



NTA approves P3-billion farm-to-market road projects

FARM-to-market road projects worth P3 billion have been approved for inclusion in the projects to be implemented this year by the agency.

The NTA Governing Board approved during its 109th Board Meeting the Tobacco Farm Access Roads to Markets (TOFARM) to be constructed within a four-year period.

This is part of the P10-billion projects, which will include Farm Machineries/ Implements Projects, Solar-Powered Irrigation System, Assistance Program and Production Inputs for Tobacco Growers, to be funded by the Tobacco Fund (Special Account in the General Fund) under Republic Act 4155. The projects will be endorsed for funding this year by the agency to the Department of Budget and Management, per NTA Board Resolution No. 789-2018.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol, Chairman of the NTA Governing Board, presided over said meeting held at the DA Office in Quezon City on February 7.

The project is in compliance with the directive of the Department to construct and upgrade farm-to-market roads (FMRs) as one of the priority infrastructure interventions with significant impact in increasing agricultural productivity and reducing losses by Filipino farmers. This

is mandated by RA 8435 (Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997).

Sec. Piñol is aiming to rationalize the FMR programs of various agencies, including NTA, in order for the Department to have one single network and a well-coordinated implementation of the program.

According to the Secretary, the DA has surveyed possible areas throughout the country from which the NTA can choose to develop either for existing tobacco areas or areas for expansion.

The project is expected to increase rural incomes through higher productivity, reduction of hauling cost of agricultural products and other goods, and improved access to markets, and this will further help the local government in the delivery of basic services to the grassroots. The NTA's FMR projects will benefit more than 65,000 registered tobacco farmers, who are also rice, corn or vegetable growers, and their communities.

According to Administrator and Governing Board Vice-Chairman Robert L. Seares, the agency will coordinate with the LGUs to identify

priority locations of FMRs that will take into account the number of tobacco farmers and their families among other considerations.

The project proposal from LGUs should be endorsed by the primary beneficiaries, the tobacco farmers or their organizations (association or cooperative) in the area, he said.

A Project Management Team for FMR Projects will be created per a Special Order No. 0249 s. 2018. The team is headed by Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa, with Finance Department Manager Ma. Teresa B. Laudencia, as Vice Chair; and Corporate Planning Department OIC Fortuna C. Benosa, Budget Officer V Reynaldo R. Aquino, Chief Accountant Milagros C. Tiu, Project Evaluation Officer III Teresita D. Dela Rosa, and Economist II Claire Monette P. Esteban, as members.

They will be assisted by the Technical Team composed of Engr. Abraham C. dela Peña (Candon Branch) and Engr. Randy I. Abella (Farm Technology and Service Department), with Executive Assistant IV Alona A. Manganaan as Secretariat officer.



Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol poses with NTA officials and directors (from left) Enrique dela Cruz (representative of Alternate Board Chairman USec. Evelyn G. Laviña), Director Teofilo R. Quintal, Director Nestor C. Casela, Deputy Administrator Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa, Secretary Piñol, Administrator and Vice Chairman Robert L. Seares, Director Rodolfo F. Salanga, Director Pedro J. Mendiola Jr., and Director Wilfredo C. Martinez. The secretary, in the other photo, presides over the meeting of the NTA Board.

Melanie Rapiz-Parel

Tobacco Fund facilitates access to food and market of farmers' produce

MARKETING, has been oft said as the ultimate test of profitability of the farming venture. The NTA therefore has adopted among its strategic measures, increasing tobacco farmers' access to their marketing centers, through the "Tobacco Farm Access Roads to Markets" (TOFARM) Project.

The project forms an integral part of the P10-billion infrastructure intervention, alongside irrigation and farm machinery/equipment support, that the NTA adopted, in line with Republic Act No. 8435, also known as the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997, to be sourced from the NTA's Tobacco Fund, per Board Resolution No. 789-2018, dated 7 February 2018, where P3-billion was allocated for the construction/repair of farm-to-market roads (FMRs) to be implemented within a four-year period.

The Tobacco Fund, established under RA 4155, is a "fortune well" for the tobacco farming sector from which funds can be drawn to finance projects that will redound to the benefit of the farmers and their families. In consonance with Presidential Decree 1234, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) established the Special Account in the General Fund (SAGF 151), where NTA's entitlement/share from excise taxes collected from locally manufactured Virginia-type cigarettes shall be deposited and considered automatically appropriated. The funds, however, are released by the DBM only upon submission of programs/projects in accordance with the menu as provided under the law.

While some look upon the tobacco industry as a sunset industry, opportunities for its sustainability evidently continue to challenge it. The Tobacco Fund will enable the farmers to take advantage of these growth opportunities. The DA Secretary and Chairman of the NTA Governing Board therefore directed the NTA to tap the fund for the construction and/or upgrading of FMRs, among other interventions, for the purpose.

The prospective beneficiaries of the project have been identified in coordination with the DA FMR Project Director. With this Project, accessibility of agricultural products and inputs will be facilitated, alongside the marketing of the farmers' produce. 🌱



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Pangasinan farmers urged to strengthen orgs, create new ones

NTA Pangasinan organized a meeting with farmer leaders in the province to discuss the need to strengthen farmer organizations (FOs), revitalize those that are inactive, and to form new ones.

Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa explained the need of well-organized FOs when he met 24 farmer-leaders and representatives in the first Farmers Organization Development Meeting held at the Branch Office in Rosales, Pangasinan last February 15.



Verzosa

"All the NTA wants is to have strong farmers organizations in every tobacco-growing province to be effective partners of the government in community development," Atty. Verzosa said.

He said that although government funds are available to provide farmers public services that will benefit their communities, such fund cannot be properly delivered to the farmers if their organizations are not well organized.

Atty. Verzosa also acknowledged the big share of the tobacco industry in the government fund by the collection of excise taxes on tobacco products. "Because of your big contribution to the economy, you deserve first-class service from the government," he added.

