



NTA reimposes total contract growing next cropping season

THE National Tobacco Administration (NTA) will reimpose total contract growing system starting crop year 2017-2018.

“We will be strict on its implementation to ensure ready market for the farmers’ produce,” NTA Administrator Robert L. Seares said in a meeting with provincial branch managers at the Central Office in Quezon City last May.

He explained that under this policy, the agency is aiming to forestall the possibility of nonbuying of tobacco leaves in trading centers because of the lack of market tie-up between tobacco growers and leaf buyers.

In connection to this, the agency has enjoined the leaf buyers to submit to NTA before the start of the cropping season their purchase commitment and ensure that tobacco growers will be covered by a contract.

The Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS), a flagship program of the agency, is a market-oriented and technology-based production system, addressing specific volume and quality requirements of the market, both export and domestic.

Under contract farming, tobacco buyers provide the inputs required for the production and guarantee to buy all the tobacco contracted at the prevailing prices, but in no case shall be lower than the floor price per kilo per grade of tobacco.

Under the TCGS, the farmers have sure access to new technologies, extension, training and information and reduction of production and marketing risks; ready production input or credit assistance; and most importantly, a guarantee of accurate weighing, proper grading, fair prices and prompt payment of their harvest, as incentives for good agricultural practices.

The policy of total TCGS was first implemented during the administration of Administrator Joaquin T. Ortega (1992-1995) to protect the farmers’ livelihood from the abusive practices of the middlemen or what farmers call “cowboys.” But the policy was not strictly implemented in the succeeding cropping seasons, because other leaf buyers continue to buy tobacco from local growers outside of a contract.

According to Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, Industrial Research Department Manager, there are farmers who do not want to go into marketing agreement because they want to be freelancers in the market. He said that leaves produced outside contract growing tend to have poor quality because the farmers do not have the full assistance or do not have access to required technology and good agricultural practices as required by contracting companies for quality tobacco production.

“Now if something happened to the market, like what happened after the closure of Mighty Corporation, the produce



With total TCGS, contract growers, like farmer Edwin Urmatom of Macatcatud, Magsingal, Ilocos Sur, are assured of market for their produce. Immanuel A. Rafanan

of these non-contracted farmers will not be bought during the trading season,” he added.

As of 2016, a total of 8,025 active tobacco growers in Region 1, or about 30% of the total tobacco growers in the region produced and sold their tobacco under contract.

Total TCGS is strictly imposed in Region 2 and in Mindoro, as 100% of the 6,367 active tobacco growers during the last cropping season were under contract with buyer firms.

NTA Deputy Administrator Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa, in an interview with the *Manila Bulletin* on May 17, said the TCGS is a direct assistance of the government to the tobacco sector from the time they sow the seeds to the harvest and the selling of the produce.

In addition, there will also be grants, assistance, programs and projects available to the specific needs of the farmers which the new administration of the NTA is preparing for them.

“We are urging all our tobacco farmers to avail of the contract growing system because it is very important that they receive the assistance from the NTA,” said Verzosa.

Verzosa sees better production after 2017 with the new programs that the government is laying down for farmers. “We also know that farmers would opt to go for tobacco production being a sure source of income compared to other agricultural products,” he added.

He said the current administration is focused on strengthening the tobacco industry which provides a big slice of pie to the national government’s budget through cigarette excise taxes.

The 2015 report of the NTA showed a 32% increase in excise tax payments to the national government or equivalent to P100 billion from the time Republic Act 10351 or the Sin Tax Law was enacted, compared to the 2014 remittance of P71.51 billion. 🌱

Unified implementation of the Tobacco Contract Growing System

THE apprehension as to the effect of the unfortunate inability of Mighty Corporation to buy the tobacco farmers' produce last CY 2016-2017 is a wake-up call for all the stakeholders of the tobacco industry to consider the TCGS seriously. While the Total TCGS was declared as a policy to be adopted 25 years ago during the term of then Administrator Joaquin T. Ortega (1992-1995), the merits of the system apparently was not appreciated as they should.

Contract growing was adopted mainly by the buyers of improved flavor tobacco as they wanted to be assured of the quality and volume of tobacco they would be buying from their contracted farmers who followed a prescribed tobacco production technology.

We note that the TCGS is a market-oriented, technology-based production system that assures the leaf buyers of the specific volume and quality they need and at the same time assure the farmers of the production assistance and technical supervision and ready market, accurate weighing, proper grading, better prices and prompt payment, plus incentives for good practices, for their produce.

Through the years, the adoption of the TCGS reached 100% only in Region 2 which mainly grows Burley tobacco. The success of the system has catapulted the Isabela-grown Burley to become internationally acknowledged as world-class tobacco.

The NTA trains and nurtures the

farmers to become responsible contract growers, ready to comply with obligations under the Marketing Agreement they signed with the tobacco buyer firm. The TCGS is a trust-building process between the tobacco buyer firm and the farmer-cooperators.

We note herewith that responsible contract growing farmers are the perpetual assurance for the local tobacco industry's sustainability.

Undoubtedly, the TCGS has much to offer to sustain the local tobacco industry. It is not enough that farmers are given the production assistance to enable them to provide the growth requirements of the tobacco plants and the structures to cure the tobacco leaves but there should be a marketing tie-up that will ensure the sale of the tobacco farmers' produce which answers the demands of the market, either locally or worldwide. There is nothing more pathetic than a farmer engaging in a laborious production of tobacco but only to end up being confronted with the uncertainties of the market.

It is more than high time that all concerned with the tobacco industry support the full implementation of the Total TCGS if the industry has to meet the present challenges it faces. Let it not be said that the Philippine tobacco industry opted to fade out by not adopting the TCGS, not only to survive but to prosper within a given highly competitive environment.

POINTS TO PONDER ON THE NTA QUALITY POLICY

by Perlita L. Baula, Ph.D.

STRUCK by the phrase – *customers' Satisfaction through the provision of adequate and timely support, number and quality of expertise . . .*

It is a fact that the ages of the manpower of the agency are mostly nearing retirement age. It is my hope that the Management is trying to address the eventuality such that when the Department Managers file their applications for clearance for purposes of retirement, no vacuum will be left behind to the point that their respective departments will end up inutile.

Thus, I encourage the younger ones to try to equip themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge, at their own expense if necessary, as part of their commitment to uphold the NTA Quality Policy.

We cannot rewind time in order to pursue the dreams we leave behind because we did not have the determination to help improve ourselves professionally. As they say, time is gold and it is a pity to just let it pass without having added to our professional development. We must prepare ourselves while we are physically and mentally active so that in case opportunities arise, we have at least the basic requirements of positions that would enable us to climb up the ladder of the organization. We have to look around for the opportunities, not simply wait for them to be served on a silver platter. Our loving Creator has given us all our own talents to help us face the challenges of life.

