



# PHILIPPINE TOBACCO NEWS

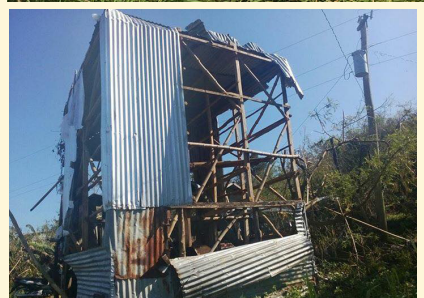
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## 'Lawin' Aftermath

THE National Tobacco Administration through its branch offices in the areas affected by Super Typhoon Lawin conducted on-farm inspections to see the extent of damages on its Rice Wet Season Project, tree seedlings for its Renewable Fuelwood Farm Project, and the seedbeds and curing barns of its Tobacco Contract Growing System farmers. These will serve as bases for coming up with programs that will enable the tobacco farmers recover from the damages caused by the calamity.

Among those inspected by the officials of the Candon Branch Office immediately after the typhoon were (in PHOTOS, clockwise) the rice farm of Reynaldo Sanchez in Galimuyod, Ilocos Sur, the rice farm of Reynaldo Javier of Codoog, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur, the tobacco seedbeds of Merylyn Cabrito in Sucoc, Narvacan and the curing barn of Felicidad Gines also in Barangay Sucoc.

Hermielynn Ringor / NTA Candon

## NTA resolute in its commitment to quality tobacco production

**F**ARMERS who produce good quality tobacco expect a ready market at favorable prices.

This has been a consistent reminder by the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) for every cropping season, which usually runs from as early as September to late April the next year.

NTA Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza has stressed the need for farmers to produce high quality leaf. He kept on reminding them that while producing low-quality leaves may be inherent with the plant, this should not be aggravated by bad production, curing, and handling practices.

Low-grade tobacco leaves, or even usable rejects, might be as good as waste now. This is so as the uniform tax rates of all types of cigarettes per pack took effect this year.

According to the new Sin Tax Law (or Republic Act 10351), the tax on tobacco products, both upper and lower price ranges continue to rise at their respective rates from the effectivity of the law in 2013 until 2017 when all types of tobacco products are taxed P30 per pack.

With this development, tobacco companies upgraded the quality of their

product to match increased prices and, therefore, would only want the best quality leaves for their products to be competitive in the market. They would only purchase the best quality leaves, and unlike years before, low grade/reject tobacco might no longer be bought during this trading season.

It may be noted that during the Tripartite Conference that approved the latest floor price increase in 2015, the farmers agreed to a status quo in the lower grade prices for Virginia and Burley to discourage production of low quality tobacco leaves, which was one of the conditions set by traders in increasing the prices for top grades.

Without the market for the low grades, reject tobacco production will no longer be profitable. The agency addresses the problem through its market-driven quality tobacco production programs, with such critical interventions as the Irrigation Support Program and the Tobacco Contract Growing System; the education and information drive of each branch office before the start of the tobacco season that centers on high quality requirements, tasking extension workers to give invaluable advice and

assistance to farmers to ensure that the tobacco grown will be acceptable; the release of the Tobacco Production Manuals (Virginia and Burley) prepared by the Techno Updating Task Force, which are expected to boost the education campaign for quality tobacco production; and continuing emphasis on Good Agricultural Practices and the implementation of Quick Response System for early detection of pests and diseases in the farm. Campaign against non-tobacco related materials is as strong as ever throughout the cropping season until the trading of the tobacco leaves.

Zaragoza said that the prospect in the market continues to be bright. "As long as the industry addresses the quality as demanded by the export market or specific quality demanded by domestic manufacturing, we will sustain the viability of the local tobacco industry," he added.

Tobacco is still a reliable cash crop, particularly in Northern Luzon.

Despite the challenges, such as anti-smoking campaigns and related legal frameworks, the tobacco industry in the country still has a promising future, that is, if good tobacco quality is sustained. 🌱

## A handy guide to promote market-driven quality tobacco production

**T**HE profitability of tobacco production is anchored on the marketability of the tobacco leaf, i.e., it should satisfy the physico-chemical requirements of the ultimate users, the local manufacturers, for the satisfaction of the cigarette/cigar smokers and of the export markets. These requirements are collectively referred to as tobacco leaf quality.

To promote consistency in quality, it is imperative that the tobacco leaf producers, the tobacco farmers, follow the same production technology as prescribed by the NTA from the time the seeds are sown until these are harvested and cured, appropriate for the kind of tobacco they are to produce. The quantity and time of application of the agricultural inputs have to be consistent between and among the tobacco growers in producing the quantity required by the aforesaid markets for a certain tobacco type/sub-type. Thus, the printing of a Tobacco Production Manual was undertaken, the contents of which were the result of an active consultation and collaboration between and among the agronomists of the private sector and the NTA.

Two versions were printed for the dominant tobacco types, Virginia and Burley tobacco. The English version is primarily intended for the Extension Workers, Researchers, Agronomists and the like; while the Ilokano version, for the tobacco farmers.

The pocket-sized manuals were distributed in time for the start of Crop Year 2016-2017 for ready reference by the intended users. 🌱



NTA Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza receives the copies of the four-set manuals from Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, chairperson of Techno Updating Task Force, along with Dr. Perlita L. Baula, editor and head of Publication Team.

Neyo E. Valdez

## Tobacco production manuals launched

**T**HE National Tobacco Administration launched last October 24 the Tobacco Production Manuals (English/Ilokano versions, both Virginia and Burley) for Crop Year 2016-2017, prepared by the Techno Updating Task Force of the agency, in collaboration with the tobacco leaf buyers.

The publication, as a component of the NTA Communications Support Program, will serve as general reference materials for tobacco production and regulation officers, specialists and trainers in teaching and assisting tobacco farmers, and will be an effective tool in education and information dissemination on production of quality tobacco.

The contents of the manual were prepared during the two-day workshop of the Techno Updating Task Force members held at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City last August. The 2016 Tobacco Production Manuals will be the first to be published since 2008.

The Techno Updating Task Force was chaired by Industrial Research Department Manager and Technical Coordinator for Branch Offices Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, with Imelda N. Riñen, Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD) officer-in-charge, as Co-Chair. 🌱

## Tobacco seeds distribution

**N**TA Candon headed by Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta (2nd from left) packs tobacco seeds ready for distribution to tobacco growers in the 2nd District of Ilocos Sur.

A total of 1,710 packets of seeds of five recommended tobacco seed varieties (Reams 266, Coker 254, Giant Coker, Golden Harvest and NC 2326) will be distributed free to about 970 tobacco farmers participating under the IFOIGAP-TCGS of the branch office in time for the start of the cropping season in October.

The first four varieties are intended for Virginia Neutral flavor production while NC 2326 for the Virginia Improved flavor.

To ensure seed purity, thus attaining uniform crop stand in the field, the Branch Offices source the tobacco seeds only from the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD) based in Batac City.

NTA Candon



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# NTA Candon sets off crop season with E & I drive

by Orlando O. Galdones

**S**TART the tobacco season early and  
**E**nd it with an optimum income!

After the rainy months of September and October, farmers would then start selecting the best portion of their rice paddies that they will use to raise tobacco seedlings.

Most tobacco farmers in Ilocos Sur raise their own seedlings. Some farmers are contracted by private tobacco companies as seedling growers and they are assigned specific quota on the number of seedlings to produce.

But before farmers could start seed-bedding activities, the operations division of NTA Candon, headed by the Branch Manager, has to conduct education and information drive in all tobacco-growing municipalities in the second district of Ilocos Sur, which the branch covers. This is in coordination with the local government units in the district.

Orientation for farmers is conducted either by municipalities or by clusters of adjacent tobacco-producing communities (barangays), depending on how the extension workers devise strategies based on the production schedules. The Branch Manager, the Chief Agriculturist, and the Supervising Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer (TPRO) attend these meetings together or separately when meetings are held in different areas simultaneously. Recruitment of farmers follows after the activity.

The Branch Office brings the “Balik Tabako” program in any of these orientation activities. The program reembraces tobacco farmers who have stopped planting the crop to plant again for another crop year. The local government units in the district support



Meeting with farmers in Codoog, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur

this program, as they are aware of the decline of the number of tobacco growers for the past two cropping seasons.

Also included in the discussion during the meetings are the two institutional projects of the agency under the Integrated Farming and Other Income Generating Activities Project (IFOIGAP), namely, the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS) and the Rice Project Wet Season, with focus on the updates in the package of technologies (POT) for both tobacco and rice crops.

A review on the harmonized international leaf grading system is also emphasized during these meetings to remind the farmers on proper grading of their tobacco. The review will facilitate the marketing aspect of their tobacco produce come trading season, i.e., no “mixed bales” or multiple cured tobacco leaf grades in one bale, high moisture content of the cured leaves, and absence of non-tobacco related materials (NTRMs). Farmers have to be reminded that tobacco planted during the cool months of November and December only, where soil moisture is adequate

for the growing tobacco plants, produce quality leaves. Quality leaves when cured command higher price per kilo.

The conduct of information and education drive will continue throughout the period, with emphasis on Good Agricultural Practices in the succeeding interactions with the farmers.

Emphasizing the importance of education and information drive, Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta said, “Our farmers need to be provided with the necessary information and guidance to produce quality tobacco.” Farmers’ income would always depend on the quality of their produce, she added.

As of October, the Branch Office has recruited a total of 815 farmers and the number may still increase until November or early December.

This education and information drive of the branch office keeps on the vision that come trading season, usually in later part of March, the farmers will realize a considerable net income, and have time for off-season business venture, such as vegetable growing or poultry or goat raising or even hog fattening. 🌱

## Series of farmers’ orientation seminars on TCGS in Santol, La Union

by Ruby A. Dacanay & Potenciano H. Apilado

**A**SERIES of orientation seminars on Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS) in separate locations was conducted by the NTA La Union in Santol, La Union for crop year 2016-2017. The said orientation seminars were held in barangays Corro-oy and Paagan on September 5; Lettac Norte and Poblacion, on September 6; and Manggaan and Lettac Sur, on September 7.

A total of 146 tobacco farmers participated in the orientation-seminars who would be cooperators of the TCGS. With the involvement and support of LGU Santol, La Union and leaf buyer Trans-Manila, Incorporated (TMI), the tobacco production in the municipality

is expected to get a boost, raising the possibility of increasing the municipal share from tobacco excise taxes.

In these meetings, Branch Manager Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay discussed the different programs and projects of the agency and the rationale of the Tobacco Contract Growing System. Branch Chief Agriculturist Emma Beth B. Fantastico and Supervising TPRO Marcelo T. Pascual alternately explained the Implementing Guidelines and Procedures of the TCGS Project.

Representatives from TMI, Engr. Reynaldo Bagaoisan, Project Manager/ Senior Agronomist, and Ms. Edna Fajardo, TMI Extension Worker, discussed the Guidelines of Virginia

Improved Flavor Tobacco Production Direct Farmers Projects as well as the observance of zero NTRM.

Santol Mayor Magno C. Wailan expressed his support to the local tobacco production by assuring the tobacco farmers that once the municipal share from the excise tax of tobacco under Republic Act 7171 is released, fertilizers for tobacco production would be subsidized. Joining the mayor in inspiring and encouraging the tobacco farmers was Municipal Agriculture Officer Edith Oriente.

Each meeting ended with an open forum with the branch officers, TMI representatives, and local officials present, ready to answer the queries of farmers. 🌱

# Serbisyo: Ano ang kahulugan nito sa'yo?

by Precilla R. Lagadon

**O**NLY life lived in the service to others is worth living." Isa itong popular na linya ni Albert Einstein na nagsilbing makapangyarihang prinsipio na siyang kaakibat ko at gabay sa pagtahak at paglalayag ko sa pagsisilbi sa Gobyerno. Noong bago pa lang ako sa industriya, kami'y nag-survey at inalam namin kung sino ang mga nagtatanim ng tabako at kung ano ang mga kailangan sa pagtatanim. Para sa ikabubuti ng industriya ng tabako at magsasaka, ang opisina ay gumawa ng paraan para maituro sa kanila ang husto at wastong teknolohiya para sa tabako.

Dahil sa mga ipinakita nila na pagtanggap sa ating mga proyekto, lalo kaming nagpursigi at naging matiyaga para sa kanila, maski na lampas na sa oras ng trabaho kapag kinakailangan.

Para mabigyan sila ng inspirasyon sa pagtatanim, ang NTA ay naglunsad ng Search for Outstanding Tobacco Farmer para ipakita nila ang kanilang kakayahan sa pagtatanim. Ginabayan namin sila nang dapat at wasto at, sa awa ng Diyos, naging provincial winner ang aking Farmer Cooperator. Tatlo ang nanalo na farmers na aking ginabayan sa provincial level at nakita ko na sila ay pursigido sa kanilang kakayahan sa pagtatanim ng tabako.

Indeed, apart from the invaluable experiences that I gained, enjoy na enjoy ako sa aking mga farmers. Ang mga ngiti nila at kagalakan ay aking nararamdaman na siyang nagbibigay ng inspirasyon at nagpapahiwatig na rin ng pagsang-ayon sa aking tunay at tapat na serbisyo.

Ang paninilbihan ko ay hindi man perpekto, ito ay aking pagtatagumpayan sapagkat bawat isa ay may kalakasan at kahinaan. Kaya nga nabuo ang kaisipan ko sa salitang SERBISYO.