"The benefits or financial grants from the government are not given to individual farmers but to associations or cooperatives. So it is important that farmers have a legitimate organization duly registered with the government," he said.

He added that the NTA supports this undertaking through the agency's Farmers Organization Development program.

Pangasinan Branch Manager Engr. Cesario G. Sambrana noted that there have been farmer-leaders representing a group or cluster of farmers in various undertakings of the agency, but sometimes they lack grassroots support or they are not fully organized. Some become inactive because of several factors such as lack of cooperation among members and lack of clear goals.

"We have to help our farmers understand that it is for everybody's interest, all the stakeholders, to strengthen their organizations in coordination with the agency," he said.

In response to the challenge, Saturnino C. Distor, president of farmer-leaders in Pangasinan, commended the branch office for the initiative of talking to the farmer-leaders and urged the farmers to answer the call to organize or help strengthen the existing organizations for their common benefit.

Manager Sambrana suggested that farmer clusters who are not yet organized must join the existing associations in their respective municipalities, as he urged the farmers not to allow themselves to be controlled by local politics.

"I envision a farmers organization that conducts its own activities, and that the members themselves could enter into business contracts and become self-sufficient," he added.

For this current crop year, Pangasinan has 4,165 registered farmers producing Burley and Native tobacco.

After the meeting, the farmers participated in the workshop on farmers' organization and development facilitated by Jovita G. Briones, Senior TPRO, and Elizabeth Q. Biala, Supervising TPRO. (Neyo E. Valdez) 🌱

NTA meets leaf buyers, farmers on amended trade rules

by Alex L. Borje, Chief TPRO, Tobacco Leaf Regulation Division, RD

THE NTA Regulation Department, headed by Manager Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros, conducted the 2018 Orientation Seminar on the Amended Trading Rules and Regulations (TRR) Governing the Trading of Locally Grown Leaf Tobacco on February 5 and 6, for a half day seminar, per Clustered Branch Offices.

Dates of orientation and venues per cluster were as follows: Cluster 1 (La Union and Pangasinan Branch Offices), February 5 (morning) at the La Union Branch in Bauang, La Union; Cluster 2 (Candon and Abra Branch Offices), February 5 (afternoon) at the Candon Branch in Candon City; and Cluster 3 (Vigan and Ilocos Norte Branch Offices) February 6 at the Vigan Branch in

Bantay, Ilocos Sur.

The orientation seminar focused on the salient amendments of the TRR and penalties for specific offenses. Presented during the open forum were observations, concerns, and problems encountered during the recently concluded Trading Year 2017, particularly on the enforcement of said TRR, including the documentation procedures on trading and deliveries of locally grown leaf tobacco.

Director Rudy F. Salanga said that the Orientation Seminar on the features of the amended TRR is conducted for the benefit of all the stakeholders, specially, the tobacco farmers. He urged stakeholders to give their full cooperation and support to all the efforts of the agency.

Director Teofilo R. Quintal asked the traders to furnish the NTA Branch Offices the required data on tobacco trading to achieve fair and just marketing of leaf tobacco for the benefit of the tobacco farmers.

Directors Wilfredo C. Martinez and Nestor C. Casela enjoined the participants to support the TRR for the benefit of all the stakeholders.



Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros discusses the salient features of the amended trading rules and regulations during the orientation seminar in Candon Branch. **NTA Candon**

The consolidated questions, issues, problems and the recommendations are presented as follows:

Q. The transfer of tobacco leaf from the field canvasser (FC) to the Buying Station is in big quantity, at times the load reaches 500,000 kg or more. In such a case, there will be a big number of Certificates of Inspection (COIs) to be issued to the company. Can the NTA reduce these?

Regulation Department (RD). As per 2018 Revised TRR, the Certificate of Inspection (COI) will no longer depend on the volume of tobacco that is being moved, but instead, the COI will be based on the number of truckloads per shipment wherein the Buying Station (BS), Wholesale Tobacco Dealer (WTD), or Redrying Plant (RP), or Principal Field Canvasser (PCF) requesting for inspection shall pay P100 per COI per truckload per shipment.

For example, if ULPI BS will transfer two truckloads of tobacco containing 10,000 kg each from their BS to WTD/RP, ULPI shall file a Request for Inspection (RFI) of the shipment, then pay P200 for the two COIs.

Q. What if the flow of Certificate of Inspection is not followed?

RD. Noncompliance of the Request for Inspection/COI is included in the specific prohibitions in the 2018 Revised TRR (Rule 16. Sec. j). As such, penalty will be imposed to violators.

Q. Who will police the violators?

RD. The NTA Administrator and/or his authorized representative shall designate and assign a Roving Team to oversee the effective and efficient enforcement of the Rules and Regulations at the BS level. At the Branch Office (BO) level, the BO will designate TPROs who shall have the authority to enter the trading areas, re-drying and/or manufacturing plant and similar premises for purposes of inspection, monitoring, and supervision. They are responsible to report such incidence/s.

Along this line, the NTA BO would like to request that they be given due respect and authority and support while

performing their assigned functions.

Q. It was observed that there are still field canvassers who buy tobacco leaf without license, who will go after them?

RD. The NTA Branch Office (BO) must refocus its enforcement and close monitoring of trading operations in the province particularly to those buyers, particularly the unregistered field canvassers in fairness to those licensed FCs. The BO shall designate its local Roving Team-TPROs who shall have the authority to go after the FCs and enter the trading areas, and similar premises for purposes of monitoring, inspection, and supervision of trading operations.

Q. There were farmers who sold their tobacco without proper classification, and there were tobacco leaves being marketed in sticks. How will the NTA monitor/prevent the situation?