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NTA Administrator Robert L. Seares and Deputy Administrator Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa inspect samples from 1,270 sacks and boxes of fake cigarettes and cut fillers, currently stocked at the NTA Tobacco Dust Production Plant in Sto. Tomas, La Union. The P9.8-million worth of fake cigarettes and raw materials were seized early this year by the joint operatives of Bureau of Customs, Bureau of Internal Revenue, and NTA from a warehouse in Lubao, Pampanga. It was not yet clear who owned said confiscated materials. Looking on is Marcelo T. Pascual, Supervising TPRO of NTA La Union. **N.E. Valdez**



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MY commitment is one with NTA's aspiration to empower and uplift the lives of the tobacco farmers we serve. We shall continue to work with utmost integrity and excellence expected of public servants.

My first 100 days is marked by efforts to make tobacco a sustainable, lucrative and mutually beneficial endeavor, not only for the big industry players, but more so for the humble tobacco farmers who are the lifeblood of this industry. Through this partnership and cooperation, we can be assured of the tobacco sector's continued growth and development.

Dialogues and Consultation with Stakeholders

I am a firm believer in opening and making communication lines accessible for the agency to better understand and relate to the issues, concerns and aspirations of its clientele. As such, I initiated dialogues and consultations with stakeholders which enabled me to better understand the farmers I serve and the agency I am leading.

Engaging the LGUs

We reiterated to our partner local government units that their excise tax shares must be spent on livelihood, agri-industrial and infrastructure projects. This is to ensure that the benefits from tobacco agriculture shall be channeled back towards increasing productivity and welfare for the tobacco farmers, in particular, and their communities, in general.

Farmers First Policy

Cognizant of the crucial role that tobacco farmers play in this industry, I have made the Farmers First Policy of utmost importance under my leadership. During the annual pre-trading orientation seminar on tobacco trading rules and regulations for local leaf buyers in Region 1 and Abra in February, I personally appealed to buyers to treat the farmers fairly and use the proper documents in buying leaves.

In the month of March we monitored the trading operations in four trading centers in Region 1. We sat down with trading center owners to discuss the issues and concerns usually arising during trading and provide possible solutions to address them. We also took the opportunity to reach out to farmers and to assure them that the NTA is always open to hear and address their trading-related complaints.

We were able to provide assistance to our farmers who unfortunately suffered from the wrath of typhoon Lawin. As we put premium on the feedback from farmers, we asked them to accomplish a survey through our NAFTAC leaders during a dialogue with them in March. We wanted to hear what production and trading assistance they need from NTA. What we have gathered through the survey becomes our basis for our plans for the next cropping season. That is what you call, tobacco farmer-driven planning.

Continuing Programs

We conducted an assessment and inspection of our programs to help enhance service delivery, the results of which became our guideposts in preparing programs and projects for our farmers and for the incoming tobacco season 2017-2018. We continue our corporate priorities such as the market-driven quality tobacco production, through the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS) and our income-generating activities such as the AgriPinoy projects, the rice program, the renewable fuel project, among others.



Managing Critical Issues

While we do not rejoice, nor condone, the allegations leveled against Mighty Corporation, we in NTA need to focus on our mandate to be catalysts for the development of the tobacco industry—one that mutually benefits the farmers, stakeholders, and the government. We have made our position clear before the House of Representatives during a committee hearing held a few weeks ago. NTA's main objective now is on the mitigation of adverse effects of the impending closure of Mighty Corp. to farmers. Through dialogues with NTA partners, we were able to find private leaf buyers willing to buy tobacco from affected farmers.

Last May 16, our President Rodrigo Duterte signed the executive order providing for the establishment of smoke-free environments in public and enclosed spaces. We welcome this new policy and we will perform our duty to ensure its effective implementation.

Strengthening Internal Organization Capacity

In an effort to attract the best and the brightest individuals, preparations are in full swing for the filling up of 60 vacant plantilla positions, and we thank the Governing Board for the nod to proceed. I am confident that the selection board will do a great job in finding highly competent personnel who will occupy these vacant posts.

Also, I have approved and signed the issuance of the cost-of-living allowance of our personnel amounting to P200 million. This grant will help our employees cope with the increasing prices of essential commodities.

TO many, the first 100 days is a measure of leadership dynamism but as for me, I went straight to do what I needed to deliver. All these accomplishments have been made possible because of the invaluable contributions of NTA personnel, stakeholders, and farmers. The challenge, for now, is to sustain and further improve on what we have achieved thus far, beyond the first 100 days.

Challenges are an inevitable reality in any public institution. The agency's continued existence and growth as an agency is a testament to the resilience in confronting issues in the months and years to come and under any circumstance, we will continue to showcase NTA's genuine commitment to safeguard the industry and promote the welfare of tobacco farmers, stakeholders, and the government.

Robert L. Seares, M.D.
Administrator

May 22, 2017



NTA monitors trading operations in Region 2

NTA Administrator Robert L. Seares, Regulation Department division chiefs, Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros and Engr. Alex L. Borje, along with Branch Managers Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda (Cagayan Branch) and Herman C. Torres (Isabela Branch), visited the two ULPI trading centers in Reina Mercedes, Isabela on June 15.

The agency officials met with Ferdinand Teneza, Director of ULPI in Region 2, to discuss current trading situations and other trading concerns in their area, and had the opportunity to observe buying of tobacco leaves on the trading floor.

Tobacco trading operations started

in May for the region, which produces Burley and native tobacco.

The region has three trading centers, two at the ULPI compound in Reina Mercedes (one each for Native and Burley), and Compania De Filipinas (for Native tobacco).

For crop year 2015-2016, a total of

13.599 million kilos valued at P1.103 billion of Burley and native tobacco were traded in Region 2.

NTA, in the exercise of its regulatory authority, has overall supervision of leaf trading operations in the country. The officials also conducted monitoring and visitation of trading centers in Region 1 on March 28 and 29.

The agency is also mandated to enforce regulatory procedures on the redrying, preliminary processing of tobacco leaf, and to set up floor prices for tobacco through the conduct of the tripartite consultative conference.

During his visit to Isabela, Administrator Seares also graced the awarding of financial assistance by the local government of Gamu, Isabela to their tobacco growers, held at the town's Pasalubong Center on June 15.

The Administrator and NTA Isabela Branch Manager Torres joined Gamu Mayor Nestor Uy in handing out financial assistance to 17 of its 212 tobacco growers.

