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ACCESS

The Official Publication of the A

AGRICOOLTOUR:
Discover the ATI Learning Sites

featuring

MADOMA FARM

ALAMEDA FARM

HOYOHOY

Savor the journey behind
the home of the famous
Pancit Kalabuko--

**FOREST WOOD
GARDEN**



in this issue

ON THE COVER

- 6** Complementing and Implementing:
How does Forest Wood Garden do it?

NEWS

- 1** ATI, DOT Work Hand-in-hand
in Promoting Farm Tourism
- 2** ATI, ASSIST Introduce CSA to Smallholder
Farmers
- 3** Climate-Smart Farming Business to Combat
Climate Change Problems
- 4** 2016 Rice Achievers' Awards Boosts
Farmers' Morale
- 5** Taposok: Expand Organic Agriculture
to Ensure Food Safety
- 8** A Wider Reach: Bangladeshi Government
Officials Visit ATI
- 9** Shaping Development Strategies during
24th AWGATE Meeting

FEATURES

- 10** Alameda Farm: Experiencing AgriCOOLTour
- 12** MADOMA Farm, "Ang Paraiso sa D. Alarcio"
- 13** The 3-Hour Travel:
Hoyohoy, a hidden paradise in Tangub City,
Misamis Occidental

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ATI, DOT Work Hand-in-Hand in Promoting Farm Tourism

Iseult Kyllie T. Capacio



Key officials from the Department of Tourism and the Department of Agriculture officially open the five-day exhibit.

MAKATI CITY, Metro Manila—Aside from boosting the influx of tourists to local farms, “farm tourism” likewise advocates knowledge on agricultural practices in the country that will encourage more active involvement in the agriculture and fisheries sector. Moreover, it opens up opportunities for farmer-producers to market their products by connecting them directly to potential niche markets.

April marked the official launch of farm tourism in Central Mindanao through a campaign by the Department of Tourism (DOT) called “SOX is Next!” This promotes several farms in the region to both local and international levels.

To materialize this campaign, the DOT held the second run of its “Treasures of SOX” exhibit, where various products and cultural presentations from different parts and

groups in the region were featured. The display, which started last year, has notably helped increase tourism activities in the region in leaps.

“Last year, our tourist arrival increased by 19% from 2015 to 2016. Our flights have also increased, and more and more local government units already considered tourism as an important driver (in the Philippine economy),” said DOT Region XII Regional Director Nelly Nita Dillera, CESO III, during the event’s opening last April 2017.

Following the success of last year’s exhibit, this year’s “Treasures of SOX” was highlighted by the launching of the Farm Tourism for Region XII. This undertaking was through the cooperation between ATI-Regional Training Center XII and the DOT Region XII. A milestone for the agricultural sector in the region, this move is the

first time that farm tourism has been launched in Region XII.

“It’s not just about the tourist arrivals from abroad that we’re targeting. Farm tourism is a wonderful opportunity for us to boost what the region can do because when people come in and out, they see more than the resorts—it’s not just the leisure,” emphasized Assistant Secretary for Tourism Regulation, Coordination & Resource Generation for Luzon and Visayas Daniel Angelo Mercado.

The five-day event started on April 3 and ended on April 7. Situated at the Glorietta 3 Activity Center were booths that feature at least 31 trade and tourism exhibitors. Aside from their products, the exhibit held business matching, cultural presentations, and fashion shows that display the region’s products.

ATI, ASSIST Introduce CSA to Smallholder Farmers

Angelica Marie T. Umali

DILIMAN, Quezon City—"If we really wanted to make a significant mark in poverty reduction, helping them is the best way to start." These were the words of Senator Cynthia Villar, Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food during the project launch of "Improving Productivity in Agriculture through Climate-Smart Technology" or ImpACT Philippines. Villar stressed the need to support our farmers and fishers since about two-thirds of the country's population is involved in the agriculture sector, directly or indirectly.

Around 70 stakeholders from public, private, and non-government organizations convened to witness the unveiling of the METOS instruments. These instruments will enable farmers to monitor weather patterns and model forecasts for their fields such as temperature, humidity, rainfall, leaf wetness, and insect pressure. Collected data are sent to the farmer's mobile phone.

The launching was led by Senator Villar; ImpACT Philippines Project Director Joseph Arnel Go; Pessl Instruments GmbH Regional Director Vishnu Nair; Calata Corporation Vice President for Business Development Halmond Parker Ong; Highly Succeed, Inc. Chief Operating Officer Maricar Malaki; and Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) Deputy Director Alfredo Aton.