RD. Selling of unclassified tobacco leaf or tobacco in sticks may lead to downgrading. One reason the NTA requires tobacco farmers to have a market tie-up or contracted tobacco Buyer Firm/BS/WTD, is for the farmer to be assisted in classifying his/her tobacco produce in accordance with the grading and classification standards prescribed by the NTA and to deliver these to his/her contracted buyer firm.

If the tobacco is not properly classified without any grade distinction, then there is a tendency for the farmer to deliver his/her produce to another buyer firm. Such situation would lead to pole vaulting, a violation classified as serious offense.

Q. Are all FCs required to have a Certificate of Authority (COA)? Is the COA transferable? Can my husband/wife use my COA?

RD. Yes, all FCs are required to have their individual COA indicating their name, address, and the Buyer Firm/BS they are representing. The COA is nontransferable and it cannot be

NTA meets leaf buyers, farmers... from page 3

used by any individual. The use of another person's license, permit or COA is a less serious offense and the offender shall be imposed a penalty and fine of not less than P50,000 nor more than P100,000.

Yes, the spouse can use the COA, provided that he/she is the legitimate/legal spouse.

Q. Who will pay the Certificate of Inspection? Will the FCs pay for the COI since there are times when they are present during inspection?

RD. The BS, WTD, or RP and Field Canvassers ("viajeros") will pay the Certificate of Inspection (COI). For instance, in any movement of tobacco, the Buyers are required to file Request for Inspection in which case they shall pay P100 per truckload of tobacco for the COI.

Sub-Field Canvasser/s and farmers are not required to pay the COI but still may file for Permit to Transport for purposes of proper documentation and traceability of origin of tobacco.

Q. Are Sub-Field Canvassers legal? Are they allowed by the NTA?

RD. Sub-Field Canvassers are legal, provided that they have secured a Certificate of Authority (COA) from NTA. The latter would allow the Sub-Field Canvasser/s to engage in tobacco trading provided they give proper identification of themselves including the name of the principal buyer to whom they deliver tobacco leaves. Further, they are required to pay the necessary license fee chargeable to the Principal Field Canvasser.

Q. How can the NTA compute the amount of License and Authority to Buy Leaf Tobacco of those who want to engage in the trading of leaf tobacco by BS and field canvassers? Is it possible for them to compute the volume of tobacco purchased/accepted?

RD. The NTA is capable of assessing the amount of License to be paid by those who want to engage in the trading of tobacco based from the average total aggregate volume of their purchases/acceptances for the last three trading seasons or estimated production of those FCs listed under their marketing agreement for the trading season applied for, whichever is higher.

The NTA seeks the assistance and cooperation of all BSs/WTDs/RPs/Principal FCs, to submit to the NTA thru the branch offices, the names of their Field Canvasser(s)/Sub-Field Canvasser(s) as well as the farmer-leaders the soonest possible time to enable the NTA to cross-list the names and identify those FCs with multiple entries/source of financing.

Q. What is a Performance Bond? How much will it cost?

RD. The Performance Bond is equivalent to the volume committed to be

purchased based on the existing average floor price issued by the contracting BS/WTD in favor of the NTA. This is being imposed to the principal buyer/WTD to ensure that their commitment to buy all of the tobacco produced by all his/her identified contracted farmer-cooperators is fulfilled.

With these, the NTA is confident that the situation that was experienced by the industry of having considerable volume of tobacco leaves that were unsold due to the closure of Mighty Corporation will be avoided.

Q. How much is the COI and where to pay in remote areas?

RD. Inspection fee is charged at P100 per truckload, per shipment. In remote places where BO is not accessible, the assigned TPRO in the area can collect inspection fee(s) and issue a temporary receipt and to be remitted to the BO within 24 hours.

Q. Are the Buyers/WTDs/RPs/Principal FCs required to pay the inspection fee immediately?

RD. Inspection fee should be paid immediately. However, for remote areas, payment of inspection fees can be paid within 24 hours prior to the loading of tobacco.

Q. Can we pay the inspection fee in advance?

RD. Yes, the inspection fee can be paid in advance provided an accurate documentation monitoring of the payment and copy of COI may be issued upon actual inspection of the subject commodity.

Q. Can we move/transfer old tobacco stock?

RD. No, only tobacco produced under the current production year should be moved or traded.

Q. Tobacco farmers come to us for a loan that is not related to tobacco production, but for health/educational purposes. Can we collect these loans over and above their tobacco production loan?

RD. No, loans from the field canvasser outside his/her tobacco production cannot be collected from the sale/trading of the tobacco farmer's produce.

Q. How come the NTA still finance the tobacco production of the farmers when there is available production loan extended by the buyer firm?

RD. The tobacco production loan extended by the BS/WTD/Principal FC is not enough to meet the needs of a quality tobacco production.

Q. Why can't the NTA buy all the tobacco of the farmer(s) inasmuch as the NTA extended the biggest production assistance?

RD. The NTA is not mandated to buy tobacco from the farmers. 🍏

PROCEDURE IN SEED PRODUCTION



Keeping the integrity of tobacco seeds

by Nelly U. Castro, Chief Science Research Specialist, FTSD

GOOD harvest starts from good seeds, especially when recommended varieties are used. Recommended varieties have undergone thorough evaluation pertaining to their yield performance, harvest quality, and resistance to pests and diseases. This is true to all crops including tobacco.

The varieties are registered with the National Seed Industry Council pursuant to Section 10 of Republic Act 7308 (Seed Industry Development Act of 1992).

With the very stringent grading and classification of tobacco leaves, there is a need for the tobacco farmers to use viable, recommended, and tested seeds. Realizing the importance of good tobacco seeds, some tobacco companies are coordinating with NTA in the testing and evaluation of tobacco seeds for the production of their seed requirements.