Mayor Uy assured the agency and the tobacco growers that a big portion of the municipality's share from tobacco excise tax will go directly to the farmers. 🌱

Tuguegarao farmers get tractors from tobacco excise tax

by Gilbert A. Taguam

THE Local Government of Tuguegarao City turned over two units of four-wheel tractors with accessories to the local farmers' cooperative.

The turnover ceremony held at the Training Center and Dormitory Demo-Farm in Brgy. Gosi Norte, Tuguegarao City on June 14, was graced by NTA Administrator Robert L. Seares and local officials. Farmer Leader and Tuguegarao Tobacco Producers Cooperative (TTPC) chairman, Manuel Talosig received, in behalf of the tobacco farmers and cooperative members, the Certificate of Award from Acting Mayor Bienvenido De Guzman, City Agriculturist Dr. Evangeline Calubaquib, and other city officials.

With Administrator Seares during the turnover were NTA Cagayan Branch Manager Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda, Engr. Alex L. Borje and Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros, both of the NTA Regulation Department.

According to De Guzman, the amount used for the purchase of the tractors is part of the LGU's share from the excise tax collection of the national government for locally manufactured tobacco pursuant to Republic Act 8240.

Administrator Seares commended Tuguegarao City for looking after the welfare of their local farmers, particularly the tobacco growers, as he challenged them to be relentless in their effort to produce quality tobacco which assured them of good profit for their family and bigger share from excise tax shares for their local government.

According to Manager Riazonda, the farmers were thankful of their local leaders for downloading the proceeds of the excise tax "up to the last centavo" for their cooperative and to the NTA officials for continually assisting them in the preparation of the documents for the purpose.

The four-wheel tractors were acquired through a resolution by the cooperatives addressed to the City Mayor requesting for the



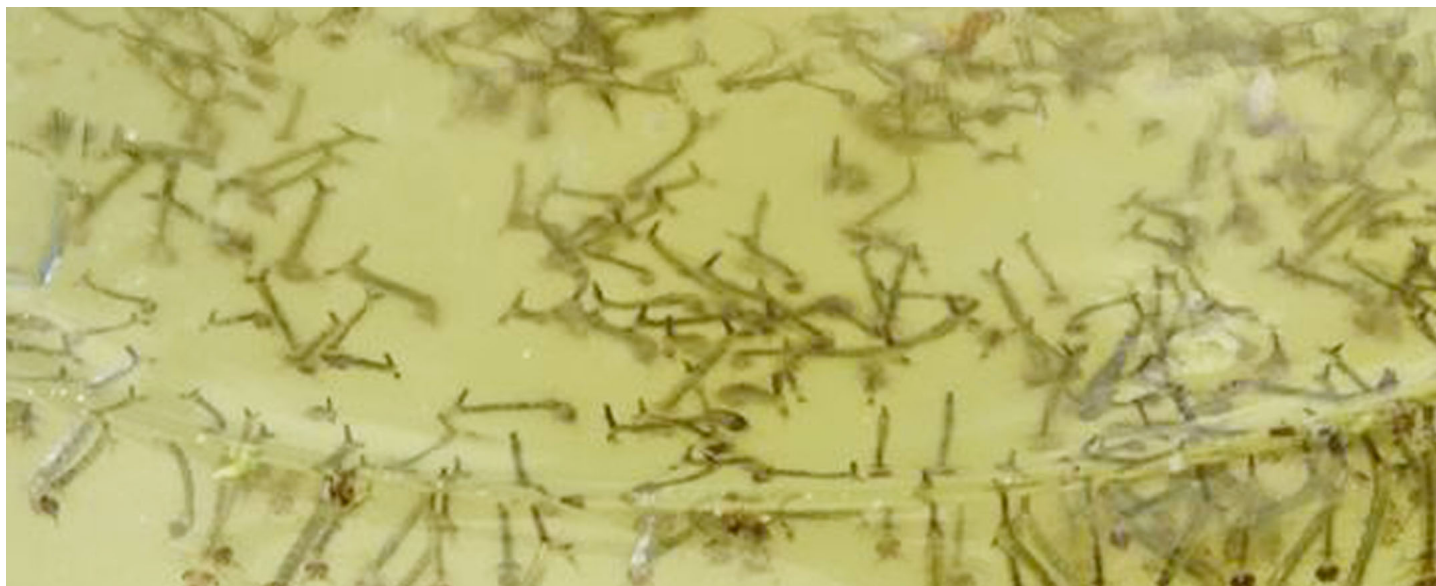
purchase of farm implement from the proceeds of tobacco excise tax for crop year 2012.

Before the release of the tractors, 17 units of shallow-tube well and five units of deep well with diesel-fed engines, along with production assistance, were also granted to cooperative members.

The awarding of the tractors was conducted alongside with the awarding of 10 non-motorized fiber glass boats and 32 fish stalls to selected farmers in the city. 🌱

Tobacco powder for controlling MOSQUITO WRIGGLERS

by Imelda C. Parbo



Survey, sampling and treatment of mosquito wigglers in the area.

THE Product Development Division of the Industrial and Market Research Department field-tested and demonstrated the use of tobacco powder, specifically the NTA Tobacco Dust Plus, for the control of mosquito wigglers (*kiti-kiti*).

This was in coordination and cooperation with the Batac City Health Office with the assistance of the barangay officials and health workers of the three rural barangays, namely, Quiling Sur, Tabug, and Baay, that were identified to have the highest dengue cases from 2013 to 2015 in the locality.

Sampling of mosquito wigglers was done in ponds and areas or materials with stagnant water. Application of tobacco powder was done immediately upon the observance of the presence of mosquito wigglers in the area at 40 g/liter of water. The volume of water in each area was estimated as basis for determining the amount of tobacco powder to be used in treating the affected area. The tobacco powder was weighed and packed in fine cloth bags and soaked in the affected area for one to three days. Twenty-four demonstration cases were done from July to September 2016.

The tobacco powder was effective in controlling the mosquito wigglers. Across locations, 97.4% of the larvae of mosquito wigglers were found dead at one day after application and 100% at two days after application. For the pupa, the mortality was 79.6% at one day after application, 98.8% at two days after application and 100% at three days after application.

The barangay officials, health workers, and observers were

interviewed after the demonstration trials for the assessment and acceptability of the technology. They were satisfied with the result of using tobacco powder against mosquito wigglers. According to them, it is easy to handle and no hazardous or bad effects were observed during the treatment application. They signified their interest in using the tobacco powder against wigglers during the rainy season and were also convinced that it can substitute chemicals in controlling them. They showed 100% acceptance of the technology.

Some cooperators suggested broadcasting the tobacco powder directly in areas with *kiti-kiti* instead of packing it first in fine cloth bags before soaking. Since the tobacco powder is a biodegradable material, an organic pesticide and environment-friendly, the end users can broadcast or apply the tobacco powder directly to areas with mosquito wigglers. 🌿



Dead mosquito wigglers after two days of application of tobacco powder.

Production assistance for IFOIGAP rice released

THE National Tobacco Administration distributed rice production assistance amounting to P27.6 million to tobacco farmers in tobacco-growing provinces for the Rice Wet Season 2017 under the agency's Integrated Farming and Other Income-Generating Activities Project (IFOIGAP).

A total of 2,769 farmers representing an aggregate area of 1,974 hectares availed of said production assistance to plant rice this wet season, according to the farm plan and budget consolidated by the Farm Technology and Services Department.

The assistance, at P20,000 per hectare, will cover the amount to purchase certified seeds, tractor/animal rental for land preparation, fuel for irrigation, and organic and inorganic fertilizers.

The rice production assistance, which was started by the agency in 1999, aims to develop the tobacco farmer as a "total farmer" doing "total farming" and that he should be efficient in tobacco and rice farming, among others.

Qualified farmers are those registered with the NTA through



Farmer Bonifacio P. Abul Jr. (2nd from right) of Sta. Isabel Sur, Ilagan City, Isabela receives the check for the rice production assistance from Administrator Robert L. Seares, while Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros (far left) and Isabela Branch Manager Herman C. Torres look on.

the provincial branch offices and personally tilling or managing a tobacco-rice farm, which must have an adequate source of irrigation water.

In Region 2, Administrator Robert L. Seares led the distribution of production assistance to tobacco farmers in his first visit to Cagayan and Isabela as head of the agency.

Administrator Seares, assisted by Cagayan Branch Manager Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda and NTA Regulation Department division chiefs, Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros and Engr. Alex L. Borje, distributed production assistance to 106 farmer-cooperators, through their cluster leaders at the Branch Office in Tuguegarao City on June 14.

Manager Riazonda gave a brief orientation on the project, which is now in its third year of implementation in the Cagayan Branch. This year's total coverage of 82 hectares has almost doubled the coverage of its initial year of implementation, crop year 2014-2015, at 46 hectares.

"The branch office had a collection efficiency of 100% for the past three implementations of the project," said Riazonda.

A brief program, hosted by Chief Agriculturist Gilbert A. Taguiam, was held before the distribution. Farmers' forum with the Administrator followed after the ceremony, with Robert F. Pedro, Agriculturist I, as moderator.

Administrator Seares, along with Atty. Ambros, Engr. Borje, and Isabela Branch Manager Herman C. Torres, led the distribution of production assistance to tobacco farmers at the Branch Office in Brgy. Osmeña, Ilagan City on June 15.

The Isabela Branch distributed production assistance to 238 farmer-cooperators, through their cluster leaders. A brief program, hosted by Chief Agriculturist Joefrey T. Bautista, was held before the distribution. Farmers' forum with the Administrator followed with Bautista as moderator.

Before this, Administrator Seares and Ilocos Norte Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz, led the distribution of production

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NTA Vigan

2 scholars graduate with honors

TWO more NTA scholars, from the Vigan Branch, graduated with honors this school year, one earning magna cum laude, while the other finished cum laude.

Graduating magna cum laude from the University of Northern Philippines (UNP) in Vigan City is Mae Angelie V. Salvador, with the degree Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. Joining Salvador in the honor roll is Kevincher A. Ramos, cum laude graduate with the degree Bachelor in Elementary Education also at UNP.

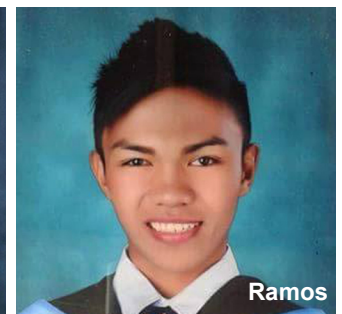
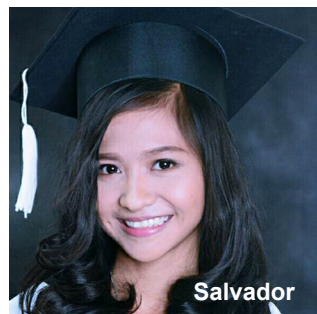
Salvador and Ramos are joined by 12 other NTA scholars in Vigan Branch who also graduated from their respective courses for school year 2016-2017.

The other graduating scholars from UNP and their respective courses are: Kathrina Joy V. Torricer, BS Nursing; Judy Mae A. Ingel, BS Tourism; Gizelle S. Sayaboc, Bachelor in Secondary Education; Kaezelle Anne S. Sambrana, Bachelor in Secondary Education; Karen G. Sunio, BS Hotel and Restaurant Administration; Kate S. Azcueta, BS in Business Administration; Evangelyn A. Tara, BS in Business Administration; Elisa S. Socias, Bachelor in Elementary Education; and Jhona Marie R. Sevilleja, Bachelor in Elementary Education. The other graduates, Eden R. Tabil, Associate in Cooperative Management, and

Jason Noel S. Jimenez, BS Information Technology, are from Ilocos Sur Community College also in Vigan City.

Salvador is the daughter of tobacco grower Ronnel Salvador and wife Juliet, of Barangay Caronoan, San Juan, Ilocos Sur. She said that the scholarship played a key role in achieving her educational dreams. "Growing up in a less privileged community has not only offered financial and academic challenges, but has also helped me realize the value of a college education," she added.

She said that graduating with Latin honors serves as her way of "giving



back the trust and confidence" that NTA, through the Vigan Branch, has given her.

Ramos, the son of tobacco growers Eusebio Jr. and Lilybeth Ramos of Barangay Barbar, San Juan, Ilocos Sur, considered having qualified for the scholarship grant from NTA as an answered prayer.

"As your scholar, I promise not to make the help you offered go for naught. I will continue my pursuit of excellence and always extend my hands to those who are in need of my services because that is one way of expressing how thankful I am," he said.

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NTA now implements CSC-approved Merit Promotional Plan

THE National Tobacco Administration conducted an orientation for Central Office regular employees and department managers on the implementation of the Merit Promotion Plan (MPP), with Administrative Department Manager, Dr. Cristina C. Lopez, as resource speaker, at the NTA Central Office Training Room in Quezon City on May 4.

This is in line with the approval on February 28, 2017 by the NTA Governing Board of the filling-up of 60 vacant plantilla positions of the agency. The MPP is contained in NTA Office Circular No. 2014-01 dated October 20, 2014 signed by then Administrator Edgardo D. Zaragoza.

According to Dr. Lopez, the MPP as approved by the Civil Service Commission shall be strictly implemented in the filling-up of vacant positions through promotions. She said that the candidates for promotion should be responsive to the demands of the position, having the required relevant educational qualification, eligibility, training and work experience.