"With climate-smart technology, smallholder farmers are equipped to make better decisions even with changing climates," Go explained as he presented the overview of the Project. ImpACT Philippines aims to introduce Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) to

smallholder farmers to increase farming productivity and to improve food security in the country through the installation of Pessl-manufactured METOS solution.

For its part, ATI will lead the skills training of farmers and agricultural technicians. ATI will also manage their exposure to new farming methods driven by climate-smart concepts in the fourth stage of the project.

“With climate-smart technology, smallholder farmers are equipped to make better decisions even with changing climates.”

Hence, the Institute commits the needed resources to ensure the success of the capacity-building component of this project. "We are honored to be a part of this pact that aims to uphold climate justice in the agriculture sector. We underscore the importance of information

and communication in empowering our farmers to make climate-smart decisions, manage risks, and avoid unnecessary interventions that can hamper their productivity," acknowledged Aton.

Likewise, ATI OIC-Director Luz Taposok stressed that the Institute will provide training support to the farmers thru its 300 Learning Sites in the country. "We will deliver quality extension services to our partners by connecting with other bureaus and agencies for their after-training support," Taposok added.

The municipality of Buguias in Benguet is the Project's pilot site, aiming to help the farmers manage their use of farming inputs. The METOS technology, developed by the project partner Pessl Instruments, will be provided free for the farmers in Buguias, Benguet.

ImpACT Philippines is implemented under the DeveloPPP program of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development through DEG. Moreover, it is supported by ATI and Calata Corporation.

This launch was held last May 2017 at the Rural Development and Education Center, ATI Compound.



Sen. Cynthia Villar with ImpACT partners from both public and private organizations lead the unveiling of the METOS instrument.

Climate-Smart Farming Business to Combat Climate Change Problems

Marianne B. Antonio

MANILA—OIC-Director Luz Taposok of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) stressed the need to shift to a market-oriented farming as some ASEAN Member States gather to undergo training and formulate plans on how to deal with agricultural losses due to the changing climate.

“Sustainable Agriculture Focused on Climate-Smart Farming Business is a practical response to the short- and long-term problems caused by climate change,” Taposok stated during the course orientation and opening program.

She suggested that the farmers all over the world should be directed to new frontiers essential for economic survival under the new “normal climate” through the ASEAN economic cooperation, regional food security cooperation, and sound market competition.

“The Philippines, through the Department of Agriculture–ATI distinguishes a proactive approach in achieving sustainable agriculture through focusing on climate-resilient farming business to reduce crop damages triggered by climate change,” she added.

The training course on climate-smart farming business will help the agricultural technicians and extension workers adjust with the changing climate and undertake new market-oriented farming techniques, according to Taposok.

Through this training, Taposok is confident that the participants will be equipped with the knowledge, skills,



OIC-Director Luz Taposok welcomes participants from ASEAN Member States during the opening program of the Climate-Smart Farming Business training.

attitude, aspirations, and practices necessary for them to efficiently shape economically resilient climate-smart farming business. She believed that climate-smart farming business is an agricultural advancement especially in these times.

Twenty extension workers and farmer officials from selected ASEAN Member States participated in the activity where they presented their respective country papers, took series of modules, and developed action plans to be implemented in their areas.

The training course on Sustainable Agriculture Focused on Climate-Smart Farming Business was held last May 2017 at Bayview Park Hotel Manila.

“The Philippines, through the Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Training Institute, distinguishes a proactive approach in achieving sustainable agriculture through focusing on climate-resilient farming business to reduce crop damages triggered by climate change.”

2016 Rice Achievers Awards Boosts Farmers' Morale

Erika Z. Vizcarra

PASAY CITY, Metro Manila—The 2016 Rice Achievers Awards ended on a positive note as members of the winning associations expressed stronger commitment to contribute to the rice self-sufficiency efforts in the country.

"We never thought that we'd be able to come here in Manila [to receive an award]. All we ever wanted was to have access to irrigation for our farms and we strived hard to maintain cooperation within our association. We would then like to thank the Rice Achievers Awards as it boosted our morale," Pagsabangan Tagum Farmers Irrigators' Association, Inc. (PATAFIA) president Daniel Seville said in Filipino. This was his message after he and his co-members received the award for being one of the Outstanding Irrigators' Associations.

Aside from PATAFIA, the 2016 Outstanding Irrigators' Associations are the Villa Fuente, Incorporated in San Mateo, Isabela; Batinao Cabacungan Sto. Niño Irrigators Farmers Association, Incorporated in New Bataan, Compostela Valley; and Hingatungan Irrigators' Association, Incorporated in Silago, Southern Leyte.