To ensure high yield and good quality leaf tobacco, the NTA is committed to produce an adequate and sustained amount of market-preferred tobacco seed stock. There is always a need to have a readily available seed stock for the farmers and private companies especially during the times when seedbeds are destroyed due to unpredictable weather conditions and any natural calamities.

To carry out this commitment, the NTA through the Seed Production Project (SPP) commits to provide true-to-type and Tobacco Mosaic Virus (TMV)-free seeds for tobacco buyers and farmers. The SPP produces seeds to satisfy the needs of the private tobacco companies and tobacco farmers.

The varieties to be produced depend on the need of the buyer firms or companies. These varieties are planted in the field, following the proper production technology. Each variety setup is maintained and assured that there are no off types or mixtures. Thorough plant-to-plant inspection and selection is done regularly to select the true-to-type variety.

On the first sign of the presence of mixtures, the plants are topped and rogued before they start to bear flowers. In seed production, the seed heads are well taken care of as much as the leaves. Removal of the unfilled and damaged seed capsules and spraying before bagging of individual seed heads are done for protection against insect damage.

For bagged seed heads, weekly monitoring, inspection, and spraying are done to warrant that the seed heads are free of insect damage. Bagging is done in areas where different varieties are planted near each other to avoid cross-pollination. However, in places where the setup is secluded, and one variety is grown far from the other varieties, bagging of the individual seed heads is not needed. The unbagged seed heads are also maintained by regular spraying to protect them from insect damage.

Harvesting of the seedheads is done when 80 to 85% of the seed capsules are already dried, one variety at a time, and wrapped with clean cheesecloth. Threshing is done with utmost care to avoid seed mixture. Threshed seeds are thoroughly cleaned, the unfilled ones are removed by winnowing or by floating in water. This is done before seed treatment.

Seed treatment is done to minimize the occurrence of seed contamination of TMV disease and to provide TMV-free seeds for farmers and buyers. Seeds are soaked in 10% Trisodium phosphate solution and shaken for 30 minutes. These are washed thoroughly until the water is clear and sun dried for five to six days. After seed treatment, germination test for each seed lot is done. This is again repeated before seed distribution to adjust the amount of seeds to be sown to attain the desired seedling population.

The treated seeds are labelled and stored properly bearing the tobacco type, variety, date harvested, source, and percent germination. Seeds that are in excess of the requirement are kept in the seed laboratory. The percent germination of the stored seeds is determined annually to evaluate their viability.

The seeds of all the varieties and accessions of the different tobacco types are also maintained and stored properly. The viability of the seeds is checked on a regular basis. If the viability decreases, i.e., the percent germination is below 80%, they are sown and planted during the tobacco season to regenerate the seed stocks. This is being done to assure that the seeds of the tobacco germplasm are available at all times. Seed increase is done to warrant the availability of each accession in cases when the viability decreases.

The tobacco seeds are very tiny as one can see but it will grow as tall as it can be. Extra care should be observed to avoid mixture because a pinch added to a seed lot can totally destroy the whole tobacco farm lot. 🌱



SEED TREATMENT PROCEDURE

Final cleaning of Virginia & Cigar Tobacco Seeds
↓
Preparation of Trisodium Phosphate solution (100 g: 1L distilled water)
↓
Weigh 50 g of tobacco seeds and place in plastic bottle (1L capacity)
↓
Pour the Trisodium Phosphate solution into the plastic bottle with tobacco seeds
↓
Shake the bottle for 30 min
↓
Pour the seeds with the solution into a cheesecloth
↓
Wash the seeds with tap water several times until the water is clear
↓
Drain the washed seeds, transfer these to a dry cheese cloth and dry under the sun for 5 to 6 days

TOBACCO GROWERS OF THE YEAR

Burley/Native Category

Zaldy P. Martinez

Tabtabungao, Rosario, La Union
Burley Neutral Flavor
La Union Branch



More than the monetary value he gets from his tobacco produce, Martinez feels a deep sense of achievement knowing that his family is very much benefitted from the industry. With his income from growing tobacco, he is able to send all of his five children to school.

"I always aim to produce high yields of quality tobacco," says Martinez.

To accomplish these, he had to increase his farm area from half-hectare to a hectare, conform to the package of technology recommended by the agency, and work closely with his extension worker Kristin Mae S. Castañeda, TPRO I of La Union Branch.

Last tobacco season, Martinez was able to produce about 3,130 kg of cured tobacco leaves from his one-hectare farm in Brgy. Tabtabungao, Rosario, La Union, with 87.80% high grades (ABC).

Florentino G. Gallardo

San Miguel, Balungao, Pangasinan
Burley Neutral Flavor
Pangasinan Branch



Gallardo, 56, has been growing tobacco for the past 36 years, but he only joined the NTA Tobacco Contract Growing System in 2007, with Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. as his market tie-up. His extension worker, Marina G. Pine, Agriculturist I, describes this father of four, as industrious and a dedicated farmer-cooperator of TCGS, quick to learn, and very strict in adopting Good Agricultural Practices and the latest package of technology recommended by the agency.

Butog, as he is fondly called, planted traditional Burley in his 0.62-hectare farm. In all his years of tobacco farming, he produced quality tobacco. For crop year 2016-2017, he produced 2,620 kg with 90% high grades (ABC). He had a gross income of P261,017.90/ha. Deducting the cost of production of P87,819.74/ha, he realized a net income of P173,198.16/ha with a Return of Investment of 197%.

Rodolfo T. Macaraeg Jr.

Bauan, Amulung, Cagayan
Burley Improved Flavor
Cagayan Branch



Macaraeg was born on January 31, 1982 in Cabilaoan, Laoac, Pangasinan where he finished his elementary and high school education. He is the sixth among the eight children of Rodolfo Sr. and Soledad Macaraeg.

In 2012, after his marriage to Mylene Sumagay, he decided to move to his wife's hometown in Baccuit, Amulung, Cagayan where the couple and their two-year-old daughter are now residing.