The MPP established a promotion system that is characterized by strict observance of the merit principle in the selection of employees for promotion to higher positions in the career service, and provided a guide for a speedy and fair adjudication of protests of employees against promotions.

With the MPP, Dr. Lopez assured the employees that all qualified and competent employees in the agency are given equal opportunities for advancement.

Screening of applicants to the vacant positions for promotion or appointment are now being conducted by the Selection Board, starting May 2017.

The NTA Selection Board, per CSC Memorandum Circular (MC) 18 s. 1988, as amended by CSC MC No. 38 s. 1989, is currently composed of Dr. Lopez as head of the Administrative Department; Industrial Research Department Manager Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, representative of management; the Head of Office where the vacancy is; Raquel Leilani F. Seña,

Market Research Specialist V, as president of the NTA Employees Association; and Demorante V. Umayam, TPRO II, representative of rank-and-file employees for first level positions.

The Selection Board shall be guided by the following policies pursuant to CSC MC No. 3 s. 2001: (1) no discrimination policy on the screening of applicants; (2) prohibition on the promotion within six-month period prior to compulsory retirement; (3) at least Very Satisfactory performance rating as a requirement for promotion; (4) the three-salary grade limitation on promotion; and (5) the limitation on promotion of more than three salary grade, except in meritorious cases.

Among the vacant high-level positions for filling up, per posting on March 22 and April 17, are Department Manager III (for the Farm Technology and Services Department), Board Secretary V, Attorney V, Project Manager I, two Chief Agriculturists in the Branch Offices, and two Division Chief level positions (Chief Science Research Specialist and Supply Officer V).

According to Dr. Lopez, before the evaluation and interview by the Selection Board of the applicants, the Administrative Services Division Head shall submit to the Board a promotional lineup, which is a listing of employees who are qualified and competent next-in-rank incumbents to the vacant positions.

“Candidates for promotion shall be evaluated based on performance, education and training, experience and outstanding accomplishments, physical characteristics and personality traits and potential,” she said.

Administrator Robert L. Seares is confident that the Selection Board will do a great job in finding highly competent personnel who will occupy the vacant posts and assimilate themselves into the agency’s “winning corporate culture.” 🌱

-- Neyo E. Valdez

In SY 2014-2015, NTA Vigan scholar Shelany Marie S. Ibaan, graduated cum laude with the degree Bachelor of Science in Business Administration.

The NTA started offering scholarship grants, through the provincial branch offices, to deserving college students, who are dependents of tobacco farmers in school year 2011-2012. It is in line with the Tobacco Free Education Program embodied in Republic Act No. 9211 (Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003).

Since its implementation, a total of 873 children of tobacco farmers have been supported, under the scholarship grants, 174 of which have finished their degree or non-degree as of School Year 2015-2016. 🌱

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Let us not just know what the NTA Quality Policy is but let us also reflect the work efficiency it connotes as we do our tasks and responsibilities. Gone should be the days when the Branch Offices have to ask for copies of approved documents. Prompt feedbacks mean a lot in providing timely support and efficient and effective implementation of programs and projects.

Let us all do our share, in the spirit of unity, to provide the service expected of an agency and prove that we deserve the ISO Certification bestowed on us.

Huwag lang nating i-memorya yong NTA Quality Policy, isabuhay natin dapat ito. 🌱

She keeps on learning and loving her work

by Orlando O. Galdones



HER bubbly attitude working with the NTA Candon Branch for the last 27 years has kept **Helen Teodora D. Peña** on the go and become a good leader.

She loves to tell her peers that she is a PWD or “person with determination.” She would never back down from a challenge.

She is presently assigned in the municipality of Burgos, Ilocos Sur, her third work-station after serving tobacco farmers in Sta. Cruz and Santiago, where she fondly shares her work experiences.

She finished BS Agricultural Education at the then Ilocos Sur Agricultural College (now Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College) in Sta. Maria, her hometown. “Back then, I was apprehensive before if I can deliver what is expected of me by the NTA since I am an Ag-Ed [Agriculture Education] graduate,” she confided. “I should be teaching in school,” she added.

But time has changed, her drive to succeed in serving the farmers now comes naturally as a gentle stride, no toilsome efforts. “Because I love my work so much that everything seems easy for me, and I find fulfillment in

it,” she said. She explained that she doesn’t mind starting her fieldwork even before her usual breakfast hour. She finishes early her extension works, meeting her farmer cooperators, especially during the growing period of tobacco and rice crops.

And during the trading season, at the end of each hectic trading day, she sees to it that she has assisted most if not all of her farmer cooperators in marketing their produce at the buying center. Sometimes, she stays with her farmers until the wee hours of the next day. And the next morning, she never fails to report on time, refreshed for another task.

And one thing that she carries all the time is her big heart. She is very kind to those who are in need, clients and friends alike. She listens and shares, financially and morally, as she empathizes with them on their life’s struggles.

“I never regret working with NTA. I love the camaraderie among staff; it boosts my inner self... having NTA my second family is the best thing that happened to me,” she said.

She always strives to work and play (“because when you love your work, it is like playing”), although sometimes she fears she is slowing down physically. Lately, during inventories of trees at the project sites, she took extra cautions as she climbed rugged and steep terrains, cross heavy vegetation cover, and prepared unexpected hazards along the way. She knows her limitations that is why she sees to it that she always carries her magic *sarukod* (walking cane) to keep her going,



and going, and going.

Peña considers all her supervisors as her role models, being inspired by them to be what she has become now. For every step she took, she learnt; and for every failure, she improved while attaining her goal to grow professionally.

She always has presence of mind during unlikely and unexpected encounters. She puts her best foot forward in dealing with these and always focused on her duty in uplifting the lives of all farmers she is dealing with.

Helen is happily married to Jonneil I. Peña, her college batchmate and former colleague at NTA, who is now connected with Universal Leaf Phils., Inc. Their only son, Neil Joseph, BS Information Technology student, is pursuing a second course in automotive while waiting to graduate this year.

Her advice to fellow extension workers: “Be patient, have determination. Just work hard to achieve your goals, do your part and do your best. God will do the rest.”

She looks forward to having more fruitful years in the agency serving her tobacco farmer clients. Receiving citations and recognitions are just bonuses that equate to more sincere and dedicated performance. 🍀

1st tobacco industry forum, stakeholders’ consultation in Davao City

by Ma. Mercedes M. Ayco



Secretary Piñol (center in dark blue shirt) with NTA officials, local leaders, heads of tobacco firms, and other industry leaders during the forum.

THE first Tobacco Industry forum was held in Pinnacle Hotel in Davao City on June 15, 2017. This activity materialized with the order of Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in collaboration with the Philippine Tobacco Institute and PMFTC.

Present during the forum were NTA officials headed by Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Versoza, NTA Directors Rodolfo F. Salanga and Nestor C. Casela, Industrial Research Department Manager Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, and Regulation Department Manager Maybelen B. Dictaan.

Also in attendance were ULPI President Winston P. Uy, TMI Chairman Marjorie Diong, TMI Vice President Matthew Diong, PMFTC staff headed by the Director for External Affairs Atty. Bayen Elero-Tinga, Atty. Cyril Lubaton of Japan Tobacco International, LGU staff, farmer leaders from the

Recognition for diligent farming well-earned

by Amelia Veronica L. Lacaden

FLORANTE B. Tingle now has a reputation among his neighbors and peers in Pidpid, Sta. Cruz, Ilocos Sur as an outstanding tobacco farmer. He was adjudged recently by the National Tobacco Administration as provincial winner for Virginia Improved Flavor Category in this year's Tobacco Grower of the Year (TGY) contest.

At present, Florante is also a freelance architectural designer and building contractor, thanks to his Bachelor of Science in Architecture degree from the University of Pangasinan in Dagupan City in 1998. He was also an overseas Filipino worker (OFW), for three years, having worked in Taiwan as a factory worker from 1999 to 2002. But he considers tobacco farming as his major source of income.

He was able to construct their family house, now ongoing improvement and expansion, and purchased three motorcycles for his family.

According to the TGY Branch Technical Committee of NTA Candon, Tingle is deserving of the TGY award. He tends to his tobacco farm meticulously. He follows diligently and strictly the production technology for the variety NC 2326, a Virginia-Topped tobacco. He starts seed sowing in mid-October so that he will be done transplanting until mid-December. He opts for early planting to avail of irrigation water from the irrigation canal and thus be free from fuel expenses for the water pumps. He only harvests mature and ripe tobacco leaves, and harvests only what his curing barn can accommodate.

During the contest period, crop year 2015-2016, he scored high in every aspect of on-farm evaluation, namely, technology adoption, overall physical condition of plants, harvesting and curing, farm recording and innovativeness. For his one-hectare farm, he harvested 2,570.85 kg, most of which, or about 85% are high grades, with zero rejects or low grades.

Florante delivers his tobacco produce to his contracted buyer twice only and makes sure he pays his production assistance at the very first delivery.

He follows the required technology for tobacco production and tobacco curing to maximize income. And he sees to it that he has enough capital before embarking on tobacco production. As much as possible he avoids having debts or loans. "Most farmers do not earn as much because they have lots of debts to be paid after harvest, and I don't like that to happen to me," he said.

His market tie-up during the contest period was leaf buyer



Tingle (inset) working on a design at home, and at his farm in Brgy. Pidpid, with NTA extension worker Amelia Veronical L. Lacaden.



Trans-Manila Inc., but now he is under NTA financing. Other than tobacco production, he has been an active cooperater of the Kahuyang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalkalisan, a Renewable Fuelwood Energy Farm project of the agency, since 2014. He has planted 2,500 tree seedlings and he is hoping to harvest them before the year ends.

In spite of the challenges besetting the tobacco industry, he will continue producing tobacco as long as there are buyers or markets for their crops. "I've been into farming for many years now, and I've known a lot about tobacco production," he said.

Florante was born on September 3, 1974 in Pidpid, Sta. Cruz, Ilocos Sur, with a twin brother, Josefino. He went to Babayoan Elementary School, in Babayoan, Sta. Cruz, Ilocos Sur and Tagudin General Comprehensive High School in Tagudin, Ilocos Sur. He married Vanessa Javillo, an OFW in Hong Kong, in 2010 and they are blessed with a son named Mo, now 7 years old. 🌱

(Florante B. Tingle and other provincial winners of the Tobacco Grower of the Year, crop year 2015-2016, will receive their awards, cash and Plaque of Appreciation during the 30th Anniversary celebration of NTA at the Central Office in Quezon City on July 28, 2017.)

Ilocos Region and Misamis Oriental, and representatives from the Department of Labor and Employment and the Department of Trade and Industry from Region 12.

DA Undersecretary Evelyn G. Laviña mentioned in her message the history and mandate of the NTA. She talked on health issues as regards smoking, the closure of Mighty Corporation, and the misuse of excise tax by the beneficiary LGUs.

The participants were grouped into four for the SWOT analysis: the farmers' group, the LGUs, the leaf buyers, and the cigarette manufacturers. The leader of each group presented their respective output.

The highlight of the one-day activity was the formulation of the TOBACCO ACTION PLAN which was signed by the different sectors of the tobacco industry, and was presented to the Secretary Piñol. The Tobacco Road Map is expected to be established after the forum. 🌱

Model Project for LGU-NTA partnership

The Tobacco Farmers' Multi-purpose Training Center in Bauang, La Union has been oft-cited by the leadership of the National Tobacco Administration as a model project by a local government beneficiary of the tobacco excise tax in partnership with the NTA in improving the lives of the tobacco farmers and their communities.

The P4.89-million two-storey farmer's center, which is **directly managed** by the La Union Branch Office, was initiated by the La Union Agricultural-Growers Multi-Purpose Cooperative (LUAGMPC). The project proposal was submitted to La Union Governor Francisco "Pacoy" R. Ortega, who then endorsed the proposal to the Provincial Board as one of the Provincial Government's priority projects for funding from the excise tax shares of the province under Republic Act 7171.

The training center, inaugurated on March 29, 2017, occupies a floor area of 91 square meters. The first floor serves as practicum area and storage for farm input deliveries and farm implements while the second floor serves as farmers' office and function room for trainings, conferences, and seminars.



Tobacco production technology immersion for MMSU agri students

FORTY-NINE students from the Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU) took up their laboratory classes in the tobacco research farms of the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD) in Batac City.

The students were enrolled in Agronomy 120 (Annual Industrial Crops) under Prof. Raymond Rahon of the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Sustainable Development. They completed in two batches the nine-hour requirement through a three-hour three-session class for the whole month of March.

This is part of the sharing of resources between NTA and MMSU. The university has considered tobacco as one of the major economic crops in Ilocos Norte. To support the industry where 4,506 (as of December 2016) farmers in the province are involved, MMSU deemed important to immerse the students taking up the Agriculture course in tobacco production technology.

The students attended the orientation in the Seed Laboratory conducted by Benjamin P. Fiesta, Science Research Specialist (SRS) II, and Chareeze Israel, Research Assistant; Crop Protection Laboratory by Avelina O. Guzman, Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer (TPRO) III; Tree Seedling Nursery by Fernando L. Andres, SRS II; Curing Facilities by Roman J. Raganit Jr, Supervising SRS, and Engr. Randy I. Abella, Senior SRS; Ilocos Norte Model Farm in Native Tobacco Production by Marzel E. Manzanos, TPRO I; and Other Uses of Tobacco by Engr. Cecilio A. Cabigan, Chief SRS.

The students also had hands-on exposure on Watering/Irrigation by Engr. Abella; Plant Selection and Bagging of Flowerheads by Israel; and Pests and Diseases of Tobacco in the Field by Luzviminda U. Padayao, Project Development Officer IV of FTSD.

MMSU and NTA have been sharing resources such

Pls turn to page 11

La Union Branch joins agri-tourism trade fair

THE Provincial Government of La Union, on its annual celebration of cityhood, ran a month-long Agri-Tourism Trade Fair which was joined in by the different municipalities, private businesses, and government agencies of La Union in March 2017. Display booths were set up along Ortega Road in San Fernando City, La Union to promote products locally produced by farmers and entrepreneurs across the province. The trade fair has been a good venue for product promotion, based on increasing number of booth visitors and buyers in the previous years.

The NTA La Union Branch took this opportunity to participate in this year's trade fair to promote its AgriPinoy meat products and meet potential business partners and sellers.

Extension workers and the AgriPinoy Project Coordinators from the Branch manned the NTA-La Union booth daily, including Saturdays and Sundays, to sell fresh and processed meats. According to Leni M. Arciaga and Nora Q. Garcia, Marketing Coordinators of AgriPinoy for La Union Branch, bestsellers were pork chop, pata sliced and lean meat (fresh); and pork tapa, native longganisa, and pork barbecue (processed).

To date, the Branch Office continues to intensify its sales of AgriPinoy products through the help of the Branch Extension Workers and their contact sellers hopefully to maintain its reputation as the top seller among all NTA branches. *(Kristin Mae S. Castañeda, Ambrocio R. Nisperos Jr., and Virgilio A. Garcia)*



Officials of the City of San Fernando Sagguniang Panglungsod visit the NTA La Union AgriPinoy Booth: (from left) SP Member John Orros, Emma Beth B. Fantastico, Aurie Nellie A. Tumbaga, Invictus Buenaventura (Executive Assistant, Office of the City Mayor of San Fernando), Sinfrosa N. Valmonte, Marie Beth B. Palabay, Renato C. Hidalgo, and SP Member Antonio Jucar.

KMS Castañeda

2017 NTA Administrator's Cup

THE 2017 edition of the Administrator's Cup Bowling Tournament kicked off on May 5 with 10 teams competing for the crown. The games organized by the NTA Employees Association will be played in nine games (every Friday) of elimination rounds and championship round or until July 7 at the RJ Bowling Lanes and Billiards in Quezon City.

Deputy Administrator for Support Services-Designate Dr. Mikael Benedict G. Crisologo and Administrative Department Manager Dr. Cristina C. Lopez graced the opening ceremony, attended by members of the competing teams.

Industrial Research Department Manager Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, team captain of red team, led the oath of sportsmanship.

Yellow Team, composed of team captain Edgar Guia, Joseph Albaos, Teresita De la Rosa, and Kyra Clamaña, topped the opening games with 824 total pinfalls.

Other team captains and their team colors are Evenezer Magaro, Light Violet; Jay Darlucio, Flesh; Al Cristobal, Purple; Joseph Benosa, Orange; Rogelio Santiago, Gray; Dr. Roberto Bonoan, Red; Ramon Muncal, Kiwi Green; Ramon Fernandez, Light Pink; and Excelsior Mejia, Fuchsia.

Mejia, tournament coordinator, was the captain of the champion team (Aqua Blue) of last year's tournament. 🍷



(Top) Ceremonial throw by Deputy Administrator-designate Dr. Mikael Benedict G. Crisologo; (Inset) Administrative Department Manager Dr. Cristina C. Lopez delivers the opening remarks; (Lower photo) The members of the competing teams with Dr. Lopez and Dr. Crisologo. **N.E. Valdez**

A float of Burley tobacco at Paoay fiesta parade

Text and Photos by Felisa R. Aurellano

TOBACCO farmers from Nalasin, Paoay, Ilocos Norte took pride in displaying their new cash crop, Burley tobacco, on a parade float during the opening day of the town's fiesta and Labor Day celebration on May 1.

For the first time this crop year (2016-2017), farmers started growing Burley in Nalasin, one of the eight tobacco-growing barangays of Paoay. It was considered a rebirth of tobacco production as the barangay in previous years was one of the town's top producers of the Virginia type.

Decades back, Virginia tobacco production in Nalasin, 1 km north of the renowned Paoay Church, laid the foundation of economic liberty for the farmers, from being tenants to landowners. It provided tobacco farmers and their families the privilege to have better quality of life as evidenced by higher education attained by the children, advanced farming practices, and more household amenities.

Tobacco production started to decline in the 1970s when the then Philippine Virginia Tobacco Administration (PVTa) found that the soil in the area is marginal (not fit for planting tobacco) with the production of "salty tobacco" in some areas. The proximity of Nalasin to the West Philippine Sea, about 4 km away, and the frequent flooding turned the farmlands unsuitable for quality tobacco production. Thus, it was completely stopped before the end of the decade, leaving the farmers no other choice but to heed the advice for termination of production by the PVTa.

Nalasin farmers returned to tobacco growing with the introduction of Burley tobacco in the area, upon the joint initiatives of the local government of Paoay, headed by Mayor Jessie E. Galano, the NTA Ilocos Norte Branch, and leaf buyer Trans-Manila, Inc.. Burley is cultivated similarly as Virginia but the two tobacco types differ in their curing process. Virginia



is flue-cured (using the *pugon* or curing barn), while Burley is air-cured under the shed.

Barangay Nalasin Chairman Noel G. Quemado, Kagawad Carlito Ramos, and Alfredo Bacena, President of the Mango Growers/Producers of Nalasin, three of the 10 first-time growers of Burley, agree that their barangay will prosper as before with Burley tobacco production.

Additional tobacco production from the barangay will help increase the total share of Paoay from the tobacco excise tax, per RA 7171 for Virginia and RA 8240 for Burley and Native tobacco types. Bigger share means more funds for the different development projects of the local government of Paoay.

To push for a greater share of the excise tax for the town, the Nalasin farmers displayed their tobacco leaves in their motorized float which they paraded around town during the fiesta celebration. 🌿

IQA Team holds pre-audit for ISO

THE NTA Internal Quality Audit (IQA) Team, headed by Dinah E. Pichay, Manager of Internal Audit Service, conducted on June 5 to 9 the internal quality audit of the NTA's Quality Management System for 2017, per approved IQA Plan.

The annual IQA is conducted to ensure continuing enhancement of Agency services in conformity to ISO 9001:2008 standards, for which the Agency was certified last year for CY 2016-2019. It is a follow-up pre-audit on the compliance of the different departments and units with their commitments to SGS Audit Findings last year.

According to Manager Pichay, this is in preparation to the ISO Surveillance Audit scheduled on the last week of July.

The IQA conducted on May 12 the orientation of NTA IQA Team members/auditors from different departments and branch offices by Team Leader Pichay, and vice Team Leader Maybelen B. Dictaan, manager of the Regulation Department.

The members are: Nora A. Corre (AgriPinoy); Charity P. Garcia and Rochelle C. De Peralta (Internal Audit Service); Excelsior R. Mejia, Carol Lynn F. Sambo, Rolando C. dela Cruz, and Imelda C. Parbo (Industrial Research); Primitivo M. Abalos Jr. and Franklin Ross S. Mendoza (Regulation); Claire Monnette P. Esteban and Arnold B. Melosantos (Corporate Planning); Charito M. Salazar and Russel T. Rutab (Finance); Ophelia T. Gonzales and Vivien F. Ferarez (Administrative); Randy I. Abella (Farm Technology and Services); Valentino L. Valdez (Ilocos Norte); Tomasito G. Taloza (Vigan); Orlando O. Galdones (Candon); Aurie Nellie A. Tumbaga (La Union); Alma G. Toralba (Pangasinan); Rogelio L. Tarun (Isabela); and Alica A. Malab (Cagayan). 🌿



The IQA Team with Quality Management Representative Rex Antonio P. Teoxon meets with Administrator Robert L. Seares, Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa and Deputy Administrator for Support Services-Designate Dr. Mikael Benedict G. Crisologo for a briefing on the QMS, before the IQA of the Office of the Administrator (including Public Relations Office), and the Office of the two Deputy Administrators (Operations and Support Services) on the third day of audit on June 7.

Tobacco production technology... from page 10

as agricultural land, building, equipment and human resources. They share services for convergence not only in the province but in the region as well. In 2015, a collaborative research on the socioeconomic status of tobacco farmers was undertaken as undergraduate thesis of students in the College of Business Administration, Economics and Accountancy. 🌿 (Felisa R. Aurellano)

Tobacco farmers honored with mural in Piat, Cagayan

THE local government of Piat, Cagayan dedicated a 10-foot-tall mural to the local farmers in recognition of their contribution to the local economy with their produce, which has been the basis of the town's share from the excise tax on Burley and native tobacco per Republic Act 8240.

The dedication ceremony last June 23 was attended by Piat Mayor Carmelo O. Villacete and other local officials, NTA Cagayan headed by Branch Manager Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda, and some tobacco farmer leaders.

The mural, located at the entrance of the People's Integrated Agro-Tourism Center, is the work of Isabela visual artist Riovic Acallar. It depicts the tobacco industry, particularly Burley production, as one of the cash crops of the municipality, and the hardworking tobacco growers tending to the growth and harvest of their crop.

Piat received from said excise tax a total of P4.29-million from its last release in 2016. According to Mayor Villacete, the fund is being used for various infrastructure projects, construction of curing barns, and assistance programs that benefit the tobacco farmers and their community.

For crop year 2015-2016, Piat had 77 registered tobacco farmers, producing about 80,640 kilos of tobacco. 🌿



Left photo: NTA Cagayan Chief Agriculturist Gilbert A. Taguiam, Piat Mayor Carmelo O. Villacete, and Cagayan Branch Manager Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda. Top: Mayor Villacete with other local leaders, NTA Branch officials and some farmers.

Photos: Moises E. Duran

Post-trading meeting with manufacturers, leaf buyers

HEADS and representatives of cigarette manufacturers and local leaf buyers had a round-table discussion with agency officials on various concerns regarding the tobacco trading operations, held at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City on June 9.

With the Administrator during the meeting were Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa; Directors Rodolfo F. Salanga, Nestor C. Casela, Teofilo R. Quintal, and Wilfredo C. Martinez; and Regulation Department Manager Maybelen B. Dictaan.

The group had their first meeting on May 17, where the leaf buyers discussed the possible repercussion of the cancellation of the license of Mighty Corporation to buy tobacco which is estimated to be 6.3 million kilos.

NTA encouraged the leaf buyers to buy tobacco more than their requirements to ensure that there will be no more tobacco left in the hands of the farmers at the end of the trading season. The local

buyers, as in the past, expressed their commitment to help in this regard.

As monitored by the Regulation Department, it was reported to the group that only 357,400 kg remain not bought which ULPI, TMI, and Conleaf committed to buy.

"This is a welcome development, and a positive indication that the problem has been solved," said Dictaan.

Director Salanga reminded the tobacco buyers to inform NTA about their purchase commitments next cropping season, 2017-2018, including the areas or locations they intend to conduct contract growing and the specific farmers who will be contracted. This will enable the NTA to limit its campaign in these areas.

Director Casela further requested the buyers to give a realistic projection of their purchase commitment.

Dictaan informed the buyers that the purchase commitment, a requirement for the approval of License to Buy tobacco, is due on October 15, 2017. 🌿



Administrator Robert L. Seares, along with other agency officials, meets with tobacco leaf buyers and manufacturers to discuss various issues on the just concluded trading operations.

NTA releases production... from page 6

assistance to 321 farmer-cooperators at the Branch Office in Batac City on June 13.

Meanwhile, Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa led the distribution of production assistance and orientation seminar on IFOIGAP-Rice in the two branch offices in Ilocos Sur on June 16.

Atty. Verzosa joined Branch Manager Minerva P. Mizal in awarding production assistance to 312 farmer cooperators of the first district in the Branch Office in Bantay, Ilocos Sur, and later in the Candon Branch in Candon City where he was assisted by Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta in handing over production assistance to 636 farmer cooperators in the second district.

It was Abra Branch Office's turn on June 19 where Administrator Seares, along with Abra Branch Manager Esmeralda G. Valera, awarded production assistance to 210 farmer cooperators.

On June 20, Administrator Seares and Atty. Verzosa met with the Branch Office staff of NTA La Union headed by Branch Manager Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay and farmer cooperators for the awarding of assistance at the Branch Office in Bauang, La Union, and later, with NTA Pangasinan, headed by Branch Manager Engr. Cesario G. Sambrana, and their farmer-cooperators at the Branch Office in Rosales Pangasinan.

Production assistance amounting to P5.08 million were distributed to 583 farmer cooperators in La Union, while P3.74 million for 353 farmer cooperators in Pangasinan. 🌿