through the Area II extension workers headed by Dominador B. Coy-om. The Area II team, in coordination with the city government, was tasked to monitor the implementation and progress of farm activities using the subsidized farm inputs.

For crop year 2017-2018, San Fernando City has 109 farmers, with a total area of 79 hectares of Virginia, Burley and Native Batek farms found in various barangays.

To date, there are additional 36 new farmers recruited for Tobacco Contract Growing System. The farmers will be given P30,000 each as curing barn assistance, in addition to production subsidy. (*Sinfrosa N. Valmonte & Kristin Mae S. Castañeda*)



San Fernando City Mayor Hermenegildo A. Gualberto (center in pink), city government staff, and NTA La Union extension workers spearheaded the cattle/carabao dispersal for tobacco farmers on September 18.

Manager's Corner

DR. GIOVANNI B. PALABAY

Manager, La Union Branch Office



Sin Tax Law: A boon for the tobacco industry?

I HAVE been with the National Tobacco Administration for 35 years now. With that span of time, I became an avid implementor of the Agency's programs and projects in various capacities in my work assignments from the former Philippine Tobacco Research and Training Center (PTRTC), Batac City, Ilocos Norte in Ilocos Region to as far as NTA Cagayan de Oro Branch in Mindanao; until at present as Branch Manager of the NTA La Union. Since my entry into this Agency, it has been my burning desire to contribute something significant for the upliftment of the lives of the tobacco farmers knowing full well that I belong to the government agency that is tasked to oversee the tobacco industry.

I have witnessed how the different stakeholders, especially the tobacco farmers, are benefitted and are still enjoying from the fruits of the programs and projects being implemented by the NTA.

Standing out among the various projects of the NTA that provide tobacco farmers with the most needed assistance is the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS). This project has undeniably helped the farmers improve their living conditions. With increased income, many tobacco farmers were able to improve their dwellings and send their children to college.

Quality tobacco production under the TCGS has not only benefitted local growers but the government as well, through the collection of excise tax from tobacco worth billions of pesos annually. With this huge amount of money, local government units of tobacco-producing provinces and municipalities, who got shares from the excise tax collections under RA Nos. 7171 and 8240, were able to implement projects such as farm-to-market roads, irrigation canals, and other infrastructures for the benefit of the farmers and their communities.

The tobacco industry is really a source of hope for better life for the tobacco farmers in the country, especially now that their local leaders are giving them production support to augment their profit. That hope for better profits, however, is being threatened by strong anti-smoking campaign here in the country and abroad due to health concerns. Anti-smoking advocates blame cigarette smoking as the direct cause of cancer, emphysema and other diseases with high mortality rate.

As signatory to the public health treaty, World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO-FCTC), the Philippines is duty bound to impose tobacco control. This has been the basis of local government units to ban cigarette smoking in public places and impose stiff penalties for offenders. The strict government regulation and higher taxes, with the enactment of RA 10351 or the Sin Tax Law in 2012, has drastically reduced number of smokers, thus affecting sales of cigarettes and eventually local tobacco production.

The sin tax increases have taken their toll on the tobacco industry. Last tobacco season (2017-2018), there was a drastic decline in the number of tobacco farmers and farm

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THE NTA La Union Branch, formerly situated in San Fernando City, holds office in Payocpoc Norte - West, Bauang, La Union. It oversees the production of all types and subtypes of tobacco: Virginia (Neutral or Full Flavor) in the first district of the province; and Burley (Neutral and Improved Flavor) and Native Tobacco (Batek, Liso, LP12, Cigar Filler and Cigar Wrapper) in the second district. Sixteen of the 20 municipalities and city in the province produce tobacco.

The Branch Office exercises regulatory power over four Virginia Tobacco trading centers, five Burley trading centers, six Native trading centers, four wholesale tobacco dealers, and three redrying plants; and 40 field canvassers across the province.

At present, the branch office has 58 personnel, consisting of 36 regular employees and 22 Job Orders, who are dedicated to carry the load of public service to more than 4,000 tobacco farmers.

Before the merger of the eight tobacco agencies which created NTA, the Philippine Virginia Tobacco Administration (PVRTA) operated in the province with Gualberto A. Turalba, from Balaoan, La Union, as the Branch Manager (May 1, 1979 - July 31, 1986). With the creation of the National Tobacco Administration on July 24, 1987, Edilberto V. Carioso, from San Fernando City, La Union, became the first Branch Manager (August 1, 1986 - July 23, 1989), and later appointed Administrator in 1990. Arnold M. Lewis, then Manager of the Marketing Department of the defunct Philippine Tobacco Administration (PTA), was appointed Branch Manager after the reorganization and streamlining of the agency in 1989. He retired on March 20, 1997 and thereafter, Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay, then Division Chief II, took the reins as Officer-in-Charge of the Branch Office (March 21, 1997 - August 8, 1999).



Gualberto A. Turalba



Edilberto V. Carioso



Arnold M. Lewis



Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay

With another round of reorganization in 1999, Dr. Palabay was permanently appointed as Department Manager III.

Important Achievements

In 1979, La Union Branch was the “Prime Mover” of the Full Flavor Virginia Tobacco Production Project. The first two sites of the project were in Butubut Oeste, Balaoan and Gusing Norte, Naguilian, and went full blast in the entire province beginning 1981.

In 1993, La Union Branch was the first to implement the Coal Briquette Project. From 1993 to 2007, majority of the tobacco farmers used coal briquette as alternative fuelwood in curing Virginia tobacco with the purpose of preserving the ecological integrity of the tobacco-producing areas in the province and augmenting the fuelwood requirement of the flue-curing of Virginia Leaf tobacco.

The La Union Branch was awarded the Best NTA Branch Office in 1993 and First Runner-up in 2009. The Regional Productivity Committee, through the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Region I, also awarded the La Union Branch as First Runner-up (Category A) in the Region I Search for the Most Outstanding 5S Implementor in the Government Sector for 2002.

NTA La Union was first among the eight Branch Offices in the level of satisfaction of farmer-cooperators in the Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted in July 2016 by an independent third party, the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic College. This means that the farmers are extremely satisfied with the services, programs, and projects provided by the Branch. On the whole, the survey indicated that La Union Branch also topped the performance rating by farmer-cooperators, researchers, consumers, and buyers garnering 4.82 weighted mean.

At present, the Branch Office is consistently performing its best in all aspects of operations and in the implementation of its various programs and projects. *(Candido I. Liangao)*

NTA La Union Branch

Project Updates and Activities

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

Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS)

Farmer-cooperators (FCs) under the TCGS project are financed by NTA, buyer firm, or buyer firm and local government unit.

For Crop Year 2017-2018, a total of 1,325 FCs with an aggregate area of 754.13 hectares (ha) participated in the contract growing project. Of this, 1,003 FCs with 579.13 ha availed of the production assistance extended by NTA; 132 FCs with 66.75 ha are financed by the buyer firm; and 190 FCs with 108.25 ha availed of the assistance from local government units and buyer firms.

The provision of production assistance for quality production had increased farmers’ productivity and profitability through improved production practices, adoption of contract growing scheme and enhancing participation of buyer firms in production assistance and leaf marketing, and the support of local government units.

IFOIGAP- Rice Project

After the tobacco season, NTA extends production assistance to tobacco farmers to augment their financial need for rice production, under the IFOIGAP Rice Wet Season.

For the past four years (2014-2017), the farmers produced an average yield of 5.64 tons per hectare. La Union Branch had 100% collection performance in Wet Season 2016-2017.

Year (WS)	No. of farmers	Area (Ha)	Ave. Yield (tons/ha)	Collection Performance (%)
2014	270	301.00	5.760	99.22
2015	411	315.75	5.140	97.58
2016	364	295.30	5.820	100.00
2017	553	361.50	5.845	100.00

For this year, 612 farmers with an aggregate area of 476.25 ha availed of the production assistance. Despite the two strong typhoons that wreaked havoc to the rice plants of the farmers, the Branch Office still has managed to collect a 90.42% loan collection this year.

Curing Barn/Air Curing Shed Assistance Project

Curing barn and curing shed are vital components in the production of quality cured tobacco leaves. It has been proven by research that proper curing of harvested tobacco leaves determines at least 40% of leaf quality which will translate to better income of farmers.

For crop year 2016-2017, NTA provided financial assistance to affected tobacco growers in the province adversely affected by Typhoon Lawin in 2016, particularly for rehabilitation of partially damaged curing barns and curing sheds and a construction for those with 70% damage. NTA extended financial assistance for 147 units for construction and repair of flue-curing barns amounting to P4,315,000 and 190 units for repair and new construction of air curing sheds worth P4,514,000. The agency subsidized P10,000 per unit of barn or shed. The repayment performance for the first amortization schedule is 50% for curing barn and 91% for the curing shed.

Improved Tobacco Seedlings Production Project

For the first year of implementation, La Union Branch has



produced 240,000 Virginia tobacco seedlings of NC 2326 variety. Two farmer-laborers were hired to care for the seedlings in the two sites in Barangay Bulbulala, Balaoan.

NTA La Union field personnel managed the project from seedbed preparation to distribution of seedlings. Extension workers, together with Branch Management, took turns in doing the seedbedding activities and supervising for proper seedling care and management. Sowing was done on October 8, 2018 and distribution and release of tobacco seedlings will start in early December.

Target beneficiaries of the free tobacco seedlings are the tobacco farmers of Balaoan, Sudipen, and Santol.

Livelihood Program

The Branch Office sponsored three livelihood trainings, under the agency's Farmers' Organizational Development (FOD) Project, for tobacco farmers and family members. Agro-mechanic training was conducted on September 12, at La Union Tobacco Farmers' Multipurpose Training Center where 22 participants acquired technical knowledge in fixing farm machineries, with Rolando Rocapor as trainer.

Separate trainings on Noodle, Bread and Pastry Production and Food Processing were conducted simultaneously, at La Union Colleges of Science and Technology at Central West, Bauang, La Union, respectively, on June 27-29, with 26 participants. These trainings were facilitated by Elvira N. Sambrana, the former Branch FOD coordinator who now works as Supervising TPRO of the Regulation Department.

Farmers' Cooperatives and Associations

The Branch Office serves as catalyst in the formation of La Union Federation of Farmers' Association (LUFFA). The organizational meeting of the officers and participants from the different tobacco-producing municipalities was held on June 18 at the La Union Tobacco Farmers' Multipurpose Training Center. Also present in the program were NTA Directors Teofilo R. Quintal, Wilfredo C. Martinez, and Nestor C. Casela, and a representative from the Department of Labor and Employment who committed assistance in the registration of the newly formed NTA-assisted associations in DOLE.

The Branch Office also sent participants from the different associations to the capability building trainings provided by the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), in coordination with the Cooperative Department Authority. The trainings on Parliamentary Procedures, Audit Management, and Conflict Management were attended by 11 association/cooperative officers



Front Row (Seated L-R) Keithlyn Joy Madayag (*Secretary Job-Order [JO]*), Mary Ella Mae Agbusac (*TPRO JO*), Emily Abubo (*Forester*), Narcisa Mosomos (*Forester*), Jemaylin Opeña (*Forester*), Jasmine Frigillana (*Forester*), Charity Laduan (*Forester*), Carolyn Natan (*Forester*), Nora Garcia (*Enumerator*), Maricar Andaya (*Enumerator*), Jez Rael Abuan (*Enumerator*); **2nd Row (Seated L-R)** Jaimes Rivera (*Janitor*), Dominador Coy-om (*TPRO III*), Warlie Oribello (*Senior TPRO*), Aurie Nellie Tumbaga (*Administrative Officer V*), Emma Beth Fantastico (*Chief Agriculturist*), Dr. Giovanni Palabay (*Department Manager III*), Marcelo Pascual (*Supervising TPRO*), Christopher Supang (*TPRO III*), Adonis Yangat (*Accountant III*), Nicolas Mendoza (*Cashier III*), Charlie Padilla (*Driver JO*), John Jharrel Aruelo (*TPRO JO*), Clifton Suguitan (*Enumerator*); **3rd Row (Standing L-R)** Ronald Louie Turqueza (*Admin. Aide JO*), Candido Liangao (*Agriculturist I*), Redel Jularbal (*Computer Operator II*), Judith Morales (*Agriculturist I*), Corazon Dacumos (*TPRO I*), Kristin Mae Castañeda (*TPRO I*), Aurelia Santos (*TPRO I*), Estrelita Nabua (*TPRO I*), Rosita Gambito (*TPRO I*), Ruby Dacanay (*TPRO I*), Sinfrosa Valmonte (*TPRO I*), Marie Beth Palabay (*TPRO I*), Leni Arciaga (*TPRO I*), Joannaliza Ordinante (*TPRO I*), Potenciano Apilado (*TPRO III*); **4th Row (Standing L-R)** Felipe Gurtiza (*TPRO III*), Alberto Casison (*Agriculturist II*), Virgilio Garcia (*TPRO I*), Ariel Calica (*TPRO I*), Deogenes Bancifra (*Agriculturist I*), Paulino Abenojar Jr. (*Agriculturist I*), Renato Hidalgo (*Agriculturist I*), and Ambrocio Nisperos Jr. (*TPRO I*)

who claimed they have gained new perspective, awareness, and knowledge to help them run their organization more effectively and efficiently. The trainings also served as avenues for sharing success stories and strategies of successful and progressive cooperative/ association.

NTA Scholarship Program

Since the start of educational assistance to dependents of tobacco growers in 2011, La Union Branch has served 106 scholars, 34 of them graduated from their respective courses, while 16 scholars are currently enrolled in various schools.

Four scholars from NTA La Union are now working with NTA. The two, Judith M. Morales, TPRO I, and John Jharrel B. Aruelo, TPRO Job Order, work as extension workers of La Union Branch. Kathlyn Mae A. Tejano is now Research Specialist Job Order of the Industrial Research Department at the NTA Central Office, while Jennifer R. Bacungan is a Trading Center Clerk.

“Oras ni Mannelon ti Tobacco” OMT Radio Program

The OMT Radio Program for the Branch Office for CY 2017-2018 was on air for 10 weeks or from December 9, 2017 to April 14, 2018 at the Bombo Radio

DZSO San Fernando City, La Union. The 30-minute program (Saturday 12:30 – 1:00 pm) was anchored by Aurie Nellie A. Tumbaga, Administrative Officer V, with Ruby A. Dacanay, TPRO I, as co-anchor. A total of 220 registered (or enrolled) listeners all over the province were given updates on various programs and projects of the agency, tobacco package of technology, and trading rules and regulations.

Tobacco Growers of the Year Contest (TGY)

For CY 2017-2018, La Union Branch participated in three categories of the TGY contest (Provincial Contest), namely, Virginia Improved Flavor, Virginia Neutral Flavor and Native-Batek. There were eight contestants for the Virginia Improved Flavor, four for Virginia Neutral Flavor, and 10 contestants for Native-Batek. Provincial TGY winners, CY 2017-2018 were: Margarita F. Surell of Bulbulala, Balaoan for Virginia Improved Flavor; Elmer R. Abat of San Felipe, San Juan for Virginia Neutral Flavor; and Juan T. Dumplit of Parian Oeste, Bauang for Native Batek. Their assisting extension workers were also cited, namely, Estrelita E. Nabua, TPRO I; Aurelia C. Santos, TPRO I; and Ambrocio R. Nisperos Jr., TPRO I.

MODEL AGRICULTURIST FROM SETBACK TO COMEBACK

by Candido I. Liangao & Kristin Mae S. Castañeda

HIS life is full of ups and downs, but Potenciano H. Apilado, a professional Agricultural Engineer, surely knows how to get by: with full dedication, hard work, and determination.

The biggest challenge came during the rationalization of the agency in 2007 when he was demoted from Agriculturist II to Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer I (same rank as Agriculturist I).

More than his technical knowledge and skills he has learned in the farm since childhood, his love for agriculture strengthened his resolve to stick with the job and pushed himself to strive more and do his job better. His parents are tobacco and rice growers, and his life has been literally revolving around both crops.

After his demotion, he involved himself to accomplishing curing barn designs and constructions, implementing coal briquette as substitute fuelwood for Virginia flue-curing, supervising farmers both in La Union lowlands and Benguet highlands, and recruiting more farmers to plant Virginia.

He pushed for the use of Delivery Reports by the Branch Office to avoid fraud in the delivery of tobacco volume by TCGS farmers and serve as billing document for TCGS fees.

It was the same dedication and hard work that brought success in his first job in the agency as Farm Management Technologist (casual status from October 17, 1988 to April 23, 1989). A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering in 1985 at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University, he is an extension worker by profession. He supervised farmers under the Tobacco Contract Growing Project (TCGP) in the mountainous areas of Inabaan Norte and Inabaan Sur in Rosario, La Union.

He got his permanent position in April 24, 1989 as Senior Farm Management Technologist (FMT). After a brief but successful stint as SFMT working in his assigned area (covering the municipalities of Bangar, Sudipen, and Luna) and convincing Virginia Neutral farmers to join the TCGP Virginia Full Flavor Project under the NTA and the Fortune Tobacco Corporation tie-up, he was promoted to Agriculturist I on July 1, 1989.

He was very punctual at work, waking up early and leaving his residence in San Blas, Bangar early for his scheduled farm visitation, farmers' meeting, field demonstrations, and provision of technical assistance for his tobacco farmers. He sometimes worked on weekends and during holidays to address his clients'

urgent concerns.

His hard work, perseverance and good farm management performance earned him a promotion to Agriculturist II, serving from August 9, 1999 until the unfortunate rationalization in 2007.

His demotion, however, did not entirely dampen his spirit.

He had received commendations for 100% collection performances for both TCGS and Rice Projects, as a top seller for AgriPinoy products, and as a major contributor to his area's improved overall accomplishments.

He was awarded Plaque of Recognition as Extension Worker for guiding his farmer who won the Tobacco Grower of the Year award, provincial category. Last year, he was one of those honored with PRAISE (Program on Awards and Incentive for Service Excellence) Model Agriculturist. He received his award during the 31st Anniversary Celebration of NTA, held at the Central Office on July 14, 2018.

Married to the former Lorna Magpali, 55-year-old Apilado is doting father to their four children: Khrystelle Joy, Lester Dane, Jimvoy, and Jem Zyriel.

After 30 years of service, and more than a decade after his demotion, Apilado is expected to be promoted to Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer III before the year ends. This position carries the same salary grade as Agriculturist II, his former position. At present, he is supervising nine extension workers, 959 farmers with an aggregate area of 909.22 hectares, and six tobacco-producing municipalities in his area of coverage.

Equipped with a clear understanding of his duties and responsibilities as Agricultural Engineer and dedication to assist the farmers for better productivity, he is making sure that agriculture, particularly tobacco production, contributes to the growth of our economy. 🌱



Manager's Corner ... from page 5

areas. This is understandable because traders and manufacturers have to cut down production due to continued business losses, causing displacement of some farmers.

Worse is the fact that the big bulk of money derived from the imposition of the Sin Tax Law is not intended for the tobacco farmers although they are the rightful beneficiaries. The farmers could have used their shares for better production of quality tobacco, ensuring them of sustainable livelihood and opportunity for quality life. It is unfortunate and ironic that the one getting the biggest slice of the fund is the medical and health sector, which is obviously anti-smoking and anti-tobacco farmers. The Department of Health needs the amount to finance the universal health program of the government.

But with another looming increase in excise tax for cigarettes, this may reduce tobacco production further. And should there be another legislation for an excise tax increase, will this create more funds for the universal health care? Yes, indeed.

What an irony! Let there be justice for the tobacco farmers! 🌱

Project Updates and Activities... from page 7

Regulatory Function / Trading of Locally Grown Tobacco

The La Union Branch strictly enforces compliance to the Trading Rules and Regulations of registered buying stations, redrying plant, wholesale tobacco dealer and field canvassers before they can open and accept tobacco deliveries. It is interesting to note that majority if not all buying stations are already compliant to the amended tobacco trading rules and regulations. Majority of the tobacco farmers were already complaint to the policies of their tie-up companies, particularly the maximum weight of tobacco per bale of not more than 50 kilos per bale and in SLOB and the proper classification as guided by both company technicians and

extension workers of the agency. The tobacco farmers are now fully aware of the campaign against non-tobacco related materials (NTRMs) starting from their tobacco field to the time they deliver cured leaves to their market tie-up.

There are 14 buying stations, eight wholesale tobacco dealers (4 Virginia, 3 Burley and 1 native), three redrying plants and 40 field canvassers duly authorized to conduct their business in tobacco trading in the province. The total acceptances of these tobacco companies for 2018 were 5,826,788.48 kilos for Virginia, 1,157,608.05 for Burley and 1,325,107.10 kilos for native tobaccos. There was 30.06 percent reduction as compared to tobacco trading in 2017. 🌱

NTA launches Improved Tobacco Seedling Production Project

TO produce healthy seedlings for quality tobacco crop, the National Tobacco Administration has started pilot testing improved seedling production technology in farmers' field condition.

The Improved Tobacco Seedling Production Project (TSPP) is currently being implemented in the five branch offices, namely, Ilocos Norte, Vigan, Candon, Abra, and La Union.

Each Branch Office is expected to produce 240,000 good quality seedlings (stocky with good root system) to supply the needs of the tobacco farmers. This is based on a 10-hectare module which assigns two seedling production sites of at least 5 hectares per location for each Branch Office.

According to the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), the project is also aimed at evaluating the components of the seedling technology for further study and testing, building a seedling production setting which is climate change resilient, and raising enough and good quality seedlings to supply the needs of the tobacco farmers.

According to FTSD Manager Imelda N. Riñen, 40% of the problems affecting flue-cured tobacco production is due to seedbedding and seedling production/management. She said that it is very essential to give special attention and care to this early stage of tobacco production.

The agency is set to produce from these seedbeds sufficient, good, uniform, strong and healthy seedlings of desired variety needed by the tobacco buyers for quality tobacco production.

"It is undisputed that quality leaves command higher price in the market and this means more income for the tobacco growers," Riñen said.

The project, per approved Board Resolution No. 887-2018 by the NTA Governing Board, is under the Integrated Farming and Other Income Generating Activities Project starting CY 2018-2019.



A team of extension workers from the Vigan Branch Office, headed by Chief Agriculturist Faustino O. Taal, supervised the seedbed preparation of a TSPP site in Barangay Pila, Cabugao, Ilocos Sur. The primary seedbeds, per recommended standards, are managed by farmer cooperador Jazon Argel, who was applying the carbonized rice hull on the seedbed surface during the onsite visit.

FPA-accredited NTA researchers... from page 2

Agriculturist II, Pangasinan Branch; and Christopher S. Cabanog, Agriculturist I, Vigan Branch.

Dr. Bonoan suggested that each branch office must have at least two accredited researchers. He added that the FPA-accredited researchers, along with the aspirants, will be attending the accreditation training for Organic Agricultural Researchers with the BAFS in October.

The members of the Technical and Review Committee for Protocol Research are Internal Audit Service Manager Dinah E. Pichay, Corporate Planning Manager Fortuna C. Benosa, and Finance Department Manager Ma. Teresa B. Laudencia, with Secretariat member Teresita D. Dela Rosa.

Also in attendance are the Managers of the different branch offices.

Coop leaders... from page 12

September 6-7.

Lilia C. Castillo, provincial Coop Development Officer, headed the team of lecturers during the training participated by 30 representatives from tobacco-based cooperatives and associations in Cagayan and Isabela.

"We learned parliamentary procedure, which can help us save much time in conducting meetings," said Saturnino Distor, Chairman of Aramal-Tocok Multi-Purpose Cooperative of San Fabian, Pangasinan.

"With proper use of motions, per Robert's Rule of Order, we can cut lengthy discussions and avoid out-of-agenda topics," added Juan Loreto, Chairman of Bagong Sikat Tobacco Growers Cooperative of San Mateo, Isabela.

Manager Riñen challenged the participants to show organizational and economic advancement with the application of the knowledge, skills and attitude that they have learned in the training.



IRD Manager Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan presiding over the meeting with the team of NTA researchers

La Union meets Aringay agri chief, farmers on tobacco production

NTA La Union met with Municipal Agriculture Officer (MAO) Manuel A. Ugaban of Aringay, La Union and officers of the Aringay Tobacco Growers Association (ATGA) to facilitate information dissemination on tobacco production.

Representing the Branch Office in the meeting held on August 23 at the town’s ABC Hall were Joannaliza D. Ordinante and Kristin Mae S. Castañeda, both Tobacco Production and Regulation Officers I.

Also present were 14 cluster leaders representing tobacco-growing barangays in Aringay.

ATGA President Ronilo R. Masangcay discussed guidelines on the use of tractor which will be given by the Department of Agriculture Regional Office 1. He said that the tractor will be utilized for business purpose. ATGA members will be given tractor rate prevailing in the area, while nonmembers will have discounted rates.

According to Ugaban, the rent will be collected as part of the association’s fund, and will be given back to the members as dividends and/or incentives.

Ugaban also discussed on what remains of the budget allocation, now amounting to P900, 000, given exclusively to ATGA members by the Aringay LGU from its share of excise tax from RA 7171 (Virginia Tobacco) and RA 8240 (Burley/Native Tobacco). He said that the fund is withdrawn and used as facility assistance by ATGA members for land preparation, purchase of fertilizers, and farm labor during tobacco season.

Ordinante and Castañeda gave ATGA cluster leaders who are currently under NTA financing for both Rice and TCGS projects updates on recruitment for Tobacco Contract Growing System for CY 2018-2019. They urged the farmers to enter into market tie-up with leaf buyers according to the purchase commitment for the coming trading season. *(Kristin Mae S. Castañeda)*



ATGA President Ronilo Masangcay presides over the meeting with cluster leaders

Tobacco output to hit ... from page 1

livelihood other than tobacco farming,” he added.

Despite the projected reduced output year-on-year, the agency also expressed optimism on the higher volume of exports, which will begin to expand by end-2018 due to the “good quality” of Burley tobacco leaves that local farmers were able to produce.

“Since we are the only country left as [the] possible source of [the] Burley type, our local producers will expand,” he said.

While the country’s high-trade dependence on the United States has declined significantly, it has strengthened trading with other Southeast Asian countries. Philippine tobacco exports to Asia rose from 47.9 percent of total exports in 2010 to 66.5 percent in 2016.

According to Deputy Administrator Atty. Mel John Verzosa, tobacco demand is pegged at about 81,000 MT annually. Of the total, local producers supply about 48,000 MT, while imports make up the rest. The country’s unmanufactured tobacco imports last year increased by nearly 3% to 53,614.758 MT from 52,115.123 MT in 2016, NTA data showed.

The 2017 volume was valued at \$237.809 million, 9.14% higher than 2016’s \$217.902 million.

Manufactured tobacco imports last year grew by 66% to 9,003.573 MT from 5,401.261 MT the year prior.

Total manufactured tobacco products imported in 2017 was valued at \$123.352 million, 90.2% higher than \$64.853 million the year before. *(Eireene Jairee Gomez, Manila Times)*

NTA holds seminar on fuelwood survey, inventory

THE agency held an orientation seminar on the conduct of survey and inventory of trees for the designated focal persons of its Kahuyang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan (KPP) Project, branch managers, manager and staff of the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), and project coordinators.

The event was held on October 1 at the NTA Branch Office in Candon City.

Also included in the one-day orientation were 30 of the 34 newly hired personnel (contractual) who will conduct the survey, inventory and monitoring of trees already planted under the KPP in tobacco-growing provinces beginning October 2.

During the seminar, the participants learned the technology on forest tree planting, care and maintenance of trees, and evaluation and monitoring of the KPP projects. The new KPP personnel, most of them graduates of forestry or licensed foresters, will be assisted during their field work by the extension workers (Agriculturists or Tobacco Production and Regulation Officers) in charge of their respective KPP areas in the branch offices.

Resource speakers were Prof. Elena Usal-Ato, unit head of the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) College of Forestry; FTSD Manager Imelda N. Riñen; and Hermogenes A. Galvez, Project Manager and KPP National Coordinator.

Before the orientation of new KPP personnel, Prof. Usal-Ato met with KPP Technical Team headed by Galvez, Branch Managers, FTSD manager and staff, and project coordinators on September 24 for a briefing on the Statistical Tools and Methods in Monitoring and Evaluation of Growth, Stand, and Yield of Forest Trees for Fuelwood.

KPP, a component of the agency’s Renewable Fuelwood Energy Farm Project, is a fuelwood venture of the agency that started in 2013. It aims at providing fuelwood to the agency’s tobacco growers to be used in the curing process and to attain sustainability for fuelwood supply.

According to Galvez, the survey and inventory activity will cover 6,846 hectares with 76,483 farmer-cooperators.

The approval of the hiring of contractual KPP personnel for survey and inventory was contained in Resolution No. 913-2018 passed by the NTA Governing Board on September 12. The survey and inventory of existing planted trees is one of the activities undertaken by the agency in its revision of the purpose of the KPP project in order to align with the requirement of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on fuelwood sustainability. 🌱

Cagayan Branch submits report on Typhoon Ompong

by Gilbert A. Taguiam

NTA Cagayan immediately completed the assessment of damage caused by Typhoon Ompong after it slammed into northern part of Luzon on September 15, knocking over tobacco curing sheds and damaging rice and corn crops of the farmer-cooperators of its NTA Rice Wet Season Project for tobacco growers.



Manager Riazonda and staff check on corn stalks damaged by Typhoon Ompong in Baggao town.

In a post-typhoon assessment report submitted to the NTA Central Office in the last week of September, the Branch Office reported a total of P47.4 million worth of damage to rice, corn, curing barn, livestock, and properties of affected tobacco growers.

At least P1.95 million worth of rice crops, with expected sales of P2.14 million, were damaged in the rice farms of Rice Project Wet Season farmer-cooperators in the province, according to the Branch Office report.

The storm, the strongest that hit the country this year, also damaged a total of P42.37 million worth of corn crops, mostly submerged due to the swollen river, of 1,121 farmers who are also tobacco growers.

The storm also hit at a time when 324 farmers have completed the construction or repair of their curing sheds damaged by Typhoon Lawin two years ago. The farmers are beneficiaries of the agency's Curing Barn Assistance Project (CBAP). The monitoring team of the Branch Office reported a total of P2.64 million worth of damage to curing sheds by Typhoon Ompong.

Cagayan Branch Manager Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda, Chief Agriculturist Gilbert A. Taguiam, and some of the operations staff visited affected rice farms in Tuao, Solana, and Piat immediately after the typhoon on September 16, and in Baggao, Alcala, and Peñablanca on September 17.

According to Branch Manager Riazonda, farmers were "in anguish and dismayed" with the damages in their rice, corn and vegetable crops, and some of their poultry and livestock were gone.

"Most of their houses have their roofs blown away by the strong winds and

most were flattened because most of the structures only have black plastic sheet as temporary roofs," she added.

According to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), agricultural losses in affected areas was at P14.3 billion, with Cagayan, where the typhoon made landfall in early dawn of September 15, as one of the most affected regions in terms of damage to rice and corn production.

As an intervention for the rehabilitation of damaged curing sheds, NTA Cagayan has recommended condonation of the 50% of the amount of production assistance of the affected farmers and production subsidy for the next tobacco cropping season.

Other Branch Offices in affected areas have also conducted and submitted their disaster assessment report to the Central Office. According to Administrator Robert L. Seares, the agency is ready to extend subsidy and financial assistance to the affected rice-tobacco farmers.

ULPI's relief operations

NTA Cagayan also joined Universal Leaf Phil. Inc. (ULPI) in the latter's relief operations to hundreds of tobacco farmers in Baggao, Alcala and Amulung, the three most affected municipalities in Cagayan.

The farmers are those who signified (registered) their interest to plant tobacco before the onslaught of Typhoon Ompong. Some 440 farmers received a bag of 25-kg quality rice. Chief Agriculturist Gilbert A. Taguiam witnessed the distribution of goods conducted at designated receiving point by Joel Binwag, ULPI Director for Operations, and Rey Cacal, ULPI Production Manager. 🌱



Administrator Seares formally welcomes Danilo Trongco to the NTA Governing Board after taking his oath on August 28.

Gawad Saka Awardee is new NTA Director

DANILO C. Trongco, long-time farmer and fishpond operator and a former member of the National Anti-Poverty Council, was formally inducted on August 28 as member of the NTA Governing Board, representing the tobacco farmers sector.

His appointment was signed by President Rodrigo Duterte on August 16.

Trongco, a Forest Ranger graduate from Lagangilang, Abra, was a Gawad Saka National Awardee in 2011 (fishery category). His fish ponds in Barangay Nagtupacan in Lagangilang, were used in 2011 by the NTA to test the efficacy of tobacco dust as a molluscicide for fish ponds and organic fertilizer.

He attended his first meeting with the NTA Governing Board during its 89th Special Board Meeting on September 21. He was designated chair of the Committee on Corporate Responsibility and Members of the following committees: Board Audit, Corporate Governance, and Risk Management.

Director Trongco formally joined the Department of Agriculture (DA) family, after his oath-taking as the latest member of the NTA Governing Board before DA Secretary and NTA Chairman Emmanuel F. Piñol on October 23 at the Office of the Secretary, Department of Agriculture in Diliman, Quezon City.

The NTA Governing Board is headed by Secretary Piñol as chairman, with Undersecretary Evelyn G. Laviña, as Alternate Chair, and Administrator Seares, vice-chairman. Trongco has joined Pedro J. Mendiola, Jr. (tobacco traders/exporters sector); Rodolfo F. Salanga (tobacco manufacturers sector); Teofilo R. Quintal (tobacco farmers sector); Wilfredo C. Martinez (tobacco farmers sector); and Nestor C. Casela (academic community sector) as members of the Board. (*Melanie Rapi-Parel*) 🌱

Another expansion area for tobacco production in Mindanao

by Ma. Mercedes M. Ayco

THE city government of Bayugan in Agusan del Sur opens its door for the expansion of tobacco production in Mindanao, particularly in CARAGA region, with the conduct of the Native-Batek Tobacco Production Technology Training for potential tobacco growers on October 17-18 at the ABC Hall in Poblacion, Bayugan City.

The training, spearheaded by the Planning, Research and Agribusiness Division of the City Agriculture Office (CAO), was attended by local farmers and representatives from CAO, the Provincial Agriculture Office, and the CARAGA Regional Agriculture Office.

According to Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, Industrial Research Department Manager of the National Tobacco Administration (NTA), the agency will collaborate with the Bayugan LGU headed by Mayor Kim Lope A. Asis, through the City Agriculture Office, to conduct a technology demonstration on variety, fertilizer and sucker control at particular locations (midland, lowland, and upland).

Dr. Bonoan, one of the resource persons on the first day of training, discussed the mandates of the agency and updates of the tobacco industry. The other resource person from the NTA, Imelda N. Riñen, Manager of Farm



(L-R) Ma. Mercedes M. Ayco, City Agricultural Officer Godofredo B. Curie, Imelda N. Riñen, Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, and Nelly G. Alba.

Technology and Services Department (FTSD), presented the various programs and projects of the agency and discussed tobacco pests and disease management. Ma. Mercedes M. Ayco and Nelly G. Alba, both Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer III from FTSD assigned in Mindanao, discussed the different laws governing tobacco industry in the Philippines, particularly Republic Act Nos. 7171, 8240, and 10351, including the revised NTA Trading Rules and Regulations.

On the second day of training, the participants were given lectures on proper seedbedding and seedling care management, field operations from site selection to transplanting, pest management, fertilizer application,

cultivation, topping, desuckering, harvesting, curing and marketing. Seeds and samples of seedlings and cured leaves were also presented to the participants.

According to Riñen, the participants were all very attentive during the discussion and all are very excited to venture knowing that planting tobacco is labor-intensive as compared to other crops in the region.

City Agricultural Officer Godofredo B. Curie, along with Teresita B. Segundino and Engr. Eulalia E. Pore of the Planning, Research and Agribusiness Division, said that they were all looking forward to the start of the first ever commercial tobacco production in the province after a successful trial phase. 🌱



WORLD FOOD DAY 2018. Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol takes a selfie of the NTA delegation to the culminating program of the 2018 World Food Day (WFD) at the Liwasang Aurora, Quezon City Memorial Circle in Quezon City on October 16. The Department of Agriculture spearheaded the annual observance of WFD in the Philippines, in partnership with the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Secretary Piñol, FAO Representative of the Philippines Jose Luis Fernandez, FAO & DA Zero Hunger Champion Megan Young, and this year's WFD chair and DA Undersecretary Evelyn G. Laviña lead the culminating activity, which was attended by employees of the department and its bureaus and attached agencies and corporations. This year's theme is "Our actions are our future" with the hashtag [#ZeroHunger world by 2030 is possible](#).

Dinah E. Pichay, Internal Audit Service Manager, and Perla Manzon, HRMO V of the Administrative Department, lead the 28-strong delegation to the WFD celebration capped by a candlelight ceremony, and reading of the 2018 World Food Day Pledge by the employees of Department of Agriculture Family. (Neyo E. Valdez) 🌱

Coop leaders learn parliamentary procedure

by Felisa R. Aurellano

THE Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD) conducted training on Parliamentary Procedure for the leaders and workers of the tobacco-based cooperatives and associations.

According to FTSD Manager Imelda N. Riñen, the standard training module on parliamentary procedure is aimed at providing continuing education to the assisted organizations as a means to promote cooperative empowerment and capacitation of their leaders and members.

The training was conducted in two batches in separate schedules.

FTSD conducted the first batch, in cooperation with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), Region 1 Dagupan Extension Office, at the Ilocos Norte Branch Office in Batac City on August 30-31. Participants were 40 representatives from tobacco-based cooperatives and associations in Region 1.

Speakers were Coop Development Specialists from CDA Region 1, namely, Van Ian F. Enriquez, Florentino Lorenzana, and Renee Faye Cariño.

FTSD conducted the second batch, in cooperation with the Provincial Cooperative Development Office of Isabela, at the PCDO Office in Ilagan City on

Pls turn to page 9