On the other hand, the Tanggal Small Impounding Dam Association, Incorporated in Tabuk City, Kalinga; San Jose Lamak Irrigators Association in Mabini, Bohol; and Hinapoyan Farmers Cooperative in Carmen, Surigao del Sur bagged the award for Outstanding Small Water Impounding System Association (SWISA). The four Outstanding Irrigators' Associations and three Outstanding SWISAs each received a trophy and Php1 million and Php500,000 cash prize, respectively.

Seven top rice-producing provinces were also recognized and received a trophy and Php4 million cash prizes. They are La Union, Pangasinan, Nueva Vizcaya, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Lanao del Norte, and Compostela Valley. Fifteen municipal and city local government units (LGUs) with remarkable performance were also awarded with a trophy and Php1 million cash prize. They are Luna, Apayao; Solsona, Ilocos Norte; Santiago City, Isabela; Victoria, Tarlac; Pila, Laguna; Paluan, Occidental Mindoro; Ligao City, Albay; Talibon, Bohol; Hinundayan, Southern Leyte; Bayog, Zamboanga del Sur; Lala, Lanao del Norte; Hagonoy, Davao del Sur; Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat; Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur; and Valladolid, Negros Occidental.

Special awards also went to selected provinces, irrigators' associations, and SWISAs.



PATAFIA president Daniel Seville thanks the DA family and the local government for their support.

Senator Cynthia Villar, who also heads the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, graced the event and called on all efforts from both the government and the private sector to ensure rice self-sufficiency in the years ahead, "It is predicted that, in 2050, the world's population will increase to nine billion. If we are not able to maintain our small family farms, the world will go hungry. We need to take care of our small farms so that the farmers' children will continue their work, otherwise our children and grandchildren will have no food to eat."

Sen. Villar also emphasized the need to increase mechanization in rice farming to increase productivity, enhance efficiency, and improve competency which will eventually curb rice smuggling in the country.

(continue to next page)

2016 Rice Achievers Awards...

From p.4

She likewise shared her plan of legislating the establishment of farm schools in every town nationwide.

“Our farmers are small-scale businessmen, so they need to learn about technology, financial literacy, business sense, and the ability to access cheap credit. This year, I will legislate that Technical Education and Skills Development Authority will allot 30 percent of their budget to finance the operation of all the farm schools in the Philippines,” she stated.

DA officials were likewise present to give the awards, namely, Undersecretary for Policy and Planning Segfredo Serrano, Undersecretary for Operations Ariel Cayanan, and Undersecretary for Special Concerns Ranibai Dilangalen. In his closing remarks, Cayanan challenged all the winners to share their best practices as this will give way to making the task of feeding millions of people a possibility.

The Rice Achievers Awards, an annual search that started in 2011, aims to capture the impact of the DA’s rice production interventions towards achieving rice self-sufficiency. The awardees were chosen based on their increased rice harvest and average yield per hectare over 2016 levels, amount of budget devoted to rice projects and initiatives, number of farmer beneficiaries, and degree of quality seed utilization, among others.

Around 500 individuals were present at the awarding ceremony held at the Philippine International Convention Center in this city last May 2017. The Agricultural Training Institute, together with the DA National Rice Program and Field Operations Services, served as the national secretariat for this year’s event.

Taposok: Expand Organic Agriculture to Ensure Food Safety

Marianne B. Antonio

KAUSWAGAN, Lanao Del Norte – Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) OIC-Director Luz Taposok urged agriculture officials and fellow Filipinos during this year’s Organic Agri-Aqua and Livestock Fair to continue adopting and promoting organic agriculture for a safe food consumption.

“Organic agriculture should be widely adopted. Several studies and researches show the increase in sicknesses and diseases, and untimely deaths triggered by foods that contain toxic substances,” Taposok expressed.

She also emphasized that the availability of food in the country is of utmost importance but quality should still be considered, “An underlying concept of food security is food safety. While it is true that we should continuously take steps and measures in securing food for all Filipinos, it is equally essential to ensure the quality and safety of the food that we eat.”

She added, “As cliché as it sounds, the reality is that health is our wealth. Utilization of organic farming is still the best prerogative to ensure food safety.”

Taposok pointed out that high and advanced food productivity does not guarantee food safety. She encouraged everyone to be critical and not just follow the various trends that come with the era of globalization.

The ATI OIC-Director explained organic agriculture as a holistic system that entails best environmental practices, promotes diversity among plant and animal life forms, and preservation of natural resources. She

as well indicated that it is an avenue to exhibit high animal welfare.