(Ito ay parte ng mensahe ni Precilla R. Lagadon, 62, Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer I ng NTA Ilocos Norte, sa programang Parangal sa Empleyado 2016. Ang programa ay nataaon sa selebrasyon ng Anibersaryo ng Philippine Civil Service Commission. Kasama ni Gng. Lagadon na pinarangalan sina Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz at Chief Agriculturist Candelario P. Corpuz, at walang iba pa. Ang parangal sa empleyado ay taonang ginaganap ng NTA Ilocos Norte.- Divina D. Pagdilao)

**S**- ay **SAKRIPISYO**. Oras at panahon ang inilaan upang maging kapakipakinabang—ang lahat ng araw ay working day.

**E**- ay **EHEMPLO**. Hindi man tayo perpekto ngunit kahit kaunti'y nakagawa tayo ng mabuti na tutularan ng iba.

**R**- ay **RESPONSABLE**. Hindi man tayo ang napagsabihan na gawin ang isang trabaho, kung kaya naman nating gawin ay tumulong tayo o gawin na ang trabahong ito.

**B**- ay **BIHAG**. Bihag? Bagamat negatibo ang dating, maari ding maging positibo. Dapat tayo ay bihag ng tapat na panunungkulan. Dapat tayo ay maglingkod at nakapokus lamang kung ano ang nararapat. Bihag sana tayo ng mga katagang Tiwala, Katapatan, at Dedikasyon.

**I**- ay **INSTRUMENTO**. Tayo'y instrumento ng pagbabago, gaya ng sabi ng ating Pangulo, upang mapabuti ang ating bayan. Respetuhin ang iba upang manatili ang respetong pansarili at para sa kapwa.

**S**- ay **SINAG**. Kailangan ng isang kawani na gaya natin na magsisilbing ilaw o liwanag ng kabutihan.

**Y**- ay **YAMAN**. Tunay na yaman ay makakamtan sa panunungkulan, hindi lamang pera, ngunit higit sa lahat, yaman sa gawa at sa natutuhan.

**O**- ay **OBRA MAESTRA**. Ang pagiging kawani ay regalo ng Panginoon kaya magpasalamat tayo dahil tayo ay Obra Maestra ng Diyos.

Being in the government service for 35 years now had not always been a bouquet of flowers nor a red carpet for me. May mga pagkakataon na mahirap ang daan, meron mga lubak-lubak o may kadiliman, pero hindi naging hadlang sa akin. Ang mga ito ang nagbigay-lakas, mga pagsubok na siyang katulong ko sa minamahal kong trabaho. Sabi nila, we don't grow when things are easy, we grow when we are confronted with difficulties.

In closing, let me quote what Abraham Lincoln said, "In the end, it is not the years in your life that counts. It is the life in your years."

Maraming salamat ng tatlumpo't limang beses... Mabuhay, NTA!!! 🙏

## Misamis Or. tobacco farmers visit FTSD

**S**OME 37 tobacco farmers, cooperative leaders, barangay leaders and municipal officials of Alubijid, Misamis Oriental visited the NTA Farm Technology and Services Department (NTA-FTSD) in Batac City as part of the tour to the Ilocos Provinces on September 1-3.

With the group was Mercedes M. Ayco, Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer III, who holds office at the NTA extension office in Northern Mindanao.

Imelda N. Riñen, FTSD officer in charge, met with the farmers and briefed them through a PowerPoint presentation on the programs, projects, and activities of the agency.

Junjie Ora-ora, Chairman of Talaba II Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Inc., in Alubijid, was impressed with the different uses of tobacco such as a material for making paper and novelty items. He signified his intention to embark on paper making as a livelihood undertaking of their cooperative.

For the sidetrip, Ayco led the farmers in touring around the historical, natural and industry-related attractions of Ilocandia. (F.R. Aurellano) 🙏

## NTA technical papers presented in commodity review

**T**HE Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD) of the National Tobacco Administration presented three technical papers in the 2016 Commodity Review on rice and rice-based farming systems and tobacco on September 6. The papers were presented along with 12 others from the different member agencies of the Ilocos Agriculture, Aquatic and Resources Research and Development Consortium (ILAARRDEC) in Batac City.

Fernando L. Andres, Science Research Specialist (SRS) II, presented the paper "Re-greening Mother Earth and Restoring Ecological Integrity: The NTA Experience." The development paper discussed the Kahuyang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan and the Synchronized Tree Planting projects of the agency from 2013 to 2015. The paper was adjudged to advance to the Region I Research and Development Symposium for oral presentation in November.

Two other development papers from

Pls turn to page 12

# NTA ABRA

## QUICK GLANCE: BRANCH PROFILE

- Number of Tobacco Farmers/Hectareage: **Virginia: 4,280 FCs / 5,249 ha**  
**Native: 296 FCs / 180.84 ha**
- Number of Tobacco-growing Municipalities  
Including Expansion Areas: **21**
- Number of Staff: **15 Regular; 4 Job Orders**

## 'Lawin' hits Abra

**T**HE Province of Abra was one of those areas in Northern Luzon badly affected by Super Typhoon Lawin last October 20. According to initial reports from the Office of the Civil Defense and the Cordillera Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, the province suffered crop damages, almost the entirety of which was on rice, amounting to P23,866,400.

NTA Abra immediately conducted on-farm inspections to see the extent of damages on its Rice Wet Season Projects, tree seedlings for its Renewable Fuelwood Farm Project, and the seedbeds and curing barns of its Tobacco Contract Growing System farmers.

According to Branch Manager Esmeralda G. Valera, 210 farmer-cooperators of the Rice Projects are affected, with the rice farms of 26 of them severely damaged by the typhoon. The renewable fuelwood farms under the agency's Kahuyang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan program involving 551 farmer-cooperators also incurred damages.

A total of 17 multi-purpose curing barns (MPCB) were partially damaged and two others severely damaged. Majority of the 253 non-MPCB structures were also severely damaged.

The damage report of the Branch Office was already submitted for consolidation with other branch offices' reports to the Central Office in Quezon City. This will be the basis for coming up with programs that will enable the tobacco farmers recover from the damages caused by the calamity. **Ped Ruben B. Barbero** 📧



A multi-purpose curing barn damaged by Lawin in Bucay, Abra.

## AgriPinoy products gain more buyers in Abra

**N**TA AgriPinoy meat products are gradually gaining popularity in Abra. As of September 2016, the branch office, has a total sales of P502,497, according to Ethelwolda C. Bosque, branch office marketing coordinator of AgriPinoy food products.

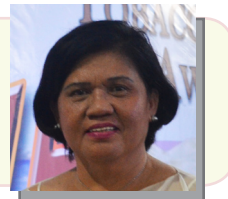
With the continuing help of the branch extension workers in promoting the products in their assigned areas, and the coming Christmas season, Bosque expects a sales boost before the year ends.

The food products, bearing the label NTA Pinoy Foods, are processed at the NTA AgriPinoy Tobacco Farmers Food Processing and Trading Center located at the National Highway in Brgy. Nanguneg, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur. Accredited tobacco farmers engaged in hog and poultry raising as additional livelihood are the exclusive suppliers of raw materials for the food processing plant.

A total of 39 tobacco farmers in four clusters in the municipalities of Pidigan, San Quintin and Villaviciosa are cooperators of the NTA AgriPinoy hog-raising program for the Branch Office. 📧

## Manager's Corner

**Esmeralda G. Valera**  
*Manager, Abra Branch Office*



### Surmounting challenges

**M**Y heart goes out to our tobacco farmers under the agency's Rice Project Wet Season who lost most, if not all, of their rice harvest to the devastation caused by Super Typhoon Lawin. Most of the tobacco seedbeds for early planting were also washed out, and some curing barns torn down by the strong winds.

Obviously this is a challenge for Abra Branch, as in other branch offices in the provinces that suffered the same. Recognizing the contributions of our farmers in the tobacco industry, we have to give them all-out assistance to lessen the impact of their loss. We will continue to show our commitment to their welfare. Our extension workers are expected to double their time assisting their farmers in time for the planting season.

This is also a big challenge for the local governments. I know, most if not all, of our local executives have been quick in assisting the farmers after the typhoon. And with funds that they have received from their share of the tobacco excise tax, there are good reasons to be optimistic.

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I believe we are up to the challenge, but it will take great effort and determination. This is on the basis of the past performance of our Branch Office.

The rationalization of the agency in 2007 reduced the number of employees in the Branch Office from 28 to 17. And that was the year I was designated Officer-in-Charge by then Administrator Atty. Carlitos S. Encarnacion.

It was a big challenge for me. I have to take charge of the office with only seven extension workers left to work for the whole province. Also there was the psychological baggage as a result of some strained relationships brought about by the rationalization. But I kept the faith. The remaining staff and I had to continue doing our tasks, motivated by the belief that we were chosen to remain in office because of our capabilities.

It is a blessing that all the administrators, current and past, have been very supportive to the Branch Office. We were given trainings to equip us with knowledge and the competence to implement the projects and programs of our agency, on top of the budgetary support given to our extension workers, such as the mobility assistance that help them reach far-flung areas of the province. I always look forward to joining our Mancom meetings, because it is here where I learn from my superiors and my co-managers on best practices, concepts and strategies on how to improve my management style.

I thank especially the current Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza for appointing me as Department Manager III in June 2015.

\*\*\*

I am very fortunate to have local chief executives who are very supportive of our tobacco industry. These local leaders have been giving support to our tobacco farmers in the form of inputs, farm equipment, and trainings. The private sector in the province is also very supportive of the agency. PMFTC and ULPI have been giving production assistance to 70% of our farmers.

Abra Branch is one small branch of NTA, but consider it as big in determination and team spirit in achieving our goals. With only seven extension workers, serving all the tobacco farmers in the whole province with all its rugged terrains is not easy. It takes

# NTA Abra through the years

## Projects Update; Achievements

**A** BRA Branch is one of the smallest branch offices of NTA. Prior to the 1999 reorganization, its manpower was almost 50 including casual employees. After the reorganization, only 28 employees were left to continue the service to the tobacco farmers. The rationalization further decreased the number of staff to 17, then to 15 due to retirement.



*TCGS monitoring by the Branch officials at a farm in Pidigan*

NTA Abra has been holding office at Washington Street, Zone 6 in Bangued, Abra since December 2009. The office building was constructed during the administration of Atty. Carlitos S. Encarnacion on a lot originally owned by the then Philippine Tobacco Administration (PTA) but was used as motorpool by the provincial government. Before this, NTA Abra occupied a space in Balbin Bldg. in Zone 3, Bangued from 1999 to 2009.

### **NTA Abra Leaders (1987-2016)**

The Branch Office is currently headed by Esmeralda G. Valera, from Bangued, Abra and holder of the Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture and Master's Degree in Development Management. She was the Branch Chief Agriculturist and designated officer-in-charge of the branch by NTA Administrator Atty. Carlitos S. Encarnacion after the rationalization in August 2007. She became a full-fledged manager upon her promotion to Department Manager III in June 2015 by the current Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza.

Before Valera, eight other individuals served as Branch Manager (in chronological order), namely, Noe F. Bernardez of Bucay, Abra (July 24, 1987 - January 15, 1999); Tolentino D. Ardaniel of Langiden, Abra (January 16-31, 1999); V. Monette C. Mendoza of Bangued, Abra (February 1, 1999 - September 2001); Mario E. Corpuz of Santiago, Ilocos Sur (September 2001 - February 2015); and Leopoldo L. Binongcal of Naguilian, La Union (February 2005 - August 15, 2007).

A current member of the NTA Governing Board, Director Rogelio A. Elveña, is from Tayum, Abra. Other Abrenians who were appointed Director in separate terms were Dr. Benjamin R. Bringas and Atty. Romeo R. Bringas both of Bangued, Abra.

### **Programs and Projects**

#### **Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS)**

TCGS is the banner program of the Integrated Farming and Other Income

Generating Projects of the agency. This program provides production assistance and technology package to qualified farmer-cooperators.

From 172 farmer-cooperators (FCs) covering 111 hectares in 2010, this increased to 252 FCs covering 138.75 hectares in 2016. The agency has provided P30.5 million in production assistance to the FCs for the five-year period 2010-2015.

#### **Rice Project Wet Season**

Tobacco cooperators during the dry season are also rice farmers during wet season. NTA fully extends its help to farmers by giving production assistance that covers the amount to purchase certified seeds, tractor or animal rental for land preparation, fuel for irrigation, and fertilizers.

With 71 farmer-cooperators participating in the program in 2010 covering 36 hectares, their number increased to 210 covering 137.50 hectares in 2016. Last year, the average yield of the farmer cooperators was at 3,128 kg/ha.

#### **Multi-Purpose Curing Barn (MPCB)**

In consonance with the thrust of promoting the production of Virginia tobacco with high quality leaf, the NTA provided facility assistance to the tobacco farmers for the construction of MPCB to enable them to cure their tobacco produce in a technically appropriate curing facility. As of 2016, a total of 110 MPCB units were constructed for the tobacco farmers in Abra.

#### **Farmers Organization and Development**

As of 2016, there are 34 registered farmers' organizations in Abra, and two tobacco-based cooperatives. The federation of farmers' associations is currently headed by Zosimo C. Adarna.

As part of its advocacy of giving continuous education to farmers' organizations, NTA gives training courses on cooperatives for farmer leaders and

livelihood training courses for farmers' dependents.

Four farmers from Abra attended the training course based on CDA (Cooperative Development Authority) Training Modules from 2012 to 2014. For the livelihood training courses, a total of 114 participants from Abra attended the training on meat processing; organic fertilizer and off-season vegetable production; bread, cake and pastry making; herbal tea making; noodle making; therapeutic massage; ice cream making; dragon fruit production; hair and nail care; dressmaking; and novelty items making.

#### **Scholarship Program**

Sixteen of the 51 NTA scholars from Abra Branch Office graduated from their respective courses in different colleges in the province last school year. Some of them are already gainfully employed.

#### **Kahuyang Pangkalikasan at Pangkabuhayan (KPP)**

A total of 119 Fcs from the tobacco-growing municipalities of the province, with an aggregate area of 139 hectares benefitted from the KPP Project this year. To date, this project has benefitted 551 FCs with a total area of 781 hectares.

#### **Synchronized Tree Planting (STP)**

For the STP held last July 31, the Branch Office distributed a total of 105,550 seedlings sourced from the branch-assisted tree nurseries in the district. A total of 9,710 planting volunteers, coming from NTA, different national agencies, local government units, educational institutions and the private sector, participated in the annual activity.

Since the launching of STP, the Branch Office has planted a total of 314,195 seedlings, involving 48,166 planting volunteers as of October 2016.

#### **Irrigation Support Project**

For the Irrigation Support Project for Small Tobacco Farmers (ISPSTF) of the

## Hard work keeps her up

agency, in coordination with the Farmers Associations and the LGUs, there are 23 sites in the province. These are located in Sagap, Bangued; Namitingan, Dolores; Upper Barit, Luba; Sta. Rosa, Tattawa, and Calabutan-Malamsit, Peñarrubia; San Diego and Yuyeng, Pidigan; Dintan and Villavieja, Pilar; Cabayogan, San Isidro; Pantoc, Bingcong Villamercedes, and Tangadan, San Quintin; Budac and Velasco, Tayum; Lumaba, Laplapog, Callao, and Poblacion, Villaviciosa.

The projects have a maximum potential service area of 3, 073.05 hectares of farmlands in the area.

### Other Projects

#### *Tobacco Grower of the Year (TGY)*

Since the revival of the TGY Project by Administrator Zaragoza in CY 2011-2012, there are already four provincial winners from Abra, namely Randy Dalligos of Villavieja, Pilar for Virginia Neutral CY 2011-2012; Celso Bayle of Pakiling, Bucay for Virginia Neutral, CY 2012-2013; Howard Ciervo of Villavieja, Pilar for Virginia Improved, CY 2012-2013; and Adonis Bolaoit of Lumaba, Villaviciosa for Virginia Neutral CY 2013-2014.

#### *Oras ni Mannalon ti Tabako (OMT)*

The branch office edition of the OMT radio program started airing (during tobacco season only) in 2012 at DZPA, Bangued, Abra, every Sunday. This is anchored by Nora A. Corre, Senior TPRO.

ALL the projects were successful because of support provided by the Administrator and other agency leaders, and the dedication and hard work of the operations group headed by Ped Ruben B. Barbero, Acting Chief Agriculturist and Area Supervisors Nora A. Corre, Senior TPRO and Romeo Y. Paculdo, Agriculturist II. The support services headed by Leonora C. Benzon, Administrative Officer III contributed equally to the success of the projects.

**Esmeralda G. Valera** 🌱

**T**HE dedication and work ethic of Florencia T. Salimbay, one of the extension workers of Abra Branch, has kept her in the agency for 32 years now. She still has few more years to serve, but she has no plans to slow down.

Salimbay, 62, has a reputation among her peers as a model extension worker and is commended by her superiors for consistency in her performance, particularly on collections and timely submission of reports in every project that she supervises. She was awarded Model Agriculturist for the Branch Office during the 26th Foundation Anniversary of the NTA in July 2013.

As an extension worker, she divides her time for her farmer-cooperators in her areas—San Quintin, Pidigan, San Juan, and her hometown Dolores. She considers the farmers as her best friends, and they are very kind to her. “They treat the extension workers as one of their own, and in return we have to understand what they are doing, and most importantly, we have to listen to them,” she said.

Salimbay earned her BS Agriculture degree from the Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology, Lagangilang Campus. She sees her role as an agriculturist as a motivator, and assisting the farm folks in their work towards a better harvest.

During collection period, some farmers would ask for considerations, pleading for extension of payment, but that’s a fact of life, especially during hard times, so she doesn’t need to put unnecessary pressures on them. “An extension worker should know how to listen, and to negotiate when necessary, but we cannot give up on our farmers,” she explained.

Even during the trading period, when tobacco prices and leaf grading are a cause of contention between farmers and buyers, she makes herself available to her farmers to explain things to them.

Traveling the roads on rugged terrains to farming communities, especially during wet season is one difficulty that she must overcome to fulfill her tasks. During trading seasons, she has to accompany her farmers, starting off early dawn to the trading centers and sometimes, at the



peak of the season, she has to stay with them until midnight.

There are other difficulties and challenges in her job. “But it’s worth it,” she said. Aside from working with the farmers and her co-workers who she considers all her friends, she’s well remunerated.

“I’m very thankful for having this job,” she said. Together with her husband Oliver, who is a pharmacist, they were able to buy their own house, buy properties and able to send all their children to college and all three of them finished their college degrees and have good-paying jobs.

Salimbay started working for the agency on January 16, 1990. Before this, she was an extension worker for the Bureau of Plant Industry in La Union, and worked at Cellophil Resources Corporation and the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist in Abra.

Her advice to young extension workers? “Life is hard. But if you love your work, and what you are doing, things will be easy. Just work hard to achieve your goals.”

“As long as I am physically fit, I’ll be good for more years in the Branch Office,” she said. But retirement is inevitable, and when that time comes, she will spend it full-time at their home in Kimmelaba, Dolores, and be with her family, especially her grandchildren. **N.E. Valdez** 🌱



### BRANCH OFFICE STAFF

**Front Row:** Natividad B. Quibilan, TPRO I; Carmencita T. Barcelona, Computer Operator II; Florencia T. Salimbay, Agriculturist I; Nora A. Corre, Senior TPRO; Branch Manager Esmeralda G. Valera, Department Manager III; Ethelwolda C. Bosque, Secretary I; Marife P. Peralta, Job Order; Anneli Tahra A. Alzate, Accountant II; **Second Row:** Ped Ruben B. Barbero, Supervising TPRO; Felicisimo T. Lazo, Cashier II; Melben B. Bejarin, TPRO I; Jordan C. Torralba, Job Order; **Back Row:** Marcosito B. Valera, Agriculturist I; Romeo Y. Paculdo, Agriculturist II; Felix L. Talledon, Job Order; Julio A. Barbosa, TPRO I; Mardelito Bacaricas, Job Order; and Virgilio A. Valera, Driver II. Not in photo: Leonora C. Benzon, Administrative Officer III.



Distribution of water pumps and pipes for irrigation



Construction of Multi-purpose Drying Pavement in Brgy. Kimmelaba



Farm-to-market road in Brgy. Pacac

## Dolores LGU gives farmers more agri support

**T**HE local government of Dolores, Abra continues enhancing the productivity and advancing the welfare of its local farmers with various infrastructure projects and assistance programs completed or implemented this year.

These are funded by the town's share from the 2013 excise tax collection of the national government for locally produced native and Burley tobacco pursuant to Republic Act (RA) 8240, as amended by RA 10351.

Farmers through their barangay councils received last July 14 a total of 15 generator sets (one for each barangay), 30 water pumps including 90 high-density polyethylene pipes. Half of the water pumps and pipes were given to the farmers associations in each barangay.

This project aims to capacitate farmers with proper equipment to combat the erratic weather conditions that are felt around the country during the onslaught of El Niño phenomenon as experienced in the region last cropping season.

The local government has completed the construction of a farm-to-market road in Barangay Pacac and three multi-purpose drying pavements in Barangays Libtec, Mudiit and Kimmelaba, as of October this year. Multi-purpose drying pavements are expected to be constructed in three other barangays. On top

of this, the town has acquired additional equipment for other projects, such as a pay loader, a dump truck, and a cargo truck.

Based on Local Budget Memorandum 72 issued early this year by the Department of Budget and Management, Dolores received from said excise tax a total of P13,211,054. According to Mayor Robert Victor G. Seares Jr., the fund, far bigger than what they received the previous years, has not only given more benefits to the farmers but also helped improve the capacity of their local government deliver basic services for their constituents.

Mayor Seares said the prospects of agriculture in the country is good with the food sufficiency programs of President Rodrigo Duterte and the Department of Agriculture. "That's why support to agriculture is also one top priority of our local government," he added.

For crop year 2015-2016, a total of 74 farmers are registered tobacco growers in Dolores, 30 of which are cooperators of the NTA's Tobacco Contract Growing System covering 25 hectares.

Dolores is one of the six municipal LGUs in Abra which received the Seal of Good Local Governance, the highest and most prestigious award given by the Department of the Interior and Local Government. 🌟

*(Photos courtesy of Dolores LGU)*



Mayor Seares, with NTA Abra Manager Valera and Supervising TPRO Ped Ruben B. Barbero **N.E. Valdez**

### Manager's Corner ... from page 5

dedication and hard work to do so, to make a difference in the lives of the stakeholders of the tobacco industry.

Due to heavy workload, sometimes the family takes a backseat. I am, however, grateful for the understanding and moral support of my husband and children. Truly, my family serves as my inspiration.

And I thank God for His guidance. He gives me strength to surmount all the challenges of my work. There may be more super typhoons to hit us, but with God's grace, I will come safely through. 🌟

**Reaching out to farmers.** We have to value our clientele, the tobacco farmers. NTA Abra, headed by Branch Manager Esmeralda G. Valera, went around the barangays of San Isidro, Pilar, Villaviciosa, Luba, Bucay, Bangued, Tayum, and other municipalities where tobacco is grown to register the tobacco farmers through the ongoing NTA Registry/ID System (RIDS). As of October 2016, the Branch Office has issued IDs to 3,053 of the total 4,846 registered farmers in the province.

During the registration, the Branch Office staff also conducted continuous information and education on the different programs and services of the the agency to the farmers. We reach out even to those in far-flung areas in the Cordillera mountains.

**Marife Perez Peralta**



(Left) Farmers' orientation in Labaan, Bucloc, Abra. (Right) Registration of farmers in Lagaosian, Villaviciosa, Abra.



## San Jose farmers get P19.7-M from tobacco excise tax

by Violeta E. Gayona

**T**HE local government of San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, headed by Mayor Romulo DM. Festin, handed out P19.74 million as financial assistance to tobacco farmers last September 23.

Some 1,316 farmers who planted tobacco for crop year 2012-2013 received P15,000 each for the construction of permanent curing barn. The amount is part of the town's share from the 2013 excise tax collection of the national government for locally manufactured native and Burley tobacco pursuant to Republic Act (RA) 8240, as amended by RA 10351.

San Jose, one of the four tobacco-growing municipalities in Occidental Mindoro, received a total of P30.76 million from the excise tax collections. Aside from financial assistance to farmers, other projects and programs being implemented by the LGU using the funds are the constructions of farm-to-market roads benefiting 12 tobacco-growing barangays, with an allocation of P10.76 million; and P260,000 worth of livelihood assistance to the members of the Samahan ng mga Magtatabako ng Kanlurang Mindoro (SAMAKAMI).

The awarding of financial assistance to the tobacco growers was implemented upon the request of Bituin V. Manguera,



Mayor Romulo DM. Festin (in bull cap) looks on as a tobacco farmer signed his name on a list.

chairperson of SAMAKAMI, in coordination with Violeta E. Gayona of the National Tobacco Administration.

Members of the Sangguniang Bayan headed by Vice Mayor Roderic Q. Agas, Board Member Ulysses P. Javier (representing Rep. Josephine Ramirez-Sato and Gov. Mario Gene Mendiola), Gayona of NTA, Melchor N. Halog of PMFTC, the local police chief, and the manager of LandBank were also

present in the event held at the municipal gymnasium.

Early this year, Mayor Festin also distributed P4.6 million worth of financial assistance to 928 tobacco farmers of San Jose, using the town's share from the 2012 excise tax collections. The local government has improved barangay roads and constructed a covered court and multi-purpose building using the funds. 🌱



(L-R, from 4th) Engr. Elmerante A. Ginez, Agriculturist I; Gloria Exclamador, Coop Secretary; Rose Macarubbo, DA Agricultural Technologist; Alicia A. Malab, Senior TPRO; and Manuel Talosig, Coop Chairman. Maricar Soriano

## 21 water pumps for Tuguegarao farmers

**T**HE local government of Tuguegarao City, headed by Mayor Jeff P. Soriano, continues its support to its tobacco farmers with the award of 21 units of water pumps for irrigation last October 7, held at the residence of farmers' cooperative president Manuel Talosig in Libag Sur in this city.

The amount for the purchase of the water pumps is part of the town's share from the 2013 excise tax collection of the national government for locally manufactured native and Burley tobacco

pursuant to Republic Act 8240.

The water pumps, five for Deep Well and 17 for Shallow Tube-Well, are expected to benefit all the 17 clusters of tobacco farmers, or a total of 395 registered farmers in the city.

Rose Macarubbo, Agricultural Technologist of the Department of Agriculture, spearheaded the turnover in behalf of Mayor Soriano, with NTA's Alicia A. Malab, Sr. TPRO and Engr. Elmerante A. Ginez, Agriculturist I, assisting. (Alicia Malab) 🌱

## Maguindanao tobacco growers receive aid

**T**HE local government of Pagalungan, Maguindanao handed out 50 units of knapsack sprayer to qualified tobacco farmer beneficiaries as Mayor Salik P. Mamasabulod assured local tobacco growers of the town's commitment to enhance quality tobacco production.

The distribution of equipment, headed by Vice Mayor Abdilah Mamasabulod in behalf of the mayor, and assisted by Nelly G. Alba, Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer III of the NTA, was held in Pagalungan on August 15.

The fund for the equipment support project came from the town's share from the 2013 excise tax collection of the national government for locally manufactured native and tobacco pursuant to Republic Act (RA) 8240, as amended by RA 10351.

Pagalungan is one of two tobacco-growing municipalities (the other is Datu Montawal town) in Maguindanao.

Last cropping season, the municipality produced 66 tons of Batek tobacco from a total of 87 hectares planted to tobacco, involving 282 farmers. (Nelly G. Alba/F.R. Aurellano) 🌱

**TEAM Building: a frequently used term which means to get closer with other members of a group towards a common purpose, setting aside differences in beliefs, lifestyle, IQ and professional achievement.**

This was the main purpose of the NTA Ilocos Norte Branch family when the group agreed and was permitted to go on a two-day travel last September 1 and 2, to a new tourist attraction in the north, Alta Vista Ilocandia Mountain and Beach Resort, in Caparispisan, Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte. It is a very relaxing serene place, where anyone can appreciate the beauty of nature, overseeing the West Philippine Sea from a quite high altitude on the western side, a deep rocky mountain trail view on the northern side and mountain view on the eastern side. Though it is obvious that the resort is new, the facilities that housed the local tourists and accommodated the team building activities made the event more exciting.

With the support of Mario E. Corpuz, Department Manager of NTA Ilocos Norte, the team building challenges were conceptualized by the active Administrative Officer Elaine A. Tinio. The staff was divided into two teams - Team White led by Branch Accountant Valentino Valdez and Team Blue led by Manager Corpuz.

A short impromptu program was held prior to the activities. An inspiring message from the Manager gave each one ideas to ponder on, part of which states “there maybe uncertainties in the



by Divina D. Pagdilao

future but in spite of it, we are united. In unity, we can attain a strong team to support any project that will make one stay fruitful and rewarding.” This kicked the different team challenges into high gear.

Teams were given points for each activity, for the members to give their best. The Human Challenge brought out the creativity of the teams to portray a thing by the human resources themselves. The Mental Challenge was a pantomime scrabble game. In the Drama Challenge, the teams portrayed different events, while in the Ang Pamilya Challenge, a father, mother and children will organize a situation required for them to do. One physical challenge, a modified tug of war, was also played.

The evening activities included bonfire with talent search through a Videoke Challenge at the seaside. It was a very

tiring yet challenging day, definitely enjoyed by everyone.

After summing up the scores, the Blue Team ended up with the higher points.

The morning of the second day was designed to do personal choices: a dip in the sea, hiking in the mountainside, photoshoots at all angles of the resort, or just sitting on a bench: to savor the place beautifully designed by the Creator.

Going home at noontime was full of remembrances of the laughter, stories, and photos.

The activity was evaluated to iron out some kinks that occurred. The differences in ideas, understanding, and leadership within the team, when fused together well can produce a good result. It’s like a sturdy corner post formed by different materials such as stones, mixed gravel and sand, and reinforced by concrete bars and cement. 🙌

## Joint team building for NTA Cagayan and La Union

by Kristine Mae S. Castañeda

**I**F a picture paints a thousand words, this particular picture is one good painting. It conveys the happy feeling of merrymaking and having fun. And “having fun” has doubled as two provincial branches of the National Tobacco Administration merged to have their own version of “meet-and-greet,” something that their Managers and Chief Agriculturists have been contemplating about for a long time.

Employees of the NTA Cagayan and NTA La Union



branches gathered for the first time in one rare event on August 6 at the NTA Cagayan Branch Office in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan, to celebrate the Agency’s 29th anniversary and conducted the first Team Building together. It was a day (and night) of getting-to-know-everyone, of parlor games, and of showing their talents through singing and dancing.

On their messages, both managers, Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay and Dr. Corazon Riazonda, expressed gladness towards the realization of this event. It was one thing that both branches work hand-in-hand towards meeting the Agency’s commitment to its clientele, but it was much better that both branches had the privilege to do fun-filled activities and celebrations such as team buildings and anniversary celebrations.

Plenty of sumptuous dishes were served, and credits went to the entire NTA Cagayan branch for being gracious and hospitable.

During the games, participants were divided into two groups; each group consisted of members from both branches. The games presented team work, wit, and agility.

As it should be, the team building was not done for serious competitions among employees, rather, it was for everyone to enjoy and learn from it. 🙌

### NTA employees yield negative in drug test

ALL employees of the National Tobacco Administration yielded negative result in a mandatory drug test ordered by the national government.

This was confirmed by Dr. Salter Joseph Elizalde, agency physician, based on results submitted by the accredited diagnostic health care centers.

The employees from agency officials to the staff and job order workers submitted themselves to a supervised drug test following a declaration of Secretary Manny F. Piñol of mandatory drug testing for all officials, executives, and employees of the Department of Agriculture and its attached bureaus, agencies, and corporations in support of the unified national campaign against drugs.

According to Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza, government employees who undergo mandatory drug testing will be showing a “very powerful symbolic act,” ensuring that all of the workers of the agency are drug-free and worthy of trust.

Administrator Zaragoza and department managers led the Central Office employees who underwent the drug testing, including chest X-ray, CBC and urinalysis last October 25, conducted by Diagnostica De San Vicente Health Care Center, a DOH-RBL accredited diagnostic health care center in Quezon City.

Drug testing and the abovementioned tests were also held in the provincial branches in separate schedules in October. 🍀

### 2016 NTA Administrator's Cup Bowling Tourney

THE 2016 edition of the Administrator's Cup Bowling Tournament kicked off last October 7 with six teams competing for the crown. The games organized by the NTA Employees Association will be played in five games (every Friday) of elimination rounds at the RJ Bowling Lanes and Billiards in Quezon City.

Administrative Department Manager Dr. Cristina C. Lopez and Industrial Research Department Manager Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan graced the opening ceremony attended by the six competing teams. 🍀

### NTA joins CSC-RACE to Serve Fun Run 2016

THE National Tobacco Administration joined the Civil Service Commission – R.A.C.E. to Serve Fun Run at the Quirino Grandstand in Luneta Park, Manila last September 3.

The one-day event was part of the annual celebration of the Philippine Civil Service Anniversary, which commemorated the birth of the Philippine civil service system in 1900 as well as to celebrate the contributions and hard work of state workers nationwide. The race featured three categories: 3K, 5K, and 10K distances.

Now on its sixth year, the event was anchored on this year's theme: “Sigaw ng Lingkod Bayani: Malasakit Para Sa Taumbayan, Kapwa Kawani, at Kalikasan.”

Leah Gina B. Ramboyong, Records Officer II of the NTA Administrative Department, headed the participants which also included Jayson I. Gannaban, Russel R. Rutab, Patricia Cortez, Rosalie P. Catura, Lina A. Cera, Excelsior R. Mejia, Leah C. Fiesta, Loida S. Borje, Dina B. Dela Reyna, Milagros C. Tiu, Renelyn C. Ortiz, Carmelita V. Albano, Laarny T. Arrojo, Michelle P. Nacpil, Franklin S. Mendoza, Kenneth S. Duguiles, Elarde M. Marzan, Marissa J. Alvero, Joseph N. Albaos, Robel U. Micu, and Rudy Albao. 🍀



NTA Employees Association President Raquel F. Señiga (top photo) has her blood sample taken by a medical attendant, while other Central Office staff line up for forms as they wait for their turn.

### ManCom Meeting and Boodle Fight Lunch

NTA Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza presided a special Management Committee (ManCom) Meeting with Department Heads, Branch and Project Operations Managers, held at the Conference Room, Office of the Administrator, NTA Central Office in Quezon City last September 22.

Part of the agenda were the preparations for the coming cropping season, curing barn assistance, and other branch office concerns.

After the meeting, the Administrator and the top officials, along with the central office employees and visitors, joined in a boodle fight lunch in celebration of the sixth year of cooperation and achievements of the NTA family under the current leadership of Administrator Zaragoza. 🍀

### NTA at Health, Wellness Summit for gov't workers

THE National Tobacco Administration joined the Public Workers Health and Wellness Summit conducted by the Philippine Government Employees Association (PGEA), in partnership with the Department of Health (DOH), last September 28 at the DOH Convention Hall, San Lazaro Compound in Sta. Cruz Manila.

The activity is aimed at promoting health and wellness in the bureaucracy and ensuring a drug-free workplace and a safe working environment for all government workers. 🍀



Keynote Speaker of the Summit, DOH Assistant Secretary Eric Tayag (2nd from left), is flanked by the representatives from NTA (L-R) Michelle P. Nacpil, HRMO II; Excelsior R. Mejia, Market Specialist V; and Franklin Ross S. Mendoza, TPRO I.



The inspection audit team from FDA Region 1 visits the meat processing section.

## Series of audits, inspections at AgriPinoy facility

OFFICERS from the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Regional Office I, San Fernando, La Union, conducted a quality inspection audit last October 27 relative to the Application for License to Operate (LTO) of the Meat Processing Plant of the NTA AgriPinoy Tobacco Farmers Food Processing and Trading Center in Nanguneg, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur.

The inspection team, composed of Purisima Lozano, Ludivina Quitevis, and Joselyn Guzman, inspected the Meat Processing section.

This is the initial inspection for the Application for LTO, Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) Inspection based on Administrative Order No. 153, s. 2004 or the Revised Guidelines on Current GMP on Manufacturing, Packing, Repacking, or Holding Food.

They were assisted during the inspection by Noralyn I. Idica, Administrative Officer-Designate; Diosdado L. Maduli, Operations Division Head; Clemencia B. Franco, Quality Control Officer; and Crisanto A. Ibbay, Inventory/Stocks Control Officer.

The Inspection Team found that, generally, NTA-APP is compliant to

the General Guidelines of A.O. 153, s. 2004 in all aspects which include GMP Organization, Premises, Equipment, Sanitation and Hygiene, Production and Process Controls, Quality Control, Documentation, Quality Audits, Warehousing and Distribution, and Product Recall and Retention Sample.

The team found few deficiencies which they said “it is normal” and asked NTA-APP to accomplish the Corrective Action/Preventive Action (CAPA) Plan and submit within nonextendable period of 10 calendar days reckoned on the following day of receipt of summary of observation/findings.

The facility had been issued an “AA” Accreditation by the NMIS for the past two years but the regulatory functions for Meat Processing Operations was transferred to FDA, hence, the application for LTO.

Before this, the TESDA Regional Office conducted a compliance and technical audit last September 7 and October 11. TESDA Auditors Loelith dela Torre, Susan May Loranzana, and Argie Mappala found that both the NTA AgriPinoy Training School and the NTA AgriPinoy Assessment Center are compliant with the rules and regulations governing the offering of Technical

## 3rd anniversary of NTA AgriPinoy

ADMINISTRATOR Edgardo D. Zaragoza graced the celebration of the 3rd Anniversary of the NTA AgriPinoy Tobacco Farmers Food Processing and Trading Center in Nanguneg, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur last October 19.

In his message to the staff and officials headed by Operations Manager Minerva P. Mizal, Administrator Zaragoza emphasized on consistent quality service for the continuous operation of the plant.

“Work harder for the betterment of the facility and be relevant,” he said.

Part of the anniversary celebration was the graduation ceremony for the fourth batch of scholars of Slaughtering Operations NC II at the NTA AgriPinoy Training School, which also celebrated its first foundation anniversary. The batch was comprised of 25 scholars funded by the Office of Senator Cynthia Villar downloaded through the TESDA Region 1 Office and two workers of the Meat Processing Section of the food processing facility. 🌟

Vocational Education and Training Programs prescribed by TESDA.

Last October 6, Engr. Cecilio J. Pined and Engr. Homer Casco, both Supervising Technical Audit Specialists of COA Technical Services Office (TSO), also conducted inspection audit on the NTA AgriPinoy buildings and facilities. They were assisted by Engr. Abraham dela Peña, NTA Project Engineer and Head of APP General Services Section, and Arch. Mark Anthony Artates.

According to NTA AgriPinoy Project Manager Minerva P. Mizal, “This regular audit in our facility is conducted to ensure continuing compliance with minimum standards set by the regulating agencies.” 🌟

## NTA technical papers ... from page 4

NTA, “Verification of Vermicomposting and Soil/Plant Stimulants on Seedling Growth and Improved Flavor of Virginia Tobacco” by Patricia A. Inocente, SRS II; and “Tracer Study on the Participants to the NTA Livelihood Training Courses” by Engr. Felisa R. Aurellano, Community Development Officer III, are slated for poster presentations at the said regional symposium.

NTA joined the Department of Agriculture-Region I Field Unit, Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU), Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU), Pangasinan State University (PSU), and the host PhilRice Batac in the 2016 Commodity Review. Six other papers to be presented in the regional symposium came from DA-RFUI, with four technical papers, and PhilRice Batac and MMSU with one technical paper each. (Felisa R. Aurellano) 🌟

## IFOIGAP Rice WS 2016 Project visitation in Ilocos Norte

THE senior staff of the NTA Ilocos Norte headed by Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz conducted IFOIGAP Rice WS 2016 visitation in three different dates last September 2016 to assess the implementation of the said project. Each day was intended to cover the three areas where the province was subdivided: Area 1 covering Nueva Era, Badoc, and Pinili; Area 2 covering Batac, Currimao, San Nicolas, Paoay, and Banna; and Area 3 covering Bacarra, Pasuquin, Piddig, Sarrat, Vintar, Dingras, and Marcos.

F. R. Aurellano

