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ACCESS

The Official Publication of the Agricultural Training Institute

on living both worlds
of culinary and farming

CHEF OT

SHARES HIS STORY

p.6

Go organic
with
Mang Pabie
p. 8

Now serving
**Binahon's
Belly Busters**
p. 13



- 1 [ATI, PCC seal partnership to promote meat, dairy production](#)
ASEAN delegates undergo two-week GAD training
- 2 [Urban agri seminar goes to Valenzuela on DZMM Kapamilya Day](#)
ATI to lead more training programs on livestock, poultry production
- 3 [Farmers, fishers recognized for outstanding contributions in Malacañan](#)
- 4 [1st National Farm Family Congress highlights food security](#)
AEWs learn dairy cattle production, processing
- 5 [ATI holds training on sustainable goat production](#)
'Radyo Eskwela sa Pag-aalaga ng Baboy' goes on air



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THE CONVINCING CHEF 6
Cover Story

LIVING IN A HAPPY, HEALTHY, & ORGANIC WAY 8
Feature

10 [Regional AgriTalk kick-starts in Iloilo](#)

11 [DA Lauds 2017 rice achievers for increased rice production](#)

12 [YFFTPJ Batch 2018 thanks mentors for learning, support](#)

BINAHON'S BELLY BUSTERS 13
Insights

ATI, PCC seal partnership to promote meat, dairy production

Marianne B. Antonio

SAN JOSE CITY, Nueva Ecija – Continuously forming intensive collaborations with key national government agencies, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) has undertaken partnership arrangements with the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC) to assist in the promotion of water buffalo production as an important source of meat and milk for the Filipinos.

ATI Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok and PCC Executive Director Arnel del Barrio signed a memorandum of agreement on said collaborative initiative during PCC's 25th Anniversary Celebration.

Through the ATI Learning Sites (LS), transfer of technology in the production of water buffalo will further be strengthened. The LS will serve as venue for practical learning opportunities in the establishment of buffalo-based village enterprise for smallholder farmers.

Moreover, Senator Cynthia Villar announced during the event that it is high time to raise the supply of local dairy products and, similarly, promote dairy farming in the country.

"If the country produces only one percent of milk and imports 99 percent of it, it means that poor children in the country are not able to drink locally produced milk," she explained.

The celebration mainly involved a knowledge-sharing activity showcasing PCC's initiatives and accomplishments in the past 25 years.

With the theme "Great to Share and Celebrate", PCC's silver anniversary celebration was held at PCC Estrada Hall. ★



ATI OIC Director Luz Taposok (second from left), together with representatives from the PCC, signs the memorandum of agreement, which promotes water buffalo as an important source of meat and milk.

ASEAN delegates undergo two-week GAD training

Angelica Marie T. Umali

MANILA, Philippines—To address the pressing issue on gender gap in the agriculture sector among Southeast Asian nations, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) spearheaded a training course on mainstreaming gender.

This two-week training, led by the ATI Career Development and Management Division, aims to guide practitioners and technical staff in integrating gender-responsive actions in the design and implementation of their agricultural programs and projects.

Around 19 delegates from Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines attended the training. The activity included discussions on Gender and Development (GAD) as well as country reporting on gender status and experiences from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries. Field visits to some of the Institute's partner farms in Batangas were held on April 21 and 23.

ATI Regional Training Center Directors Arlene Flores, Ruth Miclat-Sonaco, and

Vilma Patindol were among the resource persons for the activity. Josephine Costales of Costales Nature Farms, Gloria Pontejos-Morris of MoCa Family Farm Rlearning Center, and Liezl Carolino of Kambingan ni Eba also joined them to discuss the role of women in crop development and value-adding agricultural produce.

At the end of the training, the participants developed and presented action plans integrating GAD concerns in their respective programs.

The training was held from April 15 to 27 at the Bayview Park Hotel. This initiative is the third phase of the project "Strengthening Capability Building in Agriculture Sector in ASEAN Countries" funded by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Government of Japan. ★



Forest Wood Garden owner Joel Frago shares his expertise on herb production in the urban setting at the DZMM Kapamilya Day.

Urban Agri seminar goes to Valenzuela on DZMM Kapamilya Day

Jayvee P. Masilang

VALENZUELA CITY, Metro Manila—Residents of Disiplina Village in Bignay, Valenzuela City were introduced to farming as one of Agricultural Training Institute’s (ATI) partner farmers gave a free lecture on urban agriculture during the DZMM Kapamilya Day.

Joel Frago, owner of the ATI Learning Site, Forest Wood Garden, shared his knowledge and experiences in terms of using small available spaces and recyclable containers they have at home to produce organically grown herbs and vegetables. He also discussed the steps in producing herbs and lettuce as well as the use of organic fertilizers.

“You don’t need to have a lot of resources to go into farming. Used containers at home and small spaces can be used as foundations to go into urban gardening. This is a good startup for families as you can produce your own food at home,” Frago shared.

Aside from the seminar, knowledge products on different commodities and farming technologies were also distributed to the residents of Brgy. Bignay.

Basketball clinic, medical mission, livelihood workshops, free haircut, and distribution of reading glasses were also led by the city government of Valenzuela and the DZMM contingent as part of the activity.

The DZMM Kapamilya Day was conducted last April 28 in this city. ★

ATI to lead more training programs on livestock, poultry production

Marianne B. Antonio

M’LANG, North Cotabato – With the directive of Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Emmanuel Piñol to intensify national livestock, dairy, and poultry program, Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) Officer-in-Charge (OIC) Director Luz Taposok announced that the Institute will spearhead more related training programs across different regions.

In the roll-out of the “Back to Basics–Scientific and Sustainable Livestock and Poultry Production” in Region XII, Taposok explained that the seminar is held following the current administration’s agricultural agenda to make food available and affordable for every Filipino family.

Taposok added that the program is in line with the instruction of the National Agriculture and Fisheries Council, by virtue of Resolution No. 3 Series of 2017, that all livestock training courses should be principally implemented by the ATI in coordination with other concerned agencies.

According to the OIC-Director, the livestock and poultry sub sector is central to the country’s economic development, “More than food production, the industry helps generate income, employment, and several contributions to rural advancement.”

Furthermore, Taposok stated that the activity, held in collaboration with DA, serves as a reminder of the basic practices in livestock and poultry that are proven beneficial even at present.

She urged the participants to go back to basics and maximize the support given to them which includes starter kits, “With our hands joined together, let us achieve economic progress through the traditional farming practices. Technology and innovation are significant but let us not forget to go back to the practices that have been effective especially in poultry and livestock production.”

The Advocacy Campaign Seminar on Scientific and Sustainable Livestock and Poultry (free-range chicken and itik Pinas) Production was held at the M’lang Municipal Gymnasium. ★

Farmers, fishers recognized for outstanding contributions in Malacañan

Angelica Marie T. Umali

MANILA, Philippines—Another batch of champions was yet again recognized for their exceptional contributions in the agriculture and fisheries sector during the Awarding of the Outstanding Farmers, Fisherfolk, and Coastal Communities: The Gawad Saka 2017 and Malinis at Masaganang Karagatan (MMK) 2017.

President Rodrigo Duterte and Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel “Manny” Piñol led the awarding of 28 outstanding farmers and fisherfolk around the country. Also present in the ceremony were Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food Chairperson Cynthia Villar, and Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretaries for Operations Ariel Cayan, for Fisheries Eduardo Gongona, and, formerly, for Agribusiness and Marketing, and Regional Engagement Bernadette Romulo-Puyat.

During the opening of the Gawad Saka 2017, Cayan stressed the essence of our farmers and fisherfolk as food producers for the nation. *“Kailangang maintindihan ng sangkatauhan na wala tayong kinabukasan kung wala ang*

agrikultura—na ang kinabukasan ng susunod na henerasyon ay nakasalalay sa kamay ng mga magsasaka at mangingisda,” he said. (The nation needs to understand how our future depends on agriculture—that the future of the next generation is in the hands of our farmers and fishers.)

Likewise, Gongona noted that the strength of the fisheries sector lies in the strength of its partnership with the local government units. He underscored in his introduction of MMK, “The efforts of the national government will only be effective if they are faithfully implemented in the cities and municipalities; because by taking care of the municipal waters, we take care of the whole fishing industry.”

Aside from plaques and a Presidential citation, cash prizes were given to 23 Gawad Saka awardees, while fishery

project grants were received by the MMK national winners.

The President expressed his hope that the recognition given to them will serve as an inspiration for their fellow farmers, fishers and other stakeholders to continue exploring ways to further improve the evolving agri-fishery sector.

Gawad Saka and MMK are both annual nationwide searches conducted by the DA, through the Agricultural Training Institute and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, to give tribute to outstanding Filipino farmers and fishers.

The awarding ceremony was held on April 5, 2018 at the Rizal Hall, Malacañan Palace in this city. ★

Marieta Rodolfo from Region II receives the award for Outstanding Rural Improvement Club (RIC) on behalf of Sto. Domingo RIC.



1st National Farm Family Congress highlights food security

Catheryn M. Villoriente

QUEZON CITY, Metro Manila— Recognizing the important role of family farming, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) spearheaded the first National Farm Family Congress.

With the theme “The Role of Family Farming in Meeting the Food Security Challenge”, the congress served as a way to further promote family farming as farmers and their families shared their stories on their journey to becoming farmer leaders and agricultural entrepreneurs.

ATI Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok graced the event and underscored the significant contributions of farm families in ensuring food security in the country. She said, “Without you, we will not have food to eat; the entire nation will be in hunger. So you must be proud because you sustain the lives of all Filipinos nationwide.”

Meanwhile, Partnerships and Accreditation Division chief Renato Dela Cruz assured the farm families present of the Institute’s continuing support to their endeavors through programs that will ensure the improvement of their technologies and, eventually, their productivity. He added that the best practices shared during the congress will be the basis for policy-making in the national level in support to relevant activities that will contribute to food security.



ATI Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok (fifth from left), together with officers from the ATI Partnerships and Accreditation Division and various rural-based organizations, unveils a new book entitled “Gunita” during the 1st National Farm Family Congress.

The sharing of best practices of successful farm families highlighted the activity. Among the presenters were the Atanacio family of Laguna, Perlas family of Nueva Ecija, Rocapor family of La Union, and Mahistrado family of Bukidnon. These families encouraged the participants to continually innovate farming technologies and venture into agri-preneurship.

Also part of the congress was the launching of the book entitled “Gunita”. The book

showcases a photographic narrative on the history of the three rural-based organizations supported by the ATI which are the 4-H Club, Pambansang Mannelon, Mag-uuma, Magbabaul, Magsasaka ng Pilipinas or P4MP, and Rural Improvement Club.

The activity was held last June 19-21, 2018 at the Great Eastern Hotel in this city. ★

AEWs learn dairy cattle production, processing

Claris M. Alaska

CABAGAN, Isabela—The Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) in Region II ensures capacity development of agricultural extension workers (AEWs) on dairy cattle production, management, marketing, and processing or value adding of dairy products.

With this, a 10-day training of trainers (TOT) was held which comprised of lectures on breeds and breeding, anatomy and physiology, housing and management, and feeds and feeding. Also discussed were health management, restraining and heat detection, postharvest technology, dairy collection, processing, and record-keeping.

Social technology topics were also included such as adult learning and facilitating skills, training proposal making, and visual aid preparation.

Demonstration and hands-on exercises on formulation of feeds and supplements and processing of dairy products gave the participants the actual experience of the topics discussed. They were also required to prepare training proposal and action plan that will be submitted to ATI for funding.

The TOT was attended by 30 AEWs from different local government units region-wide. It was conducted on June 18-29, 2018 at ATI Regional Training Center II. ★

ATI holds training on sustainable goat production

Ginalyn V. Arbutante

LOS ANGELES, Butuan City - The Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center (ATI-RTC) XIII held a training on Sustainable Goat Production under the National Livestock Program of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

A total of 30 farmer-leaders in Caraga learned about the industry status, breed and selection, as well as disease and farm management of goats.

The participants were able to develop action plans for their respective farms at the end of the three-day training.

The learning activity was made possible through the combined efforts of the Provincial Veterinary and Agriculture offices in the region and ATI RTC XIII led by Officer-in-Charge Center Director Samuel Calonzo.

The training was held last June 6-8, 2018 at the ATI XIII Training Hall in this city. ★



'Radyo Eskwela sa Pag-aalaga ng Baboy' goes on air

Janine L. Cailo

INDANG, Cavite—“May kita sa baboy,” said Agricultural Training Institute Region IV-A Center Director Marites Piamonte Cosico during the launch of “Radyo Eskwela sa Pag-aalaga ng Baboy” on May 21, 2018 at Cavite State University.

This school-on-the-air (SOA) program is being held in partnership with the Provincial Veterinary Office of Cavite and Cavite State University catering to the entire province, specifically the agriculture students of Cavite State University and local swine raisers.

The program serves as a means to disseminate information and knowledge on sustainable pig farming, or “babuyang walang amoy”, to provide an alternative, sustainable, and affordable swine-raising technology for commercial and backyard farmers.

“Radyo Eskwela sa Pag-aalaga ng Baboy” hit the waves on June 25, 2018 and airs every Monday at 11:15AM to 11:50AM until September 24 at 702 DZAS. Some of the topics lined up are on ATI programs; status and potential of pig production in Cavite; sustainable pig farming; organic concoctions; diseases; and the Animal Welfare Act of 1998.

Interested listeners may visit their respective municipal or city agriculture and veterinary offices for more information.

Additionally, a SOA program on organic agriculture, “Usapang OA: Radyo Eskwela ukol sa IDOFS”, and another program on high value crops, “Unlad Saka: Isang Radyo Eskwela sa Bondoc Peninsula”, will be aired over Laguna and Bondoc Peninsula on July 11 and July 13, respectively. ★

THE CONVINCING CHEF

Dexter R. Pagcaliwagan

A chef tends to live in both worlds of culinary and farming.

When the sound of roosters, pigs, and other animals are wished more than the sounds of the busy streets in the metro, one can definitely be called either as a “probinsyano/probinsyana” or a farmer. Oliver John Gomez, an organic farmer from Los Baños, Laguna, might just be one of them.

Chef OJ has only a bite of agricultural background. This was during his childhood days. Even when he was in the corporate world of his culinary career, he was already into goat raising. A couple of months after his early retirement in 2012, he jumped into native pig raising knowing that goats are a hard sell in their area.

Planning to start a lechon business, he started seeking for agencies and organizations that could help him as he had zero knowledge on native pig raising. Fortunately, he was able to attend a course on sustainable pig farming focusing on native pigs at the Agricultural Training Institute International Training Center on Pig Husbandry (ATI-ITCPH).

Just how things were meant to be.

He enrolled in a non-formal course on organic agriculture and with a farm visit at ATI-ITCPH, he was able to know about the Center. Queries and a filled-up application form paved the way for getting a slot on the courses offered by the Center. He was able to attend free courses namely one-day artificial insemination, on-farm production on lactic acid bacteria serum (LABS), sustainable pig farming, and organic agriculture for livestock technicians.



The trainings he attended at ATI-ITCPH helped him make his farm be more efficient with better management on breeding practices, sale of compost, vermicast, and other farm by-products. He also does barter with vegetable trimmings and rejects to reduce feed costs. The fermented feeds, kimchi silage-making, LABS and indigenous microorganisms production, which he learned from ITCPH, minimized his expenses. At the same time, he helps farmers by providing very good quality compost from his pig beddings.

But before he was able to expand his farm, he went to a steep learning curve. "There were several trials and errors in my first years," Chef OJ said. This was the reason for seeking out for the best agencies that would provide him with knowledge and skills. Fitting the description for ITCPH's 'learning by doing' tagline, the Chef was able to transform himself to a real livestock farmer and teacher.

More than just serving food, Chef OJ now shares his enthusiasm with his friends, family, and clients in his advocacy for a healthy lifestyle. Organic farming led him to have a positive outlook in life as it helped him lose some body weight. When he got sick way back, it was then that he started changing his lifestyle and adopted organic farming.

Being an advocate required him not just of his potentials in farming but also of his means of communication in promoting organic agriculture. With the specialized training courses he took at ITCPH, he became more confident to handle his farm and farmer consultations. According to him, he was able to provide technical answers and solutions to amend problems on native pig raising.

Aside from his other businesses, Chef OJ has established connections with different organizations in pursuit of his organic advocacy. He is a consultant at Nu Wave Farmers, empowering the youth to get involved in organic farming and responsible for extension services. He is also a technical committee member at the Philippine Native Pig Owner's Network Association, setting the standards and



regulations for upgrading research and developments on native swine. At present, he is part of the Likasaka Maquiling Native Swine Dispersal Project at Harvest of Hope in Quezon City, a native swine breeding program for special kids.

Since the Chef always does research and development for his produce, he was able to combine all the best practices of the training courses and seminars he attended that would best fit his farm. This provided him the vantage point for convincing his customers that what he offers are superior products in the market.

Aside from making the food tasty and look really good, his advocacy on serving healthy food and promoting a greener environment is already considered a discount for everyone. As a resource person on seminars, consultant in different farms, and an advocate on getting organic to all ages, he finds it gratifying that he is able to impart his knowledge and skills to those who'd like to learn about native pig raising.

"I just want to eat, serve, and sell healthy, safe, and farmer-fair products and produce," Chef OJ said. ★

Living in a HAPPY, HEALTHY, & ORGANIC WAY

Ginalyn V. Arbutante

**This article was first published in the ATI's 'Morphoses' in 2016.*

"[Because of] our love and passion for eating pure, fresh, and organic vegetables and other farm produce, we decided to venture into organic agriculture," shared Pablito Catubig, Magsasaka Siyentista (MS) from San Jose, Dinagat Islands.

GOING ORGANIC

"Mang Pabie" has been into farming for more than 30 years. For him, organic farming is an effective system to maximize resources in a farm, which eventually results in greater profit.

The 58-year-old Mang Pabie added that the best way to increase farm yield and income is through integrated, diversified, and intensified organic farming. This can be achieved by planting various high value crops and vegetables and rearing animals such as goat, swine, poultry, and other livestock in their farm. Likewise, processing these and making these available in the market can mean more income, intensifying this through consistent production and product development.

"We have already earned from our farm produce such as organic vegetables and animals; organic fertilizers such as vermicast, chicken dung; and other by-products. This, in turn, helped me a lot in supporting my family," Mang Pabie proudly said.

As an innovative farmer, he did not limit himself to planting different crops and rearing animals even in just a small parcel of land they owned at first. Mang Pabie said that the high profit he got from his goat production enabled him to send his children to school.

Mang Pabie's wife, Aling Emma, is the treasurer of the Mary Sampaguita AGRA Multipurpose Cooperative and she convinced him to save a certain amount from their farm's income. She also helps Mang Pabie in the farm, together with their children. The whole family has one another no matter what. The couple would always teach the young ones and encourage them to practice smart and practical farming by going into organic agriculture.

HEALTHIER & WEALTHIER

From a one-fourth rented piece of land, Mang Pabie and his family now own a two-hectare land. He utilized his two-hectare farm for organically grown crops and vegetables. He allocated 0.8 hectare for their Palayamanan planted with eggplant, lady finger, cucumber, bitter melon, squash, pepper, and a lot more. Income from goat, poultry, and swine production was a big help for Mang Pabie and his family. With the assistance of Aling Emma and their children, they were able to produce vermicast and vermitea which they also use as fertilizers to their own vegetable production.



Mang Pabie believes that if there is unity, there is success and satisfaction. "Organic farming helped us a lot since the benefits in return will not only be about money but also about health. You save lives in a simple yet fulfilling way," added Mang Pabie.

INFLUENCING OTHERS

As a local farmer-technician, Mang Pabie attended various training, seminars, and workshops conducted by Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) Caraga. Even schools and non-government organizations (NGOs) invited him as resource person in any activities related to agriculture. "Agricultural technicians from government and NGOs usually requested me to be a resource speaker, and I would say 'yes' because I know, in that way, I can share my knowledge and skills based on the experiences I have in my own farm," Mang Pabie stated.

"I'm so much thankful that I was chosen as MS in 2014 specializing in goat production," he stressed. His innovation, capabilities, and persistence in sustaining the production of goats that were entrusted to them as beneficiaries of the Department of Agriculture (DA) made Mang Pabie stand out among others.

Municipal Agriculturist Jo-an Gonzales said that she has no regrets in choosing Mang Pabie as MS in their area, for he is willing to share his knowledge and skills to his fellow farmers. "He can also motivate others and discover farming techniques right in his own farm because farming is already in his mind and heart," she said.

Mang Pabie said that training and extension services from the ATI opened a door of opportunities and change as he continues building his dreams to the fullest.

At this moment, Mang Pabie's house is always open to visitors, particularly his fellow farmers, who need help in acquiring skills and knowledge about organic farming for free. "The fruits of my labor are coming back to me. I'm so thankful for all the help I received and I give it back to those who are needy like I was before," says Mang Pabie.

In fact, he encourages his neighbors to go organic farming and emulate his farming technologies. The humble Mang Pabie ended with this quote, "What I have now are blessings from God, and I know He made me as an instrument to help and inspire others especially the less fortunate ones. [Just] keep going and never stop learning." ★





DA-RFO VI senior science research specialist Anelyn Hapitan talks about goat production and management during the 1st AgriTalk in Iloilo.

Regional AgriTalk kick-starts in Iloilo

Catheryn M. Villorente

ILOILO CITY, Iloilo—As agricultural development in Iloilo continues to grow, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) takes the opportunity to enhance the capacity of local farmers by launching the AgriTalk seminar series in the province.

To provide up-to-date information on agriculture and fisheries technologies, the ATI once again collaborated with Agriculture Magazine of the Manila Bulletin Publishing Corporation for the first of the three regional AgriTalk seminars. It was also made possible in coordination with the Bureau of Agricultural Research and the Department of Agriculture Regional Field Office (DA-RFO) VI.

Around 400 agriculture enthusiasts, farmers, agricultural extension workers,

and students all over the region gathered for the activity.

Dr. Peter Sobrevega, Regional Technical Director for Research and Regulation of DA-RFO VI, graced the event. In his welcome remarks, he acknowledged everyone's role in the advancement of the agriculture sector. "I encourage every one of you to cooperate with DA in its mission to lead the country through self-sufficiency. You have to take advantage of the different programs of the government which will help you in your farming endeavors," he said.

Experts and successful farmers talked about various technologies during the event. These include producing organic concoctions, square-foot

gardening, mushroom production, goat production and management, and edible landscaping.

AgriTalk is in line with the Institute's continuous promotion of urban agriculture in the country. It also provides an avenue for agricultural practitioners to share their successes in their respective ventures.

The Institute is set conduct two more regional AgriTalk seminars this year. The next stops will be in Central Luzon and Davao region.

The first AgriTalk for 2018 was held at SM City Iloilo last May 12, 2018. ★

DA lauds 2017 rice achievers for increased rice production

Erika Z. Vizcarra

PASAY CITY, Metro Manila— Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Manny Piñol congratulated rice farmers in the country for the record-high palay production of 19.28 million metric tons (MT) last year and stressed their integral part in the national thrust for rice sufficiency.

During the 2017 Rice Achievers Awards, Piñol lauded the efforts of Filipino farmers and committed to support them through sustainable initiatives such as the easy access credit program and establishment of solar-powered irrigation system.

“We thought of ways to give farmers the freedom to choose the seedlings, machineries, and other materials they need. Through the easy access credit program, farmers can have the necessary resources to improve their productivity,” Piñol said, adding that loans should not be difficult for farmers in the first place.

Piñol and Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food Chairperson Cynthia Villar led the awarding of outstanding small water irrigation

system associations (SWISAs), irrigators’ associations (IAs), provinces, and cities and municipalities for their contribution to the overall rice production in the country.

Awarded as outstanding SWISAs are Bingao Small Water Irrigation System Association, Inc. (Region I); Barangay Ilaya Kikoy Farmers Association (Region VIII); and Lamare Small Water Impounding System Association, Inc. (Region IX).

The outstanding IAs under the national irrigation system are Kasaganahan Irrigators Association (Region VIII); Molave-Mahayag Farmers Irrigators Association (Region IX); Bagong Silang Irrigators Association (Region II); and Durian-Dacudao Irrigators Association (Region XI). Meanwhile, the top IAs under the communal irrigation system are the United Farmers Association, Inc. (Region XI); Lalawan Sawaga Simaya Farmers Irrigators Association (Region X); Barbaza Farmers Irrigators Association Inc. (Region VI); and Baleguian Organic Farmers Irrigators Association Inc. (Region XIII).

Lamare SWISA, Inc. secretary Gina Lava spoke at the ceremony and thanked the DA for its programs such as the High Yielding Technology Adoption and Farmers’ Field

Schools that enabled them to continue increasing their rice harvest in the past three years .

“We are very fortunate to receive such award and we are committed to use all the blessings we receive for the improvement of our organization so that we can uplift the livelihood of our members and help our fellowmen,” Lava said.

On the other hand, Kalinga, Cagayan, Isabela, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Zamboanga del Sur, and Zamboanga Sibugay were named the top-producing provinces. Moreover, the outstanding municipalities and cities were Tabuk City, Kalinga; Manaoag, Pangasinan; San Mateo, Isabela; Paniqui, Tarlac; Magdalena, Laguna; Sofronio Espanola, Palawan; San Jose, Camarines Sur; Bago City, Negros Occidental; San Miguel, Bohol; Alangalang, Leyte; Molave, Zamboanga del Sur; Malaybalay City, Bukidnon; Hagonoy, Davao del Sur; Tulunan, Cotabato; and Kitcharao, Agusan del Norte.

Winners received trophies and checks for Php500,000 for outstanding SWISAs and IAs; Php1 million for outstanding municipalities/cities; and Php4 million for outstanding provinces. Special citations were also given to 15 provinces, 10 SWISAs, and seven IAs.

In her speech, Villar vowed to push for legislations that will ensure appropriate funding for the development of the coconut, livestock, poultry, sugar, and rice industries.

The Rice Achievers Awards is an annual event of the DA family since 2011 that aims to acquire the full cooperation and support of the local government, organized groups of farmers and irrigators, and extension workers in securing national food production.

The awarding ceremony also served as the culmination event for the celebration of the Farmers’ and Fisherfolks’ Month. It was held at the Philippine International Convention Center on May 31, 2018 and was attended by around 500 guests. ★



Members of Durian-Dacudao Irrigators Association receive their check and trophy from DA officials led by Secretary Manny Piñol.

YFFTPJ batch 2018 thanks mentors for learning, support

Erika Z. Vizcarra

DILIMAN, Quezon City—The 21 young farmers who are part of the 2018 batch of Young Filipino Farmers' Training Program in Japan (YFFTPJ) expressed their gratitude for their teachers and mentors for enhancing their knowledge, attitude, and skills in preparation for the 11-month training program in Japan.

In the closing ceremony of the Pre-Departure Orientation Course (PDOC), the participants of the 2018 YFFTPJ took the opportunity to thank the people involved in making their 75-day preparatory training a success.

"The orientation course gave us the chance to enhance our knowledge through lessons on Nihongo and on different farming technologies. I think the most important result of this course, however, is that we were able to build our self-esteem and develop our personality and attitude," batch president John Paul Cabangal from Pigcawayan, North Cotabato said in his speech.

Cabangal, who was also awarded the most outstanding trainee of the PDOC, underscored that the most significant part of the program is not just about them gaining knowledge but also sharing such knowledge to others. With a short story, he encouraged his fellow trainees to learn from and respond positively to challenges ahead by "shaking it off and stepping it up."

Meanwhile, 24-year-old Richard Dadole from Impasugong, Bukidnon shared his excitement to learn advanced farming technologies from Japanese farmers. Upon his return, he plans to improve their farm, focusing on sweet corn, strawberry, and high value crops.



ATI OIC Director Luz Taposok congratulates this year's participants of the YFFTPJ as she hands out their certificates in the closing ceremony of the 75-day PDOC.

"I look forward to sharing with others whatever I will learn because I feel that we serve as an example for other people, especially the youth, to engage in agriculture," he said.

As part of the PDOC, the young farmers underwent classes on Nihongo, Japanese and Filipino culture and customs, dairy and cattle production, swine production, off-season vegetables, and rice production and farm mechanization.

In her opening message, ATI Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok encouraged the young farmers to learn to adapt to their surroundings and always be ready to take new opportunities especially as they will serve as teachers to the next generation of farmers. Japan Agricultural Exchange Council (JAEC) Local Coordinator Koji Kaneda also spoke to the trainees on how the program will help them grow and level up.

ATI Deputy Director Alfredo Aton was, likewise, grateful for the good partnership

between Japan and the Philippines, stressing that the Institute will continue to carry out the program as the country needs more farmers and the farmers need new knowledge.

ATI Partnerships and Accreditation Division Chief Renato Dela Cruz thanked everyone who supported the program and shared plans for its expansion which started this year with the inclusion of participants from schools like the University of Southern Mindanao. For next year, young women farmers will be also included in the program, a first in its over 30 years of implementation.

The young farmers were bound for Japan last April 12 to represent the country in the ASEAN Young Farm Leaders Training Program in Japan.

The PDOC closing ceremony was held on April 10, 2018 at the ATI Mess Hall in the Institute's central office compound in this city. ★

Binahon's BELLY BUSTERS

Vic Thor A. Palarca

Tinolang Manok, Pineapple Glazed Ham, Crispy Pata, Beef Stroganoff with Broccoli, Embutido, Adobong Baboy, and Mechado--these are some of the tasty home-cooked meals being served at Binahon Agroforestry Farm (BAFF) lately. My family and I went there on a short notice and we had a great time after the farm tour since the lunch didn't disappoint!

It's been a while that I have been telling my older brother and sister who's among the Learning Site (LS) partners of Agricultural Training Institute Regional Training Center X about BAFF. Among the 40 LS, BAFF stands out as one of the best.

BAFF is a model upland farm that practices sustainable ecological agriculture. In the farm, one can learn and experience the

application of different systems in terms of farm production as well as nature conservation. It is also interesting to note that BAFF puts nature, agriculture, and production in one harmonious balance. Everything in the farm has its specific role and all elements are interconnected from the planting of farm commodities down to food preparation.

"Each serving is a delightful treat of its own."

The farm, owned and managed by Magsasaka Siyentista (MS) Henry Binahon, and wife Perla, has also improved a lot (improved is an understatement) since hosting the 1st MS National Summit in Northern Mindanao in September 2017.

As for our dining experience, I had a hard time picking out the best dish around since each serving is a delightful treat of its own. The pineapple glazed ham was so tender it clings to the fork when I helped myself a slab of organic porcine meat. The tinolang manok with camote tops was bursting with flavor upon eager slurps since the star of the said soup were free range chickens. The mechado had a life of its own since it reminded me of a fiesta celebration at some point in my lifetime. For those who prefer to consume better carbs, our lunch came in with redolent black rice. Also considered as a superfood, the Kale juice conquered my taste buds since it was blended with cucumber, calamansi juice, and a generous helping of wild honey for added verve. No wonder, we were not the only patrons enjoying our meal!

Something tells me that we will be coming over for more BAFF experience along with the cold nights and fireplace and dense forest and the food with more family members. Perhaps, for an overnight stay (or two).

BAFF has been dishing out good food since the early 2000s and now offers buffet on weekends or per reservation arrangement. Their belly busters are definitely worth checking out! ★





2018 SECOND SEMESTER FREE SEMINARS

JULY 13

COFFEE PRODUCTION & PROCESSING

AUG 10

SWINE PRODUCTION & MEAT PROCESSING

SEPT 14

POULTRY PRODUCTION & PROCESSING

OCT 12

**CUTFLOWER PRODUCTION
& FLOWER ARRANGEMENT**

OCT 19

MUSHROOM PRODUCTION

NOV 09

CACAO PRODUCTION & PROCESSING