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ACCESS

The Official Publication of the Agricultural Training Institute

SAVOR
GOURMET FOOD
AT **KUMAYKAY
RIVER FARM**
p. 6

An adventure-filled
experience that's worth
your while:
Mejares Fun Farm
p. 8

A call to action:
**Make Organic Farming
the Norm**
p. 13



CONTENTS



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- 1 Fil-Ams experience 'Juanderful' farms
- 2 ATI-RTC V holds first financial literacy training
Free seminar presents coffee business opportunities
- 3 Farmers try farm tourism thru livestock integration
Grow with faith: ATI XII launches first Learning Site in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat
- 4 Farmers educated to train others on high-quality inbred rice seed production
- 5 Thai women farmers visit Bicol farms, agri sites
Country life, rustic vibe, mouth-watering meals, and more at Kumaykay River Farm 6
Cover Story
- 6 **Yay and neigh at Mejares Fun Farm** 8
Feature
- 10 ATI efforts showcased at Asia-Pacific Convention on Agricultural Advisory Services
- 11 14th National e-Learning Conference notes ATI initiatives
- 12 Rollout on extension delivery system starts off with training of trainers
- Make organic farming the norm** 13
Insights

Fil-Ams experience 'Juanderful' farms

Erika Z. Vizcarra



ATI MiMaRoPa staff tours the participants of the 'Juanderful' Farm Tours around their techno-demo farm.

ORIENTAL MINDORO, MiMaRoPa— Local farmers took the opportunity to prove that it is 'more fun in Philippine farms' as they showcased their technologies, fresh produce, and featured attractions during a three-day learning journey dubbed as the 'Juanderful Farm Tours'.

Some 19 Filipino-American and local guests were part of the activity and got the full experience of the Filipino farmers' warm hospitality and hardworking nature. The sites visited were located in different towns in Oriental Mindoro, namely, Victoria Nature Park and Provincial Demo Farm in Victoria; Gabutero Organic Farm and 4H Learning Camp in Bongabong; and Infinity Farm and Resort in Baco.

Nelson Gabutero of Gabutero Organic Farm and 4H Learning Camp shared some of his organic farming practices including the recommended use of 30 bags of organic fertilizer per hectare.

"Biological organic fertilizer is widely used in fields as it has good effects especially in terms of soil

improvement," he said as he gave the visitors a tour in the farm and a chance to interact with the free-range pigs and rabbits.

In Victoria Nature Park, they enjoyed fresh buko (coconut) juice and local fruits such as marang and kamote (sweet potato). They also stopped by its organic contour garden of herbs and vegetables, its free-range poultry area, and the spot overlooking Naujan Lake.

Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) MiMaRoPa Regional Training Center Director Pat Andrew Barrientos shared the beginnings of the farm, which is an accredited Learning Site for Agriculture of the Institute. According to him, the farm is being developed as an agro-tourism site, in partnership with Archipelago Philippine Ferries Corp. (APFC), the shipping company that operates FastCat; By The Sea Hotels, Inc.; and ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Foundation Inc.

The group also stopped by the Oriental Mindoro Provincial Capitol in Calapan and ATI MiMaRoPa's office and organic techno-demo farm in Naujan.

The activity served as an extended trip for some of the Filipino-American tourists who were part of the 12th Ambassadors' Tour, led by Philippine Ambassador to the United States of America (USA), Jose Manuel Romualdez. The Tour is a flagship project of all Philippine Foreign Service Posts in the USA, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Department of Tourism.

Prior to the farm tour, a luncheon event on farm tourism was held for around 120 tourists, local and international agency officials, and members of the media. This was spearheaded by Agriculture Attache to the United States and the Americas, Josyline Javelosa.

Senator Cynthia Villar graced the event and talked about the prospects in farm tourism, sharing her effort to promote the transformation of farms into farm schools.

ATI Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok also spoke at the event. She discussed the role of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and ATI in the implementation of the Farm Tourism Development Act including its efforts to support farms as tourism and technology demonstration sites.

Barrientos also expanded on the Institute's farm tourism initiatives such as the 'Juanderful Farm Tours'. He highlighted how this helps promote the economic and cultural value of agriculture and its potential to provide additional income for farmers, farm workers, and fishers.

Other topics discussed were the ATI-APFC partnership of including Oriental Mindoro farms in their tour packages and ABS-CBN's 'Bantay Kalikasan' project. Also present in the event were DA Undersecretary for Agribusiness and Marketing Jose Gabriel La Viña and Oriental Mindoro Governor Alfonso Umali, Jr.