Because he was a Burley grower for five years in Laoac before moving to Amulung, Macaraeg decided to cultivate the same crop that can give him a better income than the other crops. So he has been growing Burley without missing any cropping season since 2012.

According to his extension worker, Roberto F. Pedro, TPRO I of Cagayan Branch, Macaraeg's vast experience in Burley production, coupled with his diligence and hard work, gives him advantage over other contenders in the provincial TGY contest.

Jerome D. Iddurot

Maligaya, Mallig, Isabela
Burley Improved Flavor
Isabela Branch



Iddurot has been into tobacco farming since crop year 2012. He said that he earned big profit from his consistent production of high quality Burley. He also cultivates vegetables during the season to augment his income for his family. He vowed to continue planting tobacco as long as there is demand for high quality Burley tobacco.

He planted almost a hectare (0.96) of Burley with ULPI as market tie-up. During the contest year, he produced about 2,959 kg (or 3,082.5 kg/ha), valued at P291,305 (P303,443/ha) with an average price of P98.44/kg. He earned a net income of P156,350.94.

Iddurot was born on October 18, 1987 at Pangal Norte, Echague, Isabela where he finished his elementary and secondary education. His wife Jenny San Tagaca has been very supportive in his farm activities. They are blessed with one daughter.

Joseph J. Quiton

Mabini, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro
Burley Improved Flavor
Occidental Mindoro Extension Office



Quiton started tobacco farming during his adolescence in Barangay Mabini, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. He married at a young age of 19 and he and his wife Belinda Agustin are now blessed with two children: Jovel, 23, a seaman, and Jovie Rose, 21, a graduate of Civil Engineering.

This 43-year-old farmer hopes that winning the contest for having produced high-quality Burley will encourage tobacco buyers and investors to venture on tobacco production and make the tobacco industry in the province as profitable as before. He does not want to be the last man standing for the tobacco industry in Occidental Mindoro.

Rico B. Bangibang

Cattaran, Solana, Cagayan
Native Cigar Filler
Cagayan Branch



Bangibang has been into tobacco farming for 22 years now. He practiced diversified farming system by optimizing the utilization of his farm area through planting tobacco and various kinds of crops like vegetables (eggplant, tomato, pechay, squash, etc.), corn (glutinous and yellow corn), and rice, and managing his backyard poultry and livestock. He was once featured in the *Philippine Tobacco News* as Model Tobacco Farmer on Diversified Farming.

He is diligent and receptive to technological advances in tobacco farming. "This is the reason he is topnotch in his farming venture," said his extension worker Edna C. Zingapan, TPRO I of Cagayan Branch.

Bangibang was able to build his own two-storey residential house, purchase all his farm tools and equipment, and personal service motorcycle for him and his children, buy or lease several parcels of land for his farming and mostly, send all his children to school (two are already registered Electronic and Communication Engineers, the youngest is an NTA scholar taking up ECE also).

FTSD holds demo on anawang furnace construction in Ilocos Norte

by Felisa R. Aurellano

NTA Ilocos Norte Branch, in coordination with the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), demonstrated the construction of anawang furnace for flue curing barn in Tangaoan, Piddig, Ilocos Norte on January 9.

Engr. Randy I. Abella, Senior Science Research Specialist of FTSD, conducted the demo at the curing barn of farmer Jimmy Gamboa, a Virginia Neutral producer. According to Abella, the materials for the anawang furnace can be modified using locally available materials but the recommended specifications must be maintained to achieve the best result of heat transfer, and thus saving on fuel wood.

The anawang is one of the two recommended types of furnace (the other is the Venturi type) for flue-curing Virginia tobacco under the Curing Barn Assistance Program (CBAP) of the agency. In a study conducted by FTSD in 2009, adopting the newly developed furnace system that uses fuelwood and other agricultural wastes such as corncobs and rice hulls results in a reduction of fuelwood consumption by 30%.

Present during the demo were farmer-leaders from adjacent barangays and towns, and NTA Ilocos Norte headed by Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz with Luzviminda U. Padayao, Chief Agriculturist; Alexis B. Jamias, Supervising TPRO; Saturnino A. Agatep, TPRO III; Marzel E. Manzanas, TPRO I; Rommel A. Calautit, TPRO I; and Filipinas Q. Ganir, TPRO I.

Abella also conducted demo on furnace construction in selected curing barns in Brgy. Barbarangay in Banna on January 10, and Brgy. Lydia in Marcos on February 16.



Engr. Abella (standing in blue shirt) observes the construction of anawang furnace at a flue-curing barn in Piddig, Ilocos Norte

Echo-seminar on harmonized leaf grading in Ilocos Norte

AFTER attending the series of seminars conducted by the NTA Industrial Research Department on Approved Harmonized Grading System for Locally Grown Virginia Tobacco for Branch Managers, extension workers, and farmer leaders, NTA Ilocos Norte conducted its own seminar on leaf grading system held on January 13-15 in eight venues in the different tobacco growing municipalities in Ilocos Norte.

The echo-seminar was attended by a total of 353 farmer-cooperators under the Tobacco Contract Growing System for crop year 2017-18. The senior staff of the Branch, headed by Manager Mario E. Corpuz and Chief Agriculturist Luzviminda U. Padayao served as resource speakers/lecturers.

Leaf samples of cured Virginia tobacco were used in the seminar. Examples of grade marks and where each character stands for, was thoroughly explained by the lecturers. In some venues, farmer-leaders who attended the same seminars conducted by the NTA-IRD assisted the facilitators in the practical exercises on leaf grading. (Divina D. Pagdilao)

Pio S. Ramos

Boy-utan, Bauang, La Union
Native Batek
La Union Branch



For Ramos, seeing his three children complete their education is the greatest achievement for a father like him who only finished elementary education due to poverty in the family. And he made this possible through his income from tobacco production.

During the contest year, he produced 2,886 kg of cured tobacco leaves, giving him a gross income of P233,975. He attained 73.87% quality index (Batek grades) as a result of his hard work and diligence. Like most of the awardees, he scored high in following the package of technology and good agricultural practices recommended by the agency, with the assistance provided by his extension worker Marie Beth B. Palabay, TPRO I of La Union Branch.

Ramos says, as long as he is healthy and capable, he will continue farming and will plant tobacco since tobacco had sustained him and his family all these years.

Angelito D. Lalata

Amaperez, Villasis, Pangasinan
Native Batek
Pangasinan Branch



Lalata has been involved in NTA projects such as tobacco contract growing system (TCGS), rice production, and recently the Curing Barn Assistance Project. He has a consistent record of full repayment of production assistance from 2012 to the current crop year.

For the contest year, he produced 2,845 kg/ha and obtained an impressive Return of Investment of 211.12%.

TGY 2017-2018 on-farm evaluation in Pangasinan

THE Branch Technical Committee (BTC) of Pangasinan Branch conducted the first on-farm evaluation of the contestants for the Provincial Tobacco Growers of the Year Contest for Crop Year 2017-2018. Qualified contestants are seven farmers for Burley Neutral (traditional category) and four farmers for Native Batek category.

The contestants are: Rodolfo Palad of Sta. Monica, Tarlac; Dolly Caralipio of San Manuel, Tarlac; Janeth Lilagan and Mary Grace Gallardo of Balungao, Pangasinan; Angela Cariaga of Sta. Barbara, Pangasinan; Sonny Biala of San Fabian, Pangasinan; and Frankie Oribio of Villasis, Pangasinan for *Burley/Neutral Category*; and Roberto Reciles of Malasiqui, Pangasinan; Francisco Aquino of Sta. Maria, Pangasinan; Rogelio Barnachea of Villasis, Pangasinan; and Meliton Olpindo of Alcala, Pangasinan for *Native Batek Category*.

According to Engr. Cesario G. Sambrana, NTA Pangasinan Branch Manager and BTC Chair, two evaluations will still be conducted before the submission of winners to the National Technical Committee.

During the contest year, the Branch extension workers assisted the farmer contestants by providing them technical assistance from seedbedding to marketing of their produce.

Members of the BTC are Engr. Roger T. Madriaga, Chief Agriculturist; Elizabeth Q. Biala, Supervising TPRO; Alma Toralba and Jovita G. Briones, Senior TPROs. (Marlon G. Facun)

CBAP monitoring in La Union, Pangasinan



(L-R) Emma Beth B. Fantastico, Chief Agriculturist; Joannaliza D. Ordinante, TPRO I; Cristilita O. Mamungay, farmer-cooperator from Brgy. Inabaan Norte, Rosario, La Union; Engr. Alberto C. Casison, Area IV Supervisor; and Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay, Branch Manager, on their first CBAP visitation in La Union on January 11.

THE Project Management Team (PMT) of NTA La Union, headed by Branch Manager Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay and Chief Agriculturist Emma Beth B. Fantastico, monitored the construction of flue-curing barns and air-curing sheds in separate areas in District 2 of the province on January 11 and 16.

The curing barns/sheds are constructed by tobacco growers who availed of the Curing Barn Assistance Project by the Agency.

The PMT, in charge of the overall management and supervision of the project, ensures that the recommended shed design is strictly followed, and that all financial releases are used exclusively for the project.

Among those visited were the ongoing constructions in the municipalities of Rosario, Sto. Tomas, Agoo, and Aringay. According to Manager Palabay, 88% of constructions applied for were already completed in these areas as of the time of visit on January 11. The PMT was joined in their visitation by Engr.

LA UNION



(L-R) Farmer Tacotaco, Elizabeth Q. Biala, Supervising TPRO; Alma Toralba, Senior TPRO; Eulalia Z. Ele, TPRO III; Richie B. Vallo, TPRO I; and Engr. Roger T. Madriaga, Chief Agriculturist.

A TEAM from NTA Pangasinan conducted visitation of its Curing Barn Assistance Project (CBAP) in the province on February 13. Among those visited are the air-curing shed of Federico Tacotaco, Burley grower, in Mangandingay, San Manuel, Tarlac. As of February 13, NTA Pangasinan has visited 50 farmers who are all beneficiaries of the CBAP, either for construction or repair, with breakdown as follows: San Fabian, 20 farmer-cooperators (FCs); Sison, 6 FCs; Balungao, 6 FCs; Villasis, 5 FCs; Alcalá, 5 FCs; and whole of Tarlac, 8 FCs. (Alma G. Toralba)

PANGASINAN

Alberto C. Casison, Area IV Supervisor, along with Joannaliza D. Ordinante, and Jharrel John B. Aruelo, both Tobacco Production and Regulation Officers.

The accomplishment is far advanced compared with the 40% completion in Bauang, La Union during their visit on January 16.

NTA implemented the Curing Barn Assistance Program (CBAP) for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 to promote the use of the NTA-prescribed efficient curing sheds; and help the farmers increase their income through the production of properly cured leaf with the prescribed sheds.

“With the project, we see to it that the farmers have sufficient space to accommodate tobacco since overcrowding can have adverse effects on leaf quality during curing,” Manager Palabay said.

He added that producing quality tobacco equates with higher income and return of investment to farmers. (Kristin Mae S. Castañeda)

IRD braces for trading with orientation on new leaf grading system

by Jianne M. Gabriel, Industrial Research Department

TO enhance competence of its staff on Virginia tobacco leaf grading standards, NTA conducted Training Orientation Seminar on the Approved Harmonized Grading System for Locally Grown Virginia Tobacco from January 31 to February 2 at the NTA Candon Branch Office in Candon City.