Taposok ended her speech with a quote from the father of modern organic agriculture, Albert Howard, “The most important possession of a country is its population. If this is maintained in health and vigor, everything else will follow; if this is allowed to decline, nothing, not even great riches, can save the country from eventual ruin.”

The activity was held last April 2017 at Amphitheater, Elme Mohamad Memorial Plaza in Lanao del Norte.

“The reality is that health is our wealth. Utilization of organic farming is still the best prerogative to ensure food safety.”

**COMPLEMENTING
& IMPLEMENTING**

HOW DOES
**FOREST WOOD
GARDEN**

DO IT?

by
*Iseult Kyllie
T. Capacio*

There is just something about passion and persistence put together that calls a person to action. With it, he can innovate and explore outside the chambers of responsibility and repetition. He creates something with the gift he was given with, while relishing the opportunity to be a blessing to others.

Joel and Myrna Frago, simply the Fragos, are a match made in heaven especially with how they allow themselves to complement each other in their advocacy on organic agriculture. In fact, their farm is a testament to this “complementation”—a concept which you’d get to know as you read through the article.

Myrna is an architect by profession. It was the couple’s persistence and Myrna’s gift in landscaping that brought Forest Wood Garden in the spotlight as it won many titles in this area. See, Forest Wood started as a literal garden full of ornamental plants and artistry. But the five-hectare land evolved into something more, especially when Joel, who worked as a nurse overseas, decided to settle in the Philippines to fully venture into agriculture.



Because of the nature of his past job, it is inherent for Joel to take care of others. Natural farming provided him with more options to do so. For 10 years, the couple studied and practiced natural farming and, in 2004, they decided to register Forest Wood Garden at the Department of Tourism as a farm tourism site. After five years, it opened to the public.

ENABLED FARM TO TABLE

To their community, the Fragos introduced the farm-to-table concept. Simply put, this concept involves using the freshest ingredients picked from the garden itself, which are prepared and served to its visitors.

NATURALLY, RECIPES

Does Pancit Kalabuko ring a bell? This peculiar recipe has been featured in blog sites, as well as national TV stations in the Philippines. An object of curiosity to first-time hearers, Pancit Kalabuko is a version of a common Filipino pancit dish, however, not using actual noodles. Instead, kalabasa (squash) and buko (coconut meat) strips serve as the 'noodles.' These are supplemented with other vegetables such as mushroom, papaya, gotu kola,

and greens which make it real healthy to stuff your tummy with. This recipe is unique to Forest Wood Garden—and the Fragos made sure every ingredient contained is beneficial to a person's health.

Forest Wood also serves Balol, a smoked wild boar meat marinated in herbs, and Plantsado Lamang Lupa, a native delicacy with a rootcrop called "Toge" as its main ingredient, and is cooked using a flat iron.

COMPLEMENTING LIVING THINGS

If you find the farm-to-table dining experience and its unique dishes enough reasons to lure you in, then you'd find really interesting bonuses from the farm. Aside from ensuring its delicate landscaping, the couple also made use of each and every living organism in their farm to complement and sustain each other. This system is called "Integrated Diversified Organic Farming System" (IDOFS).

IDOFS promotes efficiency as each plant and/or animal serves a purpose outside itself. In Forest Wood's case, for instance, they house pigs and move them in different areas of the farm after the soil has been fertilized through

the pigs' activities like defecation. In the same way, some plants attract or keep away certain pests that could be beneficial to keep certain insects away from other plants.

To share this knowledge, the Fragos use their farm to conduct seminars about IDOFS, organic inputs, sustainable pig farming, and agricultural entrepreneurship (agri-preneurship). So apart from receiving visitors into their farm, the Forest Wood Garden also serves as a Learning Site to the Agricultural Training Institute—from welcoming farmers and other participants in their farm, to hosting learning sessions for students who are taking up on-the-job trainings.

There are more to learn from the Forest Wood Garden—things which are interesting, helpful, and replicable to any set of people who would like to grow the produce they eat naturally. From first opening to the public in 2009, the Forest Wood, as well as the Fragos, have come a long way in advocating various concepts in agriculture. Both continue to complement each other as they live more years of passion, persistence, and purpose.



A Wider Reach: Bangladeshi Government Officials Visit ATI

Angelica Marie T. Umali



The Bangladeshi delegation learns about the history of agricultural and fisheries extension and the farming processes and systems in the country.

DILIMAN, Quezon City — The Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) takes another opportunity to underscore the agriculture and fisheries in the Philippines. This time, to some Bangladeshi government officials headed by the Secretary of the Ministry of Food (MAF) during a briefing at the Learning and Discovery (LeAD) Center and the Agriculture and Fisheries Knowledge Resource Center on May 31, 2017.

As part of their study tour and training, eight Bangladeshi government officials from the MAF visited ATI to learn about the Institute's experience on Food Safety, Security, Handling, and Management. They are: Secretary Md. Kaikobad Hossain; Joint

Secretary Md. Sherajul Islam; Deputy Secretary Md. Saiful Islam; Deputy Secretary Md. Zahirul Islam; Deputy Secretary Kamar Jahan; Assistant Chief Monoara Parveen Mitu; Directorate General of Food Md. Mahamud Hasan; and Md. Monirul Haq.

During their tour in the LeAD Center, Joeven Calasagsag of the Institute's Information Services Division shared the history of Philippines' agricultural and fisheries extension; the existing farming systems in the country; agricultural value chains of some commodities; and inspiring stories of successful farmers. Likewise, Sherrie Dreje and Carmina De Mesa of the Partnerships and Accreditation Division gave an

overview of the Institute's Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) program.

Secretary Md. Islam noted, "Amazing idea I got from the Institution. We should implement these types of ideas in our country, Bangladesh."

This activity was organized by the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication led by Vice President Imelda Samson. It is in partnership with the Bangladesh-based Management and Training International Ltd. The focus of the study tour was to share and exchange knowledge on practical lessons, insights, and perspectives on food safety and other related issues.

Shaping Development Strategies during 24th AWGATE Meeting

Marianne B. Antonio

KANCHANABURI, Thailand – Poverty and hunger are long-term global problems severely experienced in the developing countries. As the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Agriculture and Training Extension (AWGATE) recently held its 24th meeting, improved policies and actions plans on agriculture extension have been formulated to address these worldwide challenges.

The agenda of the meeting included updates on the implementation of collaborative trainings on agriculture and extension programs of the ASEAN member states (AMS). OIC-Director Luz Taposok of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) represented the Philippine government and presented the outcome of the Regional Training on Agro Forestry Practices held last October 23-29, 2016 in Manila and the Tropical Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability (TREES) in Los Baños, Laguna.

Taposok explained that the training aimed to promote regional cooperation among the AMS in the fields of agriculture and forestry through exchange of information. Some 19 delegates from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines participated in this training. She said that at the end of the training, participants were required to prepare an action plan to apply the knowledge and skills that they have gained from the training course, and served as their start-up activity in implementing appropriate agroforestry-related projects in their respective communities.

She further noted the importance of such trainings for the AMS to convene and exchange technological practices and information significant to the agro-forestry and extension training. The OIC-Director presented the 2016 Annual Report of the Institute which focused on how it has successfully provided extension

support, education and, training services through its national office and network of training centers nationwide. She emphasized the results of various trainings and activities that the agency conducted.

Matters on the policy framework of the ASEAN cooperation, calendar of activities under the AWGATE, coordination on ASEAN Farm Youth and young farmers' promotion, establishment of AWGATE website to consolidate documents pertaining to the results of various training and activities, as well as the progress of Module on Sustainable Agriculture (MOSA) and Capacity Development in ASEAN regions were discussed.

Kanchanaburi, Thailand Vice Governor Narong Rakroi cited the significance of having productive dialogue among the AMS which will therefore guarantee the success of the ASEAN agriculture sector. Watchreeporn Orankanok, Advisory Expert in Agricultural Commodity System Development, Department of Agricultural Extension in Thailand and the Chairman of the 24th AWGATE meeting similarly expressed her strong belief to the cooperative spirit of the AMS to secure the bright future of the global agriculture landscape.

Participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines attended the meeting last June 8-9, 2017. It was agreed that the 25th AWGATE meeting will be held in Vietnam and is tentatively scheduled in May 2018.



Delegates from the ASEAN Member States attend the 24th AWGATE meeting in Thailand.

Alameda Farm

experiencing agricultour

Jason Paul Dads E. Jampac

It's not just the usual scenery of flora and fauna. For 'agrophilics' and nature-seekers, this farm is an intertwine of leisure, learning, and adventure.

In Alameda Farm, you experience the sights and sounds of nature, the taste of healthy, organically grown produce, and the feel of adrenaline rush while being whisked over and yonder the sprawling landscape of coconuts, mangoes, and assortment of crops via sky bike and zip line. Truly, a unique experience and one-of-a-kind adventure in Caraga worthy of your bucket list.

DISCOVERING AGRICOLTUR

Alameda Farm is owned by Manuel Alameda Sr., incumbent Vice Governor of Surigao del Sur. Farming has always been his line of interest besides politics. In fact, he was already into farming even before he entered public service. His biggest 'break' in farming was in 2013, when the Agricultural Training Institute- Regional Training Center (ATI-RTC) Caraga identified his farm as a Learning Site (LS) where he, as a cooperator, was provided with training and financial support to develop his farm into something worthy of emulation.

His immersion at the Costales Nature Farms in Laguna, through the ATI, was a turning point for him. He was inspired by how an information technology expert with little knowledge on agriculture was able to transform a piece of land into a farm tourism wonder.

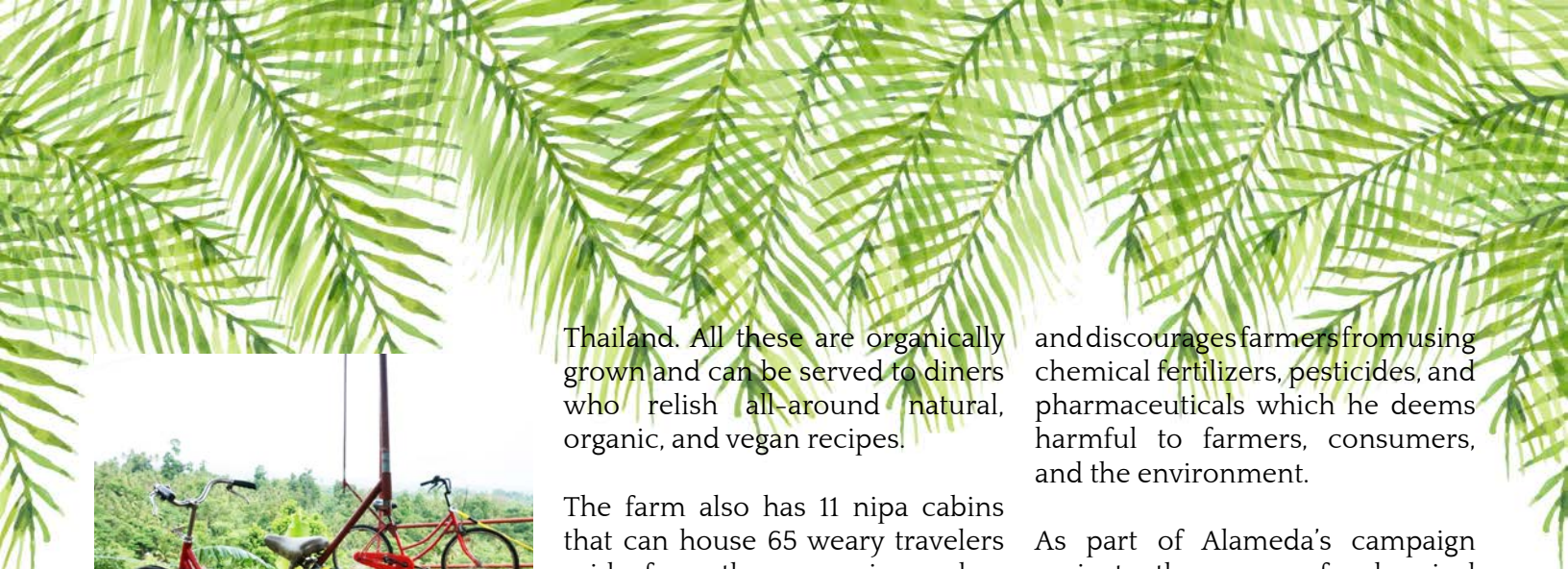
Imbued with courage, determination, and enthusiasm, Alameda decided to develop his farm into a tourist destination—just in time with the signing of Republic Act No. 10816 or the Farm Tourism Development Act of 2016. Alameda expanded his three-hectare farmland into a

10-hectare farm tourism attraction, constructing additional features such as cabins, cottages, and tents for relaxation and overnight stays; plus training halls, viewing decks, and recreational activities. He cultivated more crops and vegetables, and provided areas for raising hogs, goats, poultry, geese, and ducks.

A SYMBOL OF ABUNDANCE

Alameda Farm is located 73 kilometers south of Tandag City in San Agustin, Surigao del Sur in Eastern Mindanao. It is nestled





Thailand. All these are organically grown and can be served to diners who relish all-around natural, organic, and vegan recipes.

The farm also has 11 nipa cabins that can house 65 weary travelers aside from the open-air gazebos and tents where they can also relax; a center cottage with a loft for anyone wanting to have an airy sleep or gaze the star-studded night sky; and a function hall which is used for meetings, trainings, wedding receptions, and other gatherings.

Locally made “pasalubong” are available at the reception area. For the sweet tooth who digs healthy treats, Alameda Farm sells coco honey and lemon grass juice which helps detoxify the body and a relief from stomach disorders, insomnia, respiratory disorders, fever, aches, infections, rheumatism, and edema.

TREATS FOR THE ADVENTURESOME

Alameda Farm offers opportunities to visitors, farmers, and fishers who want to be educated and trained on farming techniques and sustainable agriculture, while providing them a venue for relaxation and outdoor adventures such as hiking, trekking, jogging, riding the all-terrain vehicle, sky biking, and zip lining.

ALAMEDA'S ADVOCACY

As an active LS cooperators of the ATI, Alameda strongly advocates the practice of organic agriculture

and discourages farmers from using chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and pharmaceuticals which he deems harmful to farmers, consumers, and the environment.

As part of Alameda’s campaign against the use of chemical fertilizers, he constructed a vermiculture farm where he uses worm castings/manure and food wastes and mixes it with soil to create a compost which is an excellent, nutrient-rich organic fertilizer and soil conditioner.

In June 2016, a group of LS cooperators formed CALESA or the Caraga Agricultural Learning Site Association. Their aim is to strengthen linkages between and among LS cooperators and the ATI, share knowledge and expertise, and promote and improve LS as a center of learning for farmers and fisherfolk. Currently, Alameda serves as the president and his farm is usually the venue for their periodic meetings.

Aside from what the acronym originally stands for, CALESA may also mean “Connecting Adventure-Like Experience with Scenic Agriculture” to speak for what one experiences at Alameda Farm. Soon, if plans push through, the road leading to the farm will be concreted through the support of the Department of Tourism. Also, kiwi and other crops will be grown in the farm. Fingers crossed, a cable car connecting the farm to the famous Britania islets may be possible in the distant future.

atop the hilly interior of Sitio Hamburger Hills, Barangay Gata which is 750 feet above sea level and 2.8 kilometers away from the national highway.

Alameda Farm is a cornucopia in itself. Inside the farm, a variety of fruits, vegetables, and herbs can be found. A far cry from what it was more than a decade ago where only mangoes and mangosteen were available. Now, down a deep, narrow portion of the farm, the golden terrain is matted with a greenery of bananas, cacaos, dragon fruits, and guavas which are interspersed with Kopyor (macapuno) coconuts and Nandokmay mango trees from

MA DO MA FARM

Ang Paraiso sa D. Alarcio

Maricel D. Dacapias

It was 2014 when I attended the launching program of a Learning Site in Barangay D. Alarcio in Laoac, Pangasinan. I was amazed when I found out that the farm was owned by Domingo Dulay who had been a professor for 35 years.

I immediately considered him my uncle because I am formerly 'Ms. Dulay' and my hometown in Aringay, La Union is where he was born and stayed during his bachelor years. I call him 'Tatay Doming.'

When he got married, Tatay Doming moved to Barangay D. Alarcio which was known before as "paitan," an Iluko word that means "bitter." The eventual change in its name also earned the place the label "paraiso" or paradise which is better than bitter.

His parents were farmers which is why farming is not that hard for him. Aside from this, he would always attend training activities of the

local government unit especially by the Municipal Agriculture's Office of Laoac and the Agricultural Training Institute Regional Training Center (ATI-RTC) I.

Tatay Doming went from teaching to farming. He applied what he learned and developed his farm until it was shown to the ATI and passed as a Learning Site. The realization came then as he would eventually become a teacher again but, this time, to his colleagues in the farm, through informal education.

Created by virtue of a Republic Act on March 5, 1980, Laoac is the youngest town of Pangasinan. It has 22 barangays which were all formerly part of Manaoag. The 37-year-old town recognized the importance of organic agriculture. With a vision that his people will "eat a healthy diet," the local executive supports natural farming and even promotes backyard gardening to families in all barangays of Laoac. Households are encouraged to grow 10 different kinds of plant in their backyards which they can also earn additional income from. This vision of the town's leader was

realized with the establishment of MaDoMa Farm as a Learning Site (LS) that practices organic farming. The farm was named after the siblings of Tatay Doming; Marites, Domingo Jr., and Mabel. It was also dubbed "Ang Paraiso sa D. Alarcio".

The MaDoMa Farm has a three-hectare area applied with organic farming practices. It showcases aqua production on tilapia and native shrimp. Livestock, particularly native pig and chicken, duck, sheep, and goat, are also being raised. Black, red, and RC 160 varieties of rice are grown in the farm. Other than these, vegetables like tomatoes, chili, squash, string beans, bottle gourd, green leafy vegetables, and other high value crops are also being grown. To complete the farm paradise, fruit-bearing trees like guyabano, mango, calamansi, macopa, banana, among others were planted in between the vegetables.

The established LS is a dream come true for Tatay Doming. He then also wanted to put up a multi-purpose building made of indigenous materials that can be used as venue for training activities. This was fulfilled when MaDoMa Farm was elevated into a School for Practical Agriculture under the ATI.

From then on, the farm has become a place for educating farmers, youth, students, and other stakeholders in agriculture. Visitors come and go at this paradise called MaDoMa.

The 3-hour Travel: HOYOHYOY, A HIDDEN PARADISE IN TANGUB CITY, MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL

Karl Louise M. Salibio

ECSTATIC.

This is my general description of my travel in Hoyohoy. I can recommend this to people who are looking for peace and personal freedom. This place is the best to unwind and reconnect with nature.

Note: Hoyohoy Highland Stone Chapel Organic Farm and Adventure Park is an ATI Learning Site for organic agriculture.

The moment the plane touched Mindanao, the breezy Monday morning and clear skies greeted me. It's a good day. As someone who grew up in Manila, travels like this make me happy. Everything is in perfect mix: the wind, the sun, the weather. I guess I can get used to this. Then, the sweet ride to Hoyohoy Highland Stone Chapel Organic Farm & Adventure Park in Tangub City, Misamis Occidental.

It was a smooth ride since the roads were perfectly paved. We arrived at Hoyohoy just in time for breakfast. They served us steamed rice, boiled egg, dried fish, and bitter melon. It was a perfect feast. It was so fresh, probably because it's organic.

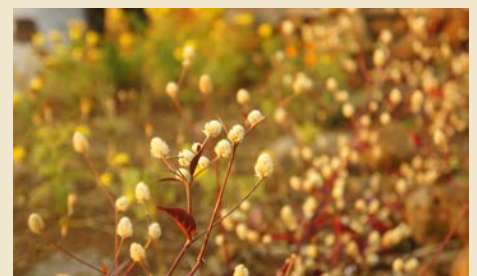
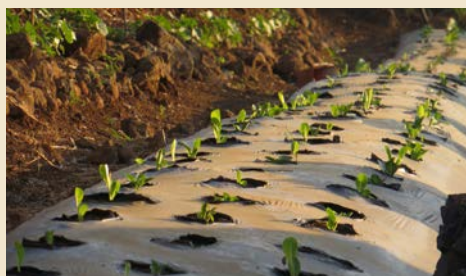
Hoyohoy is mesmerizing. The mountain, the wind, and the sun welcomed us. Overlooking, you will see the Panguil bay mixing with the clouds. On the left, however, is the broad stature of Malindang Mountain ranges peeking on the curtain of the sunrise. You can also hear the howling of the wind. This is a complete package of nature. I did not expect this scene to be this beautiful. I've traveled so much and I say, this scene really is one of a kind.

You think this is all they've got? As much as I want to believe that this beauty is already ecstatic, I realized that they've got so much more to offer. I am baffled on how I will consume all these when we still had our tour around their organic farm. The perfect landscape of the farm brought not just a blissful sight, but also a craving in my tummy.

You can also try one of Hoyohoy's adventure packages. They have one of the longest ziplines in Asia with two operating lines, first is 1.5 km long and 500 meters deep, while the second is 1.2 km long and 20 meters deep. Can you imagine all the screaming you can make?

Short but worth a million tons of smile, our Hoyohoy trip was truly a blast. I enjoyed every minute of our stay. We had morning walks while waiting for the sunrise from an 850-meter area above sea level slope.

Can you visualize such beauty? It was a bittersweet affair to be leaving so soon. For now, it's goodbye, or rather, should I say "Till then, Hoyohoy?" Maybe when I am tired of the metro, I can simply go back. Anyway, it's just a three-hour travel away from home.



357

LEARNING SITES

Functions



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Field visit area for other farmers, ATI's training participants and others who are interested in agriculture



On-the-job training (OJT) site for ATI's scholarship program



Venue for practical and hands-on learning



ATI LEARNING SITES

A Learning Site (LS) is a farm practicing applicable agricultural technologies, employing doable farming strategies and operating successfully, thus, worthy of emulation.

The farmer-owner/farm family is relatively advanced compared to the majority of the farmers and is willing to accept the responsibility of an LS after being certified by the ATI.

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