The 'Juanderful Farm Tours', on the other hand, was led by the Embassy of the Philippines, Washington D.C. and ATI MiMaRoPa on July 17-19, 2018 in this province. —With reports from ATI MiMaRoPa ★

ATI- RTC V conducts first-ever financial literacy training

Ma. Louiza SB Tena

PILI, Camarines Sur—Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center V (ATI-RTC V) conducted the financial literacy training in support to the Easy Access Financing Program of the Department of Agriculture.

The program was attended by 27 participants, mainly farmers from the municipality of Pamplona, Camarines Sur and members of the Camarines Sur Multi-Purpose Cooperative (CMPC).

This training aims to educate farmers, livestock raisers, vegetable growers, fishers, and other agricultural stakeholders in organizing budgetary operations to allow them to wisely spend for their projects and earn higher income.

During this two-day activity, CMPC treasurer Margy Cordova, who served as resource speaker, discussed financial education. She shared how to build, grow, protect, and manage wealth.

Cordova also talked about the importance of budgeting, controlling, and multiplying financial wealth through investments. Likewise, she touched on how to inculcate Filipino values to improve savings, income, and investment. Workshops and tests were conducted to assess the personality and character of the participants.

The participants of this training expressed their appreciation for the learning they gained, especially on efficiently spending their money and saving for the rainy days.

The training was held at the CMPC Training Hall, Cadlan, Pili, Camarines Sur last September 19-20, 2018. ★



Ruel Mojica, Vice President for Research and Extension of the Cavite State University, encourages the participants to support local coffee farmers and venture into coffee business to help revive the industry.

Free seminar presents coffee business opportunities

Catheryn M. Villorente

DILIMAN, Quezon City—With the growing demand for coffee and the ongoing efforts of the government and private sectors to boost the coffee industry, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) conducted a free seminar on coffee production and processing.

Ruel Mojica, Vice President for Research and Extension of Cavite State University and former director of the National Coffee Research Development and Extension Center, discussed various topics about coffee. He emphasized the growing business opportunities in this industry citing that coffee business ranked first in a 2013 survey and is second to oil in terms of trading value.

Likewise, the Philippines is the biggest coffee-drinking nation in Asia according to Mojica. He added that the Philippine soil and climate are ideal for the four varieties of coffee: Robusta, Excelsa, Arabica, and Liberica.

Mojica also discussed some of the

essentials in the coffee business and shared that certain institutions offer technical assistance to those interested to venture in this industry.

To support local coffee farmers and help revive the coffee industry in the country, Mojica also encouraged the participants to buy locally produced coffee and visit local coffee shops.

About 250 participants attended the free seminar including agriculture students from the University of Rizal System in Tanay, Rizal.

Among them was fourth year Animal Science student Kimberly Repruto who shared how ATI seminars help them in their school requirements. She was grateful for this seminar as she learned new technologies on coffee that they have not discussed in school.

This latest free seminar was conducted last July 13, 2018 at the ATI Serrano Hall as part of the Institute's provision of extension services to its clientele. ★

Farmers try farm tourism thru livestock integration

Melinda P. Petalcorin

HINUNANGAN, Southern Leyte—Farm tourism has become a go-to place for families and interested individuals who want to take a respite from their busy workweek. Visiting farms enables one to enjoy not just the beautiful sceneries but also take a few lessons on agriculture.

Because of this lucrative endeavor, farmers are being trained to turn their farms into a farm tourism site. As such, the Agricultural Training Institute Regional Training Center VIII (ATI-RTC VIII) capacitated farmer-members of the Samahang Mag-uuma sa Manalog during the Training on Livestock Farmscaping: Farm Tourism as conducted by South Pacific Integrated Agricultural Development Foundation Inc., an ATI-RTC VIII Extension Service Provider.

Thirty one member-farmers were taught the principles of integrated livestock-based farming system, concepts on

integrated livestock farmscape system, and value-adding on livestock products such as salted egg production. The training also saw the participants developing initial plans to integrate their farm for agri-tourism. They also took time for an actual farm visitation and planning at Artemio Adlao's Farm.

Grace Datoy, one of the participants, found the training very applicable. She marvelled at how forage and legumes can be used not just for livestock feeds but also for beautification of the farm.

Engaging in farm tourism gives added income to the farm while providing employment for other locals.

The three-day training was conducted on August 21-23, 2018 in the auditorium of Barangay Manalog, Hinunangan, Southern Leyte. ★

Grow with faith: ATI XII launches first Learning Site in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat

Errol Chris A. Laspiñas

ESPERANZA, Sultan Kudarat- On September 11, 2018, the Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center (ATI-RTC) XII, spearheaded by center director Abdul Daya-an, launched the Care Channels Farm (CCF) as a Learning Site for Agriculture (LSA).

The launching signaled CCF's acceptance as an accredited LSA of ATI-RTC XII. As such, the farm is expected to be a model farm in and out of the community. Also, the owner is expected to teach and share existing technologies to others.

With faith, the CCF willingly agreed to motivate and help other far-flung



Care Channel's Farm (CCF) received their Learning Site Certificate as Awarded by ATI-XII Center Director Abdul I. Daya-an in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat.

communities through livelihood projects by raising livestock in their backyard. The CCF encourages would-be LSA applicants to set up in nearby marketing outlets to lessen the efforts of farmers in transporting their products.

With this new LSA, ATI-RTC XII once again extended its extension arm with the intention of reaching out more and more people to widen the learning opportunities of our farmers. ★



Carlito Aquino, a Magsasaka Siyentista from Camarines Sur, shares how useful the training has been for him in terms of training other farmers.

Farmers educated to train others on high-quality inbred rice seed production

Jayvee P. Masilang

SAN JOSE DEL MONTE, Bulacan—In support to the government’s thrust for rice sufficiency in the country, farmers and farmer technicians graduated from the recently held Training Course on the Production of High-quality Inbred Rice Seeds and Farm Mechanization.

The training capacitated the farmers to become resource persons for agri-fishery advisory services and for their farms to be used for technical briefing and training for other farmers. This is in coordination with the Department of Agriculture’s (DA) Seed Exchange Program which aims to fast track the dissemination of information on the availability and use of quality rice seeds.

Magsasaka Siyentista, local farmer technicians, and farmer-leaders composed the 31 graduates of the two-week training. They tackled modules on PalayCheck system, seed quality, hands-on farm demonstrations, and how to bring these kinds of information to other farmers.

“This training used unique strategies in providing us knowledge on farm mechanization and high-quality rice seed production. Strategies like this will be our stepping stone in sharing our knowledge and experiences to other farmers so that they, too, can replicate this,” said Carlito Aquino, Magsasaka Siyentista from Camarines Sur.

Representatives from the proponents of the training which include the Philippine Rice Research Institute, Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization, Agricultural Training Institute, the Villar Social Institute for Poverty and Governance (Villar SIPAG), and the DA took part in the graduation ceremony.

Also present was the Senate Chairperson on Agriculture and Food Senator Cynthia Villar who is also the Managing Director of Villar SIPAG. Villar shared in her keynote message the need to alleviate poverty among our farmers for us to achieve sustainable food production and to level with neighboring countries.

“We need to uplift the lives of our farmers and fishers as they are the ones who bring food to our plate. The promotion and use of high-quality inbred rice and farm mechanization will be key in reducing production cost and increasing the yield and income of our farmers. This is part of our efforts in making our products competitive come trade liberalization,” Villar explained.

DA Assistant Secretary for Agribusiness Andrew Villacorta, who was also present in the event, encouraged the participants to do more in improving their own production and helping other farmers.

“We want to increase the utilization rate of high-quality rice seeds from 50 percent of farmers to 80 to 85 percent in 2022 through the Seed Exchange Program. This will be achieved if our farmers are aware of the benefits of using high-quality rice seeds and where they can access these. We hope that this training will be the first of many that will allow us to achieve this goal,” Villacorta said.

In the last day before their graduation, the participants presented the action plans they prepared which contained strategies in reaching out to other farmers and improving the agricultural production in their own communities.

The graduation ceremony of the Training Course on the Production of High-quality Inbred Rice Seeds and Farm Mechanization was conducted last July 31 at the Villar SIPAG Farm School in this city. ★

Thai women farmers visit Bicol farms, agri sites

Erika Z. Vizcarra

PHILIPPINES—With the continued partnership between the Philippines and Thailand in empowering rural women to sustain agricultural growth, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) hosted a learning activity for Thai women farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs this year.

Last March, the ATI welcomed 12 representatives from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DOAE) and women farmers from Thailand who were part of the “Study Exchange Program on the Potential Development of Farm Women” between the two countries. They first took part in the opening program of the Institute’s Women’s Month Celebration activity which focused on rural women as pillars of agricultural innovation and development.

They then headed to Bicol to visit ATI-supported Learning Sites and rural-based organizations (RBOs) such as Dacara’s Farm and Garden, Bula 4-H Club garden, San Jose Rural

Improvement Club (RIC), VK’s Farm, and Sonrisa Farm in Camarines Sur. Here, they learned about the beginnings and good practices of the farm owners and RBO members.

In Sorsogon, they went to Arellano Nature Farm and Gubat RIC whose members are women who live in a coastal area and has seaweed production as their main project. The Thai delegates also visited some local community projects in Camarines Sur such as the native fan-making enterprise in Canaman and a soybean processing and urban agriculture project in San Felipe, Naga.

Staff from the ATI’s Partnerships and Accreditation Division assisted the Thai delegates in the trip. They shared the positive feedback of the participants especially on the determination of the rural women to implement farming projects and programs in spite of the calamities that hit them.

The eight-day study tour of the Thai delegates in the Philippines was held on March 18-25, 2018. It also included a visit to heritage sites and livelihood

programs in Laguna through the Department of Foreign Affairs-Technical Cooperation Council of the Philippines.

Meanwhile, on June 6-13, 12 RIC officers, members, and coordinators, and other partner women farmers from Regions II, III, IV-A, V, VI, VIII, XII, and ATI Central Office flew to Thailand as part of the exchange program.

The event was hosted by DOAE’s Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives-Office of Agriculture Extension and Development, Region 6, Chiang Mai Province. They visited different agricultural and livelihood sites to observe activities on avocado processing, strawberry processing and cultivation, food security, chili paste processing, and community bank management.

Other project areas visited included those for dried longan processing, dried fruit processing, soap-making, handicraft-making, mushroom production, egg processing, hydroponics, and aquaponics. —With reports from Larry Illich Souribio and Jovane Dela Cuadra. ★

Angelita Dacara, who owns Dacara’s Farm and Garden, shares some of her organic farming practices to the visiting Thai farmers.



country life, rustic vibe, mouth-watering meals & more

KUMAYKAY RIVER FARM

Vic Thor A. Palarca

Bukidnon has always had a strong tradition in farming. Thanks to the commitment of its hardworking people who make full use of its rich agricultural land, rolling terrain, and nutrient-rich soil. The abundance of high-value crops, access to urban necessities in the cities, plus culinary fares influenced by a mix of traditions among seven indigenous tribes, have shaped its rich foodways. Its proximity to Cagayan de Oro, with its dynamic tourism and booming restaurant industry, has also enabled Bukidnon to begin to develop a more modern take on the ways they eat and cook.

Kumaykay River Farm in Dahilayan is slowly coming into its own, with its growing reputation for organic produce and farm-to-table and recreational scene. Surrounded by high mountain ranges as backdrop, green meadows replete with bamboos and fern everywhere, a river with crystal clear cold running

water nearby, the place is simply idyllic and as country as one can get.

Their farm-to-table approach stands out among the established tourism farm, as the resident chef—son of Kumaykay Farm owner Boy Javier, Josef Martin Javier or “JJ” (pronounced Jay-Jay)—cooks personally and intimately for their patrons, promoting the use of its local produce.

As a self-proclaimed foodie, one of the highlights of our stay was the mouth-watering seven-course meal prepared and served with such verve by Chef JJ himself (see page 7 for Chef JJ’s seven-course meal). And what a gastronomic treat it was! It would be a mortal crime for me not to capture in words the visual and sensory experience of it all.



1
Cesar's Salad with Dill

Such glorious greens! I love how the way all the ingredients masticated in my mouth as I savored each chew mindfully. The result was a delightful mix of flavor profile—savory, sweet-spicy, and earthy. The greens and the herbs and the egg along with the dried anchovies complimented each other. And I have to point out that the dressing drizzled over was a killer!

3
Kinilaw (Ceviche)

His version of kinilaw is delicately sweet and tangy with just enough spice to fire our palate which was thrown in with mini cucumbers. The latter provided the much needed oomph for that crunch and vitality. Clearly, Chef JJ captured the purest expression of a fresh fish's flavor.

5
**Shrimp Skewers
aka Surf and Turf
with Artillery Plant**

This one's your straight grilled shrimp on a stick but what made it a palate-pleaser was that the shrimps got that irresistible lightly charred smokiness brushed with a marinade I cannot quite decipher to ensure great flavor in every bite. The artillery plant added some texture and aromatic taste in this sensational shrimp skewers.

7
**Seafood Adobo
(Clam and Mussels)**

Rounding up our seven-course meal was this clam and mussels adobo combo. Admit it, who doesn't like adobo like the Chicken Adobo fame? Adobo gets my vote any time of the day. Only this time, it was dished out with other helpings our abundant splendid sea can offer. ★

2
**Tuna Tataki
with Purslane**

Perfectly seared on the outside but juicy and tender tuna on the inside, this is what this dish was all about; a bursting contradiction of wholesomely cooked and luscious raw. The browned spices and sesame seeds—adding little crunch and subtle nutty taste—complete this succulent treat.

4
**Chocolate-dipped Sweet
Potato with Dried
Anchovies
or "Champorado"**

This one's pretty neat and clever. When Chef JJ chimed in that our fourth serving was champorado, I got a bit confused since it was not the one I had in mind. Still, it got my taste buds working double-time since the savory fried thinly sliced (ala Pringles) sweet potatoes, chocolate, and dried anchovies were pure epicurean bliss. This one's yum set in Caps Lock.

6
**Minced Beef
with Spicy Noodles, Cayenne
Pepper, Sumac,
and Paprika**

Best eaten when it's raining and cold outside or if one is under the weather. The well-minced beef mixed with spices like cayenne pepper and paprika got my taste buds straight to zing, zing, zing heaven! A light sprinkle of sumac added an edible color to this tasty treat of a bowl.



Chef JJ's
seven-course meal



YAY AND NEIGH AT MEJARES FUN FARM

Jason Paul Dads E. Jampac

Not the cow's moo nor the cock's cocorico but it's the horse's neigh that thrills children and parents to visit Mejares Fun Farm. Every time people hear the horse's sound, they rush to the streets to watch in glee at the passing equine star. This new tourist attraction is located in Lianga, Surigao del Sur—a two-hour ride southeast of Butuan City. Tourists keep coming back here because of the “kalesa”—a horse-drawn carriage which was the mode of transportation for nobles during the Spanish time. Nowadays, kalesas can only be found in Vigan, Laoag, Manila, and Iligan. But in Lianga, kalesas are now frequently seen roaming its streets. Thanks to the Mejares Fun Farm for offering this old-style vehicle at a very reasonable price. The windy ride is relaxing, fuel-free, and environment-friendly. A perfect escape from the hustle and bustle in the city and reminiscent of our Spanish colonial past at the same time.

Arlinda Mejares-Galarroza, owner of the 14-hectare Mejares Fun Farm, was always determined and enthusiastic in developing her farm into a unique and adventure-filled tourism site. “Ang uban naay zip-line ug carabao ride, so nakahuna-huna pud kog kalesa kay wala pa kaayo ni sa Caraga. Timing pud kay pag adto nako sa Iligan naay nagbaligya sa akoo ug kabayo. So nipalit kog duha. Usa ka puti ug usa ka brown. Gipahimuan nako ug karomata ug sapatos. Karon mao na ni ang usa sa kalingawan dinhi sa mga bisita,” she shared.

[“Some have zip-line and carabao ride, so I thought of a kalesa since we don't have this in Caraga. It was timely because, when I went to Iligan City, somebody offered me to buy his horse. So, I bought two. One white and the other brown. I made carriages and bought horseshoes. Now, it has become a popular entertainment for our visitors.”]

In the farm, fun doesn't stop on the kalesas per se. For the adventuresome, they can try climbing the treacherous rock formations, trek the steep slopes of nearby hills or explore the bat-filled underground cave. For the animal lovers, they may opt to feed the birds, fish, pigs, ducks and other animals in the farm. For the vegetarians and fruit lovers, they may want to pick bitter melon, okra, cucumber, spinach, stringed-beans, watermelon, banana, papaya, among others. They can buy and bring it home or eat it at the farm's restaurant where short orders and other sumptuous menu items are also offered.

For food lovers, Arlinda would definitely recommend her crispy “Rock Dynamite”, a chili pepper with cheese fillings rolled in lumpia wrapper. Expect it to be very spicy, so better order as well a glass of cold and honey-sweetened lemon juice, just in case. For visitors who are health conscious, they need not worry. Everything served here is organically grown.





“Wala gyud mi ga-spray diri ug chemicals. Tanan natural gyud. Mao ni akong natun-an niadtong nikuha ko ug NC II sa organic,” she said.

[“We never use chemical sprays here. Everything is natural. This is what I learned when I took the NC (National Certificate) II on organic (agriculture).”]

Arlinda further explained that she uses a mixture of coconut wine, beer, and sugar as her home-made natural fertilizer. In addition, natural wastes from her aquaponics system also serve as nutrients for her plants.

Opened only last January 2018, the Mejares Fun Farm is already a favorite place for weddings, birthday parties, field trips, family outings, and team-building activities. It has a training hall with WiFi connection and a dormitory which can house up to 17 people. Tents are also available for those who wish to camp nearby.

A month after its opening, the Mejares Fun Farm was certified by the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) as a Learning Site. Then, in May 2018, the farm was accredited by the Department of Tourism as a farm tourism site, making it the second farm in Caraga to receive such distinction.

“Mapasalamaton kaayo ko sa ATI kay sila gyud ang nitabang ug nigiya sa ako kay wala man gyud koy hinanawan sa farming,” she mused.

[“I’m very thankful to ATI because they were the ones who helped and guided me since I don’t know much about farming.”]

Arlinda is referring to the farm and business advisories given to her by the agency in addition to the construction materials she received for her swine house that was worth PhP100,000.

Arlinda, who used to be into buy-and-sell business, believes that through strong will, hard work, and support from the government, it is always possible for a farmer to be successful. She says one should not stop from dreaming big just like her who still has a lot of plans for her farm.

Currently, the expansion of her catering services and farm school application are in the works. In addition, Christian devotees are expected to visit the farm during Holy Week because Arlinda’s “Stations of the Cross” are near completion. Furthermore, once she gets the funding support from other agencies, she will construct additional dormitory, souvenir center, orchidarium, and swimming pool as added attraction in her farm.

Don’t wait for all these features to materialize, though. It is still advisable to visit the farm the soonest. Reason: Entrance is still free at Mejares Fun Farm. At least for now. Soon, when all the planned attractions are already in place and functional, entrance fees might be necessary by that time.

If you wish to visit, the farm is located in Brgy. Banahao, Lianga, Surigao del Sur. For reservations you can call 0938-255-1587 or drop a line on their Facebook page by searching Mejares Fun Farm & Restaurant. ★



ATI efforts showcased at Asia-Pacific Convention on Agricultural Advisory Services

Erika Z. Vizcarra



ATI Partnerships and Accreditation Division chief Renato dela Cruz takes part in the discussion during the learning event on Agricultural Advisory Services in Asia and the Pacific Islands. (Photo courtesy of APIRAS)

BANGKOK, Thailand—The initiatives of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) under the “Supporting Smallholder Farmers in Asia and Pacific Islands through Strengthened Agricultural Advisory Services” (SAAS) were front and center during a meeting with Asia-Pacific counterparts and the project proponents.

ATI officials were part of the Philippine delegation present at the project meeting, along with representatives from the governments of Bangladesh and Fiji Islands, the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), and the Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network (APIRAS).

Engr. Renato dela Cruz, chief of the ATI Partnerships and Accreditation Division, presented SAAS accomplishments in the Philippines as well as the directional activities for Year Two of the project. He shared details about the initial dialogues with the Department of Interior and Local Government for the possible inclusion

of the agriculture sector in the Seal of Good Local Governance.

Meanwhile, ATI Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) Training Center Director Arlene Flores discussed their training interventions as part of their efforts to complement the Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project (CHARMP). She also noted the after-training support they provide to sustain the activities of the project.

CHARMP is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), like the SAAS project, and spearheaded by the Department of Agriculture (DA) in CAR.

During the Regional Learning Event and Experience Sharing on the “Best Practices in Agricultural Advisory Services (AAS) in Asia and the Pacific Islands”, CHARMP planning officer Czarina Pangket talked about the participatory approach adopted for the project.

“Impacts are better felt when people are involved and given the sense of ownership in every step of the implementation of the project,” she said.

The regional learning event was spearheaded by APIRAS in coordination with SEARCA. APIRAS oversees the Asian sub-regional component of the SAAS project.

Over 30 representatives from Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Fiji Islands, Bangladesh, India, Uzbekistan, Laos, South Korea, and the Philippines, as well as affiliates from Australia and South Africa, convened for the event held at the Centara Watergate Pavillion Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand on July 30-31, 2018.

In October, the annual conference of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services will be held in South Korea to continue to expand AAS to all farmers.—With report from Zarette Baniya, SAAS Project Associate ★

14th National e-Learning Conference notes ATI initiatives

Catheryn M. Villorente

BUTUAN City, Agusan del Norte—The electronic learning or e-Learning program of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) exemplified yet again the government’s initiatives in terms of information and communications technology (ICT) in agriculture and fisheries during the 14th National eLearning Conference (NeLC).

ATI Officer-in-Charge Director Luz Taposok, who keynoted the conference, shared the evolution, accomplishments, and further improvements for the e-Learning program as it reached its 10th year.

“So far, after 10 years of implementing e-Learning, we have already around 60,000 registered users in our site. We have already produced more than 39,000 graduates from the 58 courses we are offering,” she said.

She also talked about the partnerships with educational institutions and other government agencies to further the reach of the program. In terms of the issues

that challenge the implementation of e-Learning, such as technological limitations and level of acceptability and adoption among the stakeholders, Taposok remained optimistic.

“Despite these challenges, some opportunities can be observed. ICT, in general, does not only mean the use of computers and the Internet but also other media mixes. The use of radio, through the school-on-the-air, mixed with interactive chats, online forum, and short messaging system can be done to make more content available and accessible for our clientele,” Taposok stressed.

Spearheaded by the Philippine e-Learning Society (PeLS), NeLC is an academic forum that gathers e-Learning practitioners, educators, trainers, researchers, media specialists, instructional designers, university school administrators, policy-makers, industry partners, and students. This year, the conference theme is “Gaining the Edge: Integrating e-Learning in Instruction, Extension, and Research” and advances and research results in various aspects of e-Learning were presented.

Highlights of the event were the plenary sessions and “Ice Talks” given by various e-Learning practitioners. Their presentations showed how e-Learning is being integrated in education, research, and extension.

Parallel paper presentations were also part of the conference. ATI’s Information Services Division chief Antonieta Arceo presented the paper of Policy and Planning Division chief Milagros Urbano entitled “An Evaluation of the Agricultural Training Institute’s e-Learning as an Alternative Mode in the Delivery of Extension Services: Basis for Policy”. It was recognized as second best paper among 29 papers presented during the conference.

Also marking the event was the election of PeLS’ new board of trustees. ISD assistant chief Pamela Mappala was elected as new member, along with four academicians.

NeLC also featured an exhibit from private and government organizations such as Panopto, Pearson, Blackboard, Canvas, Eesysoft, Nephila Web, Neo by Cypher Learning, TechFactors Inc., Department of Tourism, and ATI which served as one of the major sponsors.

Around 200 e-Learning practitioners attended the conference which also celebrated PeLS’ 15th anniversary. It was held in this city on September 12-14, 2018.★



ATI OIC Director Luz Taposok shares the beginnings of the e-Learning program and some plans to expand its reach, including the development of the offline version of the courses.

Rollout on extension delivery system starts off with training of trainers

Angelica Marie T. Umali

QUEZON CITY, Metro Manila— To successfully bridge the gap between agricultural information and the farmers, there is a need for agricultural extension workers (AEWs) to continually build a strong foundation of knowledge and skills that will equip them in performing their duties more effectively.

Heeding this call, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), through the Career Development and Management Division, steered a Training of Trainers (ToT) on Extension Delivery System (EDS) for a new breed of AEWs. The first of two batches of participants was composed of 22 technical personnel from the regional centers of the Institute, as well as from its central office.

The training included various extension approaches, strategies, methods, interventions, modalities, and innovations discussed by experts from the University of the Philippines Los Baños, Dr. Andrew Gasmen and Dr. Rowena Bacongus. Likewise, communication in extension was highlighted by the Institute's Information Services Division (ISD) chief Antonieta Arceo.

Moreover, a micro-teaching activity served as the final output, wherein each participant was given a topic from the EDS module to showcase the acquired extension and presentation skills from the training. Some of the topics include the overview of agricultural extension (AE); AE System Components and Philippine AE; AE in the Philippines; clients of extension; characteristics of an

AEW; approaches, strategies, methods, modalities, interventions and innovations of AE; communication competence; ethics in AE; handling participant behavior; and facilitation skills.

"Before, I couldn't understand the whole meaning of agricultural extension. But now, I've learned to appreciate it. I realized that I really want to be an extension worker," Assel Mandanguit of ATI Regional Training Center XI said as she expressed her gratitude for having attended the EDS training.

This kickoff was held on June 25-29, 2018 at the Hive Hotel in this city, while the second leg of the ToT will be on August 6-10, 2018 in Pasay City. ★

ATI-ISD chief Antonieta Arceo (right) gives her feedback during the workshop on presentation skills.



MAKE ORGANIC FARMING THE NORM

Brian Amante Belen

Mahal ang gulay sa palengke at sa supermarket. Why? It is because of the rising costs of synthetic inputs to keep conventional farms productive. Nakadagdag din ang nakaraang El Niño at labis na pag-ulan nitong nakaraang mga buwan kaya bumaba ang level of production at tumaas ang presyo ng mga agricultural products.

Sapagkat ang organikong pagsasaka ay hindi nangangailangan ng synthetic inputs at gumagamit lamang ng mga materyales na nanggagaling sa mismong farm (kung talagang organic farming system nga ang iyong ginagamit), hindi dapat ito apektado ng pagtaas ng presyo ng mga synthetic inputs.

Kung gayon, dapat manatiling wala o bahagya lamang ang pagbabago sa presyo ng organic produce saan man ito ibinebenta. Upang makaiwas sa dagdag gastos dahil sa diesel o gasolina para sa pagtransport ng produkto, go local Ka-Farmer. At sa mga Consumers naman, why not go local din at tangkilikin ang produkto ni Kababayang Farmer. Deadma muna sa mga imported na produkto. Tulungan ang bayan sa pamamagitan ng pagtangkilik sa sariling atin.

I challenge organic producers to keep their selling prices low to counter the rise in prices of conventional produce. Patunayan na ang organic farming ay hindi lamang isang business strategy kundi siyang tunay ngang susi sa food security ng daigdig. Panahon na to make organic farming the norm rather than the exception.

May challenge din ako sa mga tahanan. Aralin po natin kung paano mag-produce ng sariling prutas at gulay at mag-maintain ng garden sa inyong mga bahay. Makakabawas ito sa inyong gastos sapagkat makakatipid na sa ibinabayad sa pagkain, nakakaaliw pa ang paghahardin. Bawas sa gastos sa gala, nakapag-exercise pa na sama-sama.

“PATUNAYAN NA ANG ORGANIC FARMING AY HINDI LAMANG ISANG BUSINESS STRATEGY KUNDI SIYANG TUNAY NGANG SUSI SA FOOD SECURITY NG DAIGDIG.

Sa mga eskuwelahan na kasalukuyan nang may Gulayan sa Paaralan, ipagpatuloy po ninyo ang magandang nasimulan. Sa mga wala pa, ito na po ang tamang panahon para turuan ang ating mga kabataan ng mga paraan sa pag-produce ng sariling pagkain. Sa pag-aaral naman ay hindi lamang Math o Science ang mahalaga, importante din na matuto ang bata na maging independent at maging asset sa ating lipunan.

Sa mga lokal na pamahalaan, magdadalawang-isip pa ba na gumawa ng mga proyektong tutugon sa mga isyung ito? Kung ako ang tatanungin kung ano ang magiging pangunahing batayan ko sa pagboto sa susunod na eleksiyon, iyon ay ang inclination ng kandidato sa food security sapagkat indikasyon ito ng mas malawak na kaisipan at malasakit sa kanyang mga constituents.

Galaw galaw po tayo, mga Kababayan! ★

*Brian Amante Belen is a Magsasaka Siyentista in Laguna and manager of Ato Belen's Farm which is an accredited Learning Site of the Agricultural Training Institute. This piece was originally published in his Facebook page.





LEARNING SITE FOR AGRICULTURE

APPLICATION PROCESS



1 IDENTIFICATION

- Letter of intent
- endorsement
- recommendation



2 ORIENTATION

- Orientation on the responsibilities as a Learning Site.



3 FARM PROFILE FORM

Upon acceptance after the orientation, the prospective LSA will be required to accomplish the "Farm Profile Form."



4 FIELD VALIDATION

ATI will conduct ocular inspection of the prospective LSA, aided by the "LSA Acceptance Evaluation Form."



8 ISSUANCE OF ATI CERTIFICATE

LSA Certificate and the ATI LSA Signage shall be issued by the ATI Central Office. This will be displayed at the farm.



7 MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

Upon approval of the development plan, the "Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for LSA establishment" will be signed.



6 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Preparation, evaluation and approval of the LSA development plan.



5 ACCEPTANCE

The prospective LSA signs the "Acceptance to become a LSA Form."