The training was spearheaded by the Quality Assurance Division (QAD) of its Industrial Research Department (IRD).

The three-day seminar was attended by 82 participants, including the branch office managers from the five branch offices in Region 1 and Abra, divided into groups: branch managers and new extension workers (Tobacco Production and Regulation Officers and Agriculturists) and researchers on Day 1; area supervisors on Day 2; and farmer cluster leaders and Branch Chief Agriculturists on Day 3.

Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa, and members of the NTA Governing Board Nestor C. Casela and Teofilo R. Quintal graced the three-day event.

IRD Manager Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan presented the objectives and overview of the seminar. He said that with the

training of staff on leaf grading, NTA expects better trading operations with farmers in this year’s trading season. “We will have a common understanding among the extension workers, researchers, tobacco farmers and tobacco company graders on the said grading system,” he said.

QAD Chief Lina A. Cera talked on the principles and application of the Approved Harmonized Grade Standards for Virginia Tobacco, which will be used by buying stations in the country starting this coming trading season.

After the lectures, an open forum was held to address the participants’ queries and clarifications. Alfonso E. Sabado, Supervising Science Research Specialist, facilitated the practicum that allowed the participants to apply what they learned by doing practical exercises and reviews on leaf samples

The participants, particularly the area supervisors, are tasked to conduct echo trainings to their fellow extension workers and farmer-leaders in their respective areas.

The breakdown of participants (branch managers, agriculturists, and TPROs) per branch office were as follows:

NTA hires 7 agency scholars

SEVEN scholars of the National Tobacco Administration under its Tobacco Free Education Program (TFEP) are now working with the agency after their graduation, with four of them given their regular appointment last December.

“NTA scholars are all children or dependents of tobacco farmers and they know and appreciate what we’ve been doing for the industry. Those who were hired also went through the agency’s selection process, and the scholars came out the best among those whom the agency considered for the jobs,” Dr. Cristina C. Lopez, Manager of the Administrative Department, said.

The four newly appointed to regular plantilla positions are **Maricar R. De Leon**, Bachelor of Science in Computer Science graduate of Cagayan State University, who now works as Computer Operator II of the Cagayan Branch Office; **Karla May E. Cardona**, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA) graduate of Isabela State University, Cabagan Campus, as Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer (TPRO) I, of the Isabela Branch; **Michael John P. Dahilig**, BSA graduate of Mariano Marcos State University, Batac City, as TPRO I of Ilocos Norte Branch; and **Judith M. Morales**, BSA, major in Crop Science and Horticulture, graduate of Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU), Bacnotan Campus, as Agriculturist I of La Union Branch.

De Leon, from Alcala, Cagayan has been working with the agency since May 2015, while Cardona, from Quirino, Isabela, started working at the Isabela Branch in January 2017.

Morales, from Balaoan, La Union was sent to Danziger Flower Farm in

Hamerkaz, Israel to pursue an on-the-job training from September 2014 to September 2015. Her training included creating mother stocks, sowing, planting, pruning, and topping of Baby’s Breath flowers. She passed the Agriculturist Board Examination in 2016.

The other former scholars now working with the agency (on Job Order basis) are NTA La Union scholars **Jharrel John B. Aruelo** and **Kathlyn Mae A. Tejano**; and NTA Candon scholar **Abigael E. Imperial**.

Aruelo, from Sto. Tomas, La Union, is a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics graduate of DMMMSU, Agoo Campus. He passed the Civil Service Career Professional Examinations in October 2017. He joined NTA La Union as TPRO I in August 2017.

Tejano, from Bauang, La Union, is a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering graduate of DMMMSU, Bacnotan Campus. She passed the Agricultural and Biosystem Engineering Board Examination in August 2017. She joined the Industrial Research Department at the Central Office in Quezon City as Science Research Specialist.

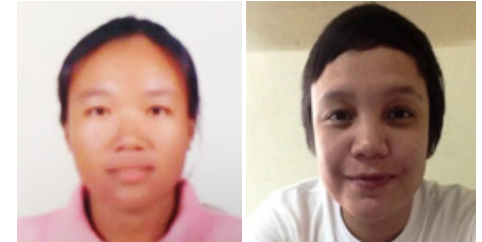
Imperial, from Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, received her diploma for BSA Major in Agronomy, from the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College, Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur Campus in April 2015, and got her appointment as TPRO I in February 2016.

The NTA Scholarship program



Dahilig

De Leon



Cardona

Morales

covers five school years (SY 2011-12 to SY 2015-16). Several slots for two-year technical and four-year courses, preferably agriculture-related courses, were offered to qualified sons and daughters of tobacco farmers.

The agency suspended giving new grants starting SY 2016-2017 with the implementation of the K to 12 program. As of first semester of SY 2017-2018, the branch offices have 246 remaining scholars.

According to Administrator Robert L. Seares, hiring its own scholars is part of the agency’s continuing assistance to our tobacco farmers and their families. He said that the parents of the scholars whom he met during his trips to the provincial offices are very thankful to the agency for initiating the scholarship program, and they want the project to continue to help more students.

As soon as the students finish their Senior High School or Grade 12 starting this year, NTA will offer more scholarship grants for deserving children of tobacco farmers who enter college, he said. *(with reports from Candido I. Liangao, Corazon V. Dacumos, and Estrelita E. Nabua)*

Abra, 15; Ilocos Norte, 15; Vigan, 12; La Union, 17; Candon, 17; IRD, 5; and FTSD, 4. Isabela Branch Manager Herman C. Torres and Cagayan Branch Manager Dr. Corazon R. Riazonda, with some extension workers from the two branches attended Day 2 of the orientation as observers.

IRD also conducted the same orientation seminar for leaf graders/technicians of trading centers on February 7 (ULPI) in Candon City, February 8 (TMI) in San Juan, Ilocos Sur, and February 9 (PMFTC) in Sta. Cruz, Ilocos Sur. The said schedules were attended by a total of 152 farmers, 43 leaf graders and 9 supervisors, with the Managers, area supervisors, and TPROs from NTA Candon and NTA Vigan as observers.

Pangasinan scholar lands 7th in Agri Board Exams

by Marlon G. Facun

ARIANE Shane E. Valdez, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture graduate of Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University, South La Union Campus in Rosario, La Union, garnered 7th place in the Agriculturist Board Examination given in various testing centers on November 2017.

Valdez, recipient of the NTA Scholarship Program, is the daughter of tobacco growers Danilo C. Valdez and Gina Erfe Valdez of Anonang, San Fabian, Pangasinan.

For her Top 10 finish in the exams, she was recognized by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Pangasinan, with Provincial Resolution No. 9-2018 signed on February 5.

Valdez is one of the 87 NTA scholars from Pangasinan Branch, 41 of them including Valdez, who finished their college degrees at the end of the second semester of SY 2017-2018.

She was cited for her Outstanding Performance as International On-the-Job Training Student in Israel.

The NTA started offering scholarship grants to deserving college students, who are dependents of tobacco farmers, in school year 2011-2012. The program, as an incentive for local farmers, is in line with the Tobacco Free Education Program embodied in Republic Act 9211 (Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003).



Tobacco as fillers/additives for plywood panel production

TOBACCO dusts and stalks and other particles can be used as fillers/additives for the production of plywood panels.

This is the objective of the recent R&D project “Utilization of Tobacco Dusts/Particles and Spent Tea Leaves as Additives for Plywood Adhesives” of the Forest Products Research Development Institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DOST-FPRDI), in partnership with the National Tobacco Administration.

Tobacco materials, along with spent tea leaves, can be a big help in the production of plywood with lower cost of adhesives and termite-repellant. In a previous study, researchers found that the nicotine content of tobacco is a good termite repellent.

The memorandum of agreement for the said joint project was signed by Administrator Robert L. Seares for the NTA and Director Romulo T. Aggangan for DOST-FPRDI, at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City on January 17.

Also present to witness the signing were Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa, Manager Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan of the Industrial Research Department, OIC Manager Fortuna C. Benosa of the Corporate Planning Department, Science Research Analyst Cyrus Raymond C. Olivenza, and Executive Assistant Alona A. Manganaan of NTA; and Dr. Erlinda L. Mari and Juanito P. Jimenez, Jr. of DOST-FPRDI.

According to the agreement, DOST-FPRDI will provide the technical manpower and facilities to determine the physical and mechanical properties of various wood and wood-based products and to test the plywood for shear strength, formaldehyde emission, and termite resistance.

NTA, which is mandated to conduct R&D studies concerning technologies development and alternative uses of tobacco and similar research programs, will provide the facilities and expertise on the analysis of the chemical composition of tobacco and similar raw materials.

DOST-FPRDI and NTA will also seek partnership with a tobacco farmers association or cooperative for the possible enterprise development of processing tobacco stalks/dusts into flour as filler/additives for plywood adhesives.

According to Dr. Bonoan, NTA’s commitment to the project is to provide tobacco stalks from La Union and Pangasinan. About 1,000 kg of dried stalks per tobacco type will be needed this cropping season. (Cyrus Raymond C. Olivenza) 🌿



After the MOA signing: NTA Administrator Robert L. Seares (seated), with (L-R, standing) Executive Assistant IV Alona A. Manganaan, Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa, Juanito P. Jimenez of DOST-FPRDI, Industrial Research Department Manager Dr. Roberto R. Bonoan, Dr. Erlinda L. Mari of DOST-FPRDI, Corporate Planning Department OIC Fortuna C. Benosa, and Science Research Analyst Cyrus Raymond C. Olivenza. Angelo B. Castillo

Ilocos Norte farmers, dependents learn noodles, cakes, pastries production

by Divina D. Pagdilao

THE Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), in coordination with NTA Ilocos Norte, started conducting training on Noodles, Cakes and Pastries Production, in the Branch Office in Batac City on January 16 to 18.

This is one of the four training courses for tobacco farmers and their dependents through the agency’s Livelihood Assistance Program. The other courses are Sari-Sari/Rolling Store Management, Agro-Mechanic Course, and Food Processing.

The 25 trainees are the wives and/or children of tobacco farmers from the different municipalities in Ilocos Norte.

The resource persons/trainers were Dr. Lorma M. Valera, professor of Food Technology; and Dr. Teresita N. Pablo, in-charge of Food Service, both of Mariano Marcos State University, College of Industrial Technology (MMSU-CIT). They were assisted by Chrizellelgo Angelica C. Martinez, Food Tech student also from MMSU-CIT.

FTSD Manager Imelda N. Riñen, Edwin C. Cariño of the Millenium Development Goal of the Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte, MMSU-CIT Associate Dean Dr. Celerino Ancheta, and NTA Ilocos Norte Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz gave their separate messages to the trainees during the opening program, which was also attended by senior high school students who were having their work immersion at the Branch Office.

NTA Director Wilfredo C. Martinez came on the third day and gave his message to the trainees.

Valera stressed the importance of the basic procedures, especially the correct measurement, using standard measuring tools (spoons and cups), to achieve the

best output. “Gawin kung ano ang dapat, hindi puwede ang puwede na,” she said.

Pablo discussed different kitchen wears for food safety, such as hairnet, laboratory gown/apron, hand towel, dish towel, face mask, hand gloves, pot holder, and kitchen utensils. She reminded the trainees that a sanitary permit is a requirement in doing a business.

The trainees, divided in groups, had actual cooking demonstration after the lecture by the trainers. The groups learned how to make noodle products like *miki*, fresh pancit, pancit canton, lomi and misua; molo wrapper, siomai, