

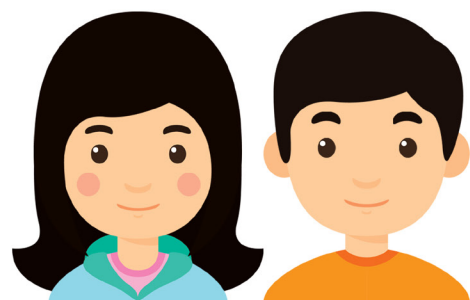


JOIN THE 4-H CLUB OF THE PHILIPPINES

4-H Club is an organization of out-of-school youth (OSY) who are involved in agriculture programs and activities for the four-fold development of the HEAD, HEART, HANDS and HEALTH

BE A LEADER TODAY!

WHO CAN JOIN?



Male or Female
10-30 years old

- Out- and in-school youth
- Has good moral character
- Interested or engaged in agri-based and enterprise development projects

WHAT ARE THE ACTIVITIES?



CAPABILITY BUILDING

Trainings and Seminars
Contests and Competitions
Cross-learning experiences
International Youth Exchange Programs



ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING

Regional Farm Family
Regional Youth Camp
National Convention
Regular Meetings



SUPPORT TO LIVELIHOOD PROJECTS

Communal and Individual Projects

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OUR LAST GRAND SALUTE TO NANAY DOLFA

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JANUARY TO MARCH 2018



Our last grand salute to Nanay Dolfa

-Meitats Piquero Soliva

“ LET US WORK HAND-IN-HAND TO MAKE THIS COURSE IN PLACE SO THAT IT WILL FACILITATE THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO WANTED TO LEARN IN UBI PRODUCTION

- Nanay Dolfa had said.



I met Nanay Dolfa (Adolfa T. Apale) 12 years ago during the celebration of the annual Ubi Festival in 2005 (barely five months from my transfer to ATI in Central Visayas from ATI-Farmers' Training Center in Cagayan de Oro City). I was introduced by my colleague to our partners who were having booth displays of the bountiful harvest of ubi – and Nanay Dolfa was among those who were very active in this endeavor given that she served as Rural Improvement Club (RIC) President in the municipality of Corella in Bohol for quite some time and an active community leader.

Fast forward: When ATI in Central Office invited the second batch of course developers that includes our center, we were then asked to identify one commodity course to be developed into online learning, thus, Yummy Yam: Online Course on Ubi Production came into the picture.

With ATI's strong collaborative partnership among stakeholders in the region, the course development phase was able to pool subject matter specialists (SMS) with different backgrounds, but with common expertise on ubi production.

Nanay Dolfa, who was an ubi farmer for 35 long years, had the great cut on the traditional planting; harvesting to post-harvest. With her experiences, it has been a test of time that indigenous knowledge played a great impact on the ubi production especially the aromatic purplish variety best known in the province, the Kinampay.

At 85, Nanay Dolfa indeed served not just in her locality but the entire e-learning community who enrolled Yummy Yam. Her untimely passing due to a vehicular accident last October 25, 2017 was a sudden lull of our existence and the ubi industry as a whole.

And since we cannot defy death – we at ATI7 would like to thank Nanay Dolfa for her contribution that our e-learners benefitted from.

To recall, it was just last April 25, 2017 that I wrote a Thank You message to Mam Zenaida Darunday, another ubi SMS who went ahead of us, and today, another good soul followed.

To Nanay Dolfa, salamat kaayo sa tanan (thank you very much). Our grand salute to you. ★

Role of youth in agriculture recognized yet again

Marianne B. Antonio

ROSARIO, La Union - Redesigning agriculture in the changing times is possible with the capabilities of the youth.

This was highlighted by Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) to some 400 senior high school (SHS) students during the First Recognition Rites for the passers of the National Competencies and Immersion in support to K12 Program in Region I.

Taposok congratulated the SHS students who have demonstrated competence in various agricultural practices and received their National Certificates. She also expressed her delight in knowing that more and more young individuals aspire to develop their knowledge and skills in farming.

She likewise indicated that deciding what career track to follow is an overwhelming task especially for SHS students. However, Taposok guaranteed that they all made an appropriate decision.

“Now that you are here, having completed your immersion in the farm and now ready to receive your national certificates,

I assure you, students, you are in the right track,” she remarked.

The new curriculum of the Department of Education (DepEd) enables the students to decide for their professional path in the early years of their academic lives.

According to Taposok, DepEd’s K12 Program is not made to pressure the students. “As I have observed, the emerging trend among millennials today is how they feel pressured to be someone who can contribute in the development of the world,” Taposok expressed.

She further inculcated in the minds of the students that engaging in farming or choosing agriculture as a way of life already makes them contributors of development and worldwide food production.

Moreover, Taposok mentioned that there are still several concepts

and practices to improve in the agriculture sector as the world changes in time. She explained, “We need a new generation of farmers. Oftentimes, innovations start with you, millennials. Young and dynamic individuals who are keen in researching and finding ways to help transform livelihood.”

Despite the challenges that lay ahead, Taposok is hopeful in the potential of the youth to drive agricultural advancement. “I hope you will never lose that flaming passion to feed the world and initiate change. I am confident that we can count on you in this pursuit to national progress,” she added.

The activity in collaboration with DepEd, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and Rocapor’s Farm was held last February 23, 2018 in Rosario Town Center. ★

Some 400 senior high school students receive Certificates as passers of National Competencies and Immersion in support to K12 Program in Region I.



Young residents of Barangay Malaria, Quezon City learn how to plant vegetables using recycled plastic bottles.

ATI engages urban youth in agriculture

Erika Z. Vizcarra

CALOOCAN CITY, Metro Manila—In its continuing drive to engage more Filipino youth in agriculture, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) launched the project entitled “Glamourizing Farming through Agriculture: Metropolitan Youth in Sustainable and Healthy Living” this year.

The project aims to develop the appreciation of young people in urban areas toward farming and involve them in agricultural work through the establishment of 4-H Clubs in their communities.

The ATI also seeks to integrate farming into the lifestyle of urban dwellers and develop “champions” in the communities to serve as partners of the Department of Agriculture in its advocacies towards the attainment of food security and sustainability.

The project includes orientation on urban agriculture and 4-H Club in

different barangays in Metro Manila. Starter kits will also be distributed to help these partner communities create individual or communal gardens in their respective areas.

The ATI, through the Partnerships and Accreditation Division (PAD), kicked off the campaign with the residents of Barangay Malaria, Caloocan City. PAD officers spoke to 30 youth and women in the community on the values of basic food production, healthy food systems, and clean urban environment.

In his speech, PAD Chief Renato dela Cruz stressed the importance of building the interest of young people

towards agriculture and involving them in farming. Barangay Malaria coordinator Richard Arceno extended his appreciation for the ATI for creating the project which he said provides an opportunity for the youth to gain knowledge about agriculture as well as the 4-H Club in the Philippines.

The participants were thankful for the lectures which gave them insight on how they can do farming in their backyards. One of them shared, “I’m happy to know that we can still grow [vegetables] in our home using recycled plastic bottles.”

The activity was held on February 22, 2018. It is the first of the monthly series of barangay caravans slated this year. ★

ATIng Mercado sa SiyuDAd highlights local farm products

Jayvee P. Masilang

DILIMAN, Quezon City - Farmers' produce from different parts of the country were on showcase as the "ATIng Mercado sa SiyuDAd" opened during the 31st anniversary celebration of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI).

The two-day activity aims to provide a venue for farmers and fisherfolk to sell their products directly to the public. In turn, consumers will be able to buy fresh, healthy, and affordable food and food products in the most convenient and accessible way.

A total of 25 merchants took part in the event which include ATI's training centers, Learning Sites (LS), Extension Service Providers (ESPs), and other partner merchants. Their products range from raw produce to processed and packaged ones.

One of the merchants is Vizcaya Fresh,

an LS in Nueva Vizcaya that is being assisted by ATI Regional Training Center II. Marketing officer Ronnel Acio shared that they have been participating in trade fairs and market events since the organization started in 2013.

"We offer fresh highland vegetables harvested by small scale farmers who serve as our partners. This kind of event will help us sell our produce and promote it to more buyers in various locations," Acio added.

Senator Cynthia Villar and Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary

for Operations Ariel Cayanan graced the launching of the event and led the ribbon-cutting ceremony, together with ATI Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok and Deputy Director Alfredo Aton.

Sales for the first day amounts to around Php103,000. The total sales is expected to rise as more shoppers came for the second day.

Inspired by the "TienDA Farmers and Fisherfolk Outlet" of the DA, ATIng Mercado sa SiyuDAd was held on January 29 and 30, 2018 at the ATI grounds in this city. ★

Senator Cynthia Villar takes the opportunity to buy fresh vegetables from Vizcaya Fresh at the ATIng Mercado sa SiyuDAd.



ATI jumpstarts career development program for AEWs

Angelica Marie T. Umali

QUEZON CITY, Metro Manila—With the crucial role of agricultural extension workers (AEWs) in the sustainable growth of the sector, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), through its Career Development and Management Division (CDMD), conducted a technical guidance session to ensure their continual professional growth.

Some 25 staff of the ATI-CDMD and Human Resource Management Unit participated in the two-day activity, which mainly familiarized them on the basics of creating a career development program.

Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of National Defense College of the Philippines Dr. Theresita Atienza served as the resource person for the activity. While discussing the concept and theory of career development, Dr.

Atienza highlighted career development as a shared responsibility between the person and the organization.

She underscored the role of local government units (LGUs) and the Department of Agriculture, through the ATI, as champions in the career path of municipal and provincial agriculture offices.

Likewise, she stressed the importance of human resource in influencing the career development

of an agency in terms of training and development; performance appraisal; and compensation planning and remuneration.

As part of the activities during the orientation, the participants proposed interventions based on the functional training requirements of the Institute's clients.

The activity was held on February 19-20, 2018 at Fersal Hotel in the said city. ★

Free seminar highlights culinary, medical importance of herbs

Catheryn M. Villorente

DILIMAN, Quezon City—To encourage healthy lifestyle and sustainable farming, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) held the third of its year-long series of free seminars which focused on production and processing of herbs and spices.

Simultaneous lectures on the culinary and medicinal aspects of herbs and spices were held, with ATI Learning Site for Diversified Organic Farming and Aquaculture cooperator Connie Carillo and Remnant Institute Inc. president Mechelle Palma serving as resource speakers, respectively.

In her lecture, Carillo talked about how to plant, harvest, and process herbs and spices. She also shared how these could be used as flavoring and seasoning for food.



Agripreneur and ATI Learning Site cooperator Connie Carillo talks about the production and culinary uses of herbs.

She reminded the attendees to make sure that they have a target market before venturing into herbs production and processing. She also encouraged them to explore opportunities so that they can be productive in their chosen enterprise.

Meanwhile, Palma stressed the importance of having a healthy lifestyle to prevent illness. She added, "Everything that you put in your mouth will end up in your blood."

She encouraged the attendees to include herbs and spices in their daily

diet and as an alternative to over-the-counter medicines.

Palma also showed how to utilize herbs and spices as infusions, decoctions, warm and cold compress, poultice, ointment, and cream. She also gave tips in harvesting herbs, stressing the importance of leaving 25% of the plant intact for it to grow again.

About 450 individuals from all over the country attended the free seminar which was held on March 9, 2018 at the ATI Mess Hall and Serrano Hall in the Institute's compound. ★

'Pagkain Para sa Masa' site launched at ATI

Jayvee P. Masilang

DILIMAN, Quezon City - With the effort to lessen hunger in urban communities, the Department of Agriculture (DA) established the fourth Urban Agriculture-Pagkain Para Sa Masa (UA-PPSM) site at the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) compound.

With the theme 'Sa maliit na espasyo, may pagkain tayo', the UA-PPSM aims to encourage urban poor families to integrate urban farming into their lifestyle. The Department considers this initiative as a step towards reducing the poverty incidence of the country's growing population.

Part of the activity is the launching of the hydroponics/aquaponics facility led by officials from the DA, ATI, and Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc. Planting materials and garden tools were also turned over to the ATI for the maintenance of the area which is now designated as a communal vegetable garden for residents of Barangay Vasra.

DA Undersecretary for Special Concerns Ranibai Dilangalen led the ceremonial planting as part of the launch. In her message, she highlighted the importance of such activities towards the goal of the Department.

Beneficiaries of the project from Barangay Vasra also gathered for feeding and training programs as part of the activity. The ceremonial signing of the memorandum of understanding was conducted between the DA, ATI, and Aboitiz as well.

The UA-PPSM was first launched on May 31, 2017 in Barangay Bahay Toro in Quezon City. Two more sites were established since then in Davao and Cotabato. The fifth one is set to be established on April 12 in Taguig City. The establishment of the new UA-PPSM site in the ATI was held last March 12 in this city. ★



DA Undersecretary for Special Concerns Ranibai Dilangalen, together with ATI OIC Director Luz Taposok and officials from Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc., takes a look at some of the innovative practices in the communal urban garden.

Libo-o Elementary School set to 'go green'

Bob F. Galvan

DINGLE, Iloilo - About seven million children across the Philippines suffer from hunger and malnutrition, hence, to battle these challenges, the Agricultural Training Institute -Regional Training Center VI (ATI-RTC VI), together with the Municipal Agriculture Office of Dingle, launched the Organic Vegetable Production and Health and Wellness Project in Libo-o Elementary School (LES) last January 18, 2018 at Dingle, Iloilo.

The project aims to enhance the supplemental feeding program of the school; provide healthy and nutritious vegetable for pupils and parents; serve as a leaning-by-doing site for pupils; serve as a learning site; and provide additional source of income for farm families.

It is divided into three components. First, Benchmarking - a one-day benchmarking activity took place in November 30, 2017, at Tagbac Elementary School, Tagbac Sur, Oton, Iloilo. Project beneficiaries were able to learn several organic agriculture technologies practiced in the school.

Second was the Establishment of Community-based Organic Vegetable and Herbal Garden where concepts and

principles of organic agriculture will be employed. This was presented during the launching program on January 18, 2018.

The final component will be the Certification as Learning Site for Agriculture. LES will apply for ATI Learning Site (LS) accreditation to serve as living classrooms featuring the best agricultural practices and farming strategies of highly emulated farmer-owners in the region. This will enhance the project site and later on will be developed as a one stop-shop tourism site.

The project is expected to run until 2019 and eventually improve the community's health and financial conditions. ★

Sen. Villar challenges ATI to teach, assist more farmers

Erika Z. Vizcarra

DILIMAN, Quezon City—Senator Cynthia Villar urged the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), as it marks its 31st year, to ensure that more farmers and fishers are equipped with the appropriate know-how that can help them maximize the opportunities offered through the programs and services of the government.

In her keynote message during the Institute's 31st anniversary celebration, Villar cited studies that show how lack of technical expertise, mechanization, financial literacy, and inadequate access to cheap credit keep Filipino farmers from being more successful and profitable.

"Continuing education and training is the key, as we all know. We need to teach farmers how to be able to access credit programs through banks and cooperatives where interest rates are much lower than the '5-6' lending scheme that they are more accustomed to," she said.

She then thanked the ATI for being a "dependable partner" in her goal to uplift the lives of farmers, fishers, and their families by making them competent and capable.

"Increasing food production and farm productivity alone cannot move them permanently out of poverty, we must also teach more farmers capacity-building strategies and introduce them to new technologies and approaches," she stated, sharing in particular the Institute's role in the training-workshops held through Villar SIPAG, or Social Institute for Poverty Alleviation and Governance.

With access to education and training among farmers and fishers as part of her legislative agenda as the Chairperson of the Senate

Committee on Agriculture and Food, Villar assured that budget allocations for education are being made in development programs for various industries like fisheries, coconut, and sugar.

Villar also enjoined more farms and private organizations to become farm schools, Learning Sites, or training centers as these will offer them more ways to earn, "Farmers are small businessmen and their farm is their small business. Hence, they should be able to learn the principles of business."

She likewise underscored the importance of strong collaboration, coordination, and cooperation to realize sooner the goal to "improve the situation of farmers and fishers who remain among the poorest in the Philippines which is an agricultural country."

Together with Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary for Operations Ariel Cayan, ATI Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok, and ATI Deputy Director Alfredo Aton, Villar led some of the anniversary festivities including the ribbon-cutting ceremonies for the new ATI facility and vehicles and the ATIng Mercado sa SiyuDad.

Prior to these, they graced the launching of seven new publications of the ATI and the awarding of the certificates for the ISO 9001:2015 for



Senator Cynthia Villar calls for more efforts to help farmers, fishers, and agricultural workers who are at the forefront of the agriculture sector.

the Central Office and seven expansion training centers.

"The DA sees the ATI as the agency that will go down to the grassroots to teach our farmers with 'complete' knowledge that will make them productive and competitive," Cayan said.

Taposok, on the other hand, shared the continuing efforts of the Institute to promote urban gardening to teach more Filipinos produce their own food and help ensure affordable and sufficient food for everyone.

The ATI's 31st anniversary celebration was held on January 29, 2018 and gathered its workforce from the Central Office and network of training centers; former directors and employees; and partners from different government, private, and non-government institutions. ★



Duran Farm Agribusiness and Training Center Farm and Training Manager Luis Bausa teaches some participants on the preparation of plant concoctions.

Free Seminar Offers Hands-on Learning on Organic Concoctions

Catheryn M. Villorente

DILIMAN, Quezon City—In its continuous effort to promote organic farming both in rural and urban areas, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) held a free seminar on making organic concoctions.

Luis Bausa, Farm and Training Manager of the Duran Farm Agribusiness and Training Center in San Ildefonso, Bulacan, served as the resource person during the seminar.

He gave some tips on making various concoctions, natural attractants, and plant extracts which can be used as fertilizer and organic pesticides for plants.

He also showed videos on how some concoctions can be used as food supplement for farm animals. Also part of his lecture are some innovative practices including how to water plants using recycled plastic bottles.

The attendees also took part in a hands-on demonstration on the preparation of fermented plant juice, fermented fruit juice, oriental herb nutrient, and hot pepper extract. Among them is 45-year-old Liezl

Cunanan from Quezon City who said that she will make these concoctions at home and use them in her existing garden.

Bausa encouraged the attendees to formulate their own organic concoctions using materials that are readily available in their areas. He emphasized that an organic lifestyle is not just about diet but also a way of thinking.

About 197 individuals from Metro Manila, Central Luzon, and CaLaBarZon attended the free seminar which was held on February 23, 2018 at the ATI Mess Hall.

This is the first of the ATI's two-part seminar on urban agriculture this year. The second one will be held on April 13 which will focus on composting and vermiculture. ★

ATI celebrates role of rural women

Erika Z. Vizcarra

QUEZON CITY, Metro Manila—The Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) furthers its efforts to promote the empowerment of women in the agriculture sector through a symposium dubbed as “Celebrating Women in Agriculture: Rural Women as Pillars of Agricultural Innovation and Development” this National Women’s Month.

Around 50 women farmers, Rural Improvement Club members, extension workers, and ATI Gender and Development (GAD) focal persons joined the activity. During the opening program, ATI Partnerships and Accreditation Division Assistant Chief Elsa Parot welcomed the attendees on behalf of Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok.

Gender specialist Gichelle Cruz kicked off the lecture series as she talked about the Magna Carta of Women and the role of women in agriculture.

“We need to be aware of the gender dimensions of our national services and programs. We need to promote a gender-sensitive culture,” Cruz said as she discussed women’s rights and privileges, GAD activities, and challenges that women face in the country today.

Advocacy films on women and children were also shown, including ‘Boses’ by Erasto Films. Other activities lined up for the week-long celebration are knowledge-sharing sessions, free seminar on organic agriculture, and a tour at ATI learning areas at its central office compound.

The opening program for the ‘Women in Agriculture’ symposium was held on March 22, 2018 at the Great Eastern Hotel in this city. ★



With the great effort of Emma, the farm in the school was maintained through the help also of the parents and students who are working together despite the lack of agricultural facilities.

In 2005 when they started organic farming in the school, it brought helpful effects to the students who are the primary beneficiaries of the feeding program. As described by Emma, their students became active, energetic and they improved a lot in their academic performance and extra curricular activities. Along with its healthy effect,

students also developed positive mind-set as they are tasked to plant and grow plants.

Emma added that she can personally testify how helpful the products of organic farming in ones health. Before, she was frequently hospitalized due to stress and hypertension, but after changing her lifestyle, and shifted into organic vegetable products, she feels even younger than before.

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement defines organic farming as a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people.

It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.

At present, the schools’ farmland contains different healing and profitable plants, such as broccoli, cauli flower, parsley, cucumber, black rice, tomatoes, eggplant, peppermint, lettuce, celery, and many more, “ We have rich soil that we maintain with the use of night crawlers or natural decomposing earthworms, using vermicomposting” said Emma.

Vermicomposting is a method of using worms to transform organic waste into a nutrient-rich fertilizer. It is a healthy and clean way to eliminate wastes going into our landfills, which improves the environment. Vermicomposting is inexpensive, and only takes two to three months to produce results.

Because of these, the school received several recognition in their municipality, where they became a grand slam awardee in organic farming, and they were also awarded by the Department of education, division of Iloilo and became its partner in the project SCHOOL IN THE GARDEN.

“Our sacrifice is worth having awards, indeed, if you love nature, it will return back to you hundred folds of what you have sacrificed” Emma stressed. ★

Green

Reymar L. Latoza

**This article was first published in Iloilo Metropolitan Times 2014.*

IS DEFINITELY IN

Tagbak Elementary School in the municipality of Oton has been recognized nationally for its organic farm. Many local and national agencies, both private and public organizations as well as schools and universities all over the country visited and conducted their research and study about organic farming in the this school.

The people who stay in the soil are commonly associated of having green hands who can make plants grow well. According to Emma Caballero, principal of Tagbak Elementary School, it's really the courage, hard work, and determination that we have planted within us that give chlorophyll in our hands and be successful in the field of agriculture.

“We never expected to reach this far, we started to plant vegetables for our pupils in the school who are malnourished, as part of our feeding program “ said Emma.



The school showcases the use of recycled materials such as old styrofoams, empty plastic bottles, and indigenous materials like bamboo. This practice lowers production cost of the farm.

Youth in agriculture promotes peace, development

Marianne B. Antonio

PIGCWAYAN, North Cotabato - Cultivating younger generations of farmers, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) continues to capacitate the youth in the various facets of agriculture especially in the far-flung areas.

In the recent graduation ceremony for the Academic and Technology Integration and Education Program (ATI-EP) scholars of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), ATI Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok stressed the urgent need to strengthen the involvement of the youth in agriculture because it is central to the fight against poverty and hunger particularly in regions where peace is consistently disturbed.

Taposok explained that there are different circumstances that somehow affect the decisions of the youth to pursue their agricultural interest especially in the remote and conflict-driven areas.

“Not all young bloods in the war zones and poverty-stricken areas have the luxury to dream dreams and have the optimism that their situation will eventually change,” she stated.

Likewise, globalization gives a promise of a glamorous and peaceful urban life that distorts the realistic vision of what national development really means, according to the Taposok.

She therefore emphasized that it is high time to instill in the minds of the young people the beauty and the bright future of agriculture. “It is necessary that we widely incorporate the different practices of this industry in their (youth) educational curriculum, affiliated organizations and even in their respective communities,” she further claimed.

Conveying support and inspiration to the graduates, she remarked,



ATI Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok hands out Certificates of Completion to the ATI-EP Scholars of ARMM during their graduation ceremony.

“Seeing you learn various agriculture technologies, the academic aspects of farming, and farming as business while preserving culture gives us joy in our hearts, satisfaction in our minds and motivation to continuously bring farming closer to the youth.”

With the integrated courses, hands-on exercises on the farm and actual experience, Taposok is confident that they have been equipped with knowledge, skills and positive behaviors of an “Agripreneur” with utmost selflessness and sense of nationalism. Moreover, she believed that at their young age, they are already capable of practicing what they have learned as they have undertaken actual demonstration.

Taposok also assured that ATI will continue supporting and doing its part in the provision of extension services and capability building for sustainable development.

“With our collective efforts, we can inspire more of you, young people who are passionate about agricultural and rural advancement,” she noted.

In conclusion, she reminded them to continue learning and promoting the profession of satisfying basic human needs, contributing to the wellbeing as well as to the survival of the expanding and developing human population.

The ATI-EP Graduation Program was held last February 16, 2018 in GB III Agro Farms, in Region XII. ★



ALL CAN DO

ROARS: Rice and Organic Agriculture Awareness Reach Schools

Melinda P. Petalcorin

Adults should be the ones to make the world a better place to live in but time has come to actually bank on a child's innate curiosity and creativity to secure the future. The problem on food security and malnutrition leave children as the most vulnerable members of society. What's amazing in this fight, however, is that no matter how vulnerable children are, with the help of grown-ups, they actually have the means to combat it.

ATI 8's Advocacy

As the training arm of the Department of Agriculture, the Agricultural Training Institute Regional Training Center (ATI-RTC) VIII sees the need to start mainstreaming the role of children, parents and teachers in reaching the country's goals for food security and nutrition.

Instituted in 2015, the **Rice and Organic Agriculture Awareness Reach Schools (ROARS)** promotes rice self-sufficiency and organic agriculture to various schools in Region VIII. ROARS gives children and teachers insights into the world of agriculture. It also gives them suggestions on how they can become RicePossible and discerning of the safety of the food they buy and eat.

SES roars

While ROARS have had the opportunity to visit various schools, the recent visit to Sagkahan Elementary School (SES) in Tacloban City, Leyte on November 23, 2017 was especially memorable. The visit was ROARS' first in an urban setting. It was also the first school for ROARS where parents showed keen interest in organic container gardening.

Pupils from Grades 4, 5 and 6 participated in ROARS 2017. The 122-strong participants listened to lectures on basic facts about rice and how they can become RicePossible individuals in school and at home. For lunch, they got to taste brown rice, black rice, and red. They were also taught simple organic agriculture practices they can use right away in their Gulayan sa Paaralan with Loreto Godoy as resource person. Godoy is one of ATI's Magsasaka Siyentista and the 2nd placer in the 2017 Best Magsasaka Siyentista regional search.

All for one

Sagkahan Elementary School's Gulayan sa Paaralan coordinator Lilian Salvaña attests to the active participation of the parents. The parents helped in the school garden as a requirement of the DSWD Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). The parents help in the establishment and maintenance of the school garden which support the school's feeding program. This makes it truly special for ROARS because the advocacy has now started to include parents. Since the information campaign is only conducted in the school, the children are encouraged to tell their parents about the advocacy and what they can do at home.



This time however, some of the parents were there to actually witness the demonstration of Godoy, giving them the chance to ask questions. They clamored for more trainings.

Child's play

During the lecture proper of ROARS, a lull due to technical difficulties propelled Godoy to challenge the Sagkahan Elementary School pupils to a talent showdown. One by one, pupils belted out songs and danced to K-Pop tunes. Whether they understood the language used in the songs or not, it showed that children can easily learn whatever it is that they are exposed to. They even make it fun in the process.

The government and the school itself should exhaust all means to inculcate the children about agriculture. After all, one can only reap what one has sown. Lilian Salvaña enthused, "We are very lucky. Here in Tacloban we are the only ones that they visited. They are from Baybay. Did they waste their time coming here (to the children)? No. They taught us about rice awareness and organic agriculture. They taught us to try eating brown rice. As a teacher, and coordinator of the Gulayan sa Paaralan and the school's feeding program. We will learn more if we cooperate in the work that we have to do."

One for all

The Sagkahan Elementary School ROARS experience showed that each person in the household has a role to play in helping the country build food-secure communities. What a family member can do transcends to what he can do to help his community. What's more, teachers are finally getting the help that they need in educating the children about agriculture.

The household used to be the first school for a child. However, in recent times the task of educating children has been turned over to the schools as parents have become busy with finding food for the family. Most have forgotten the fact that food can actually be produced at the household level. If each family can grow its own food, no child shall ever be hungry again.

As the children signed the commitment tarp to become RicePossible, the reality dawns that ATI RTC VIII alone cannot achieve food security and safety goals. SES cannot go at it alone as well. But together, nothing is impossible. Well-informed children will hopefully grow into empowered individuals.

Sagkahan Elementary School is now one of the learning sites of ATI RTC VIII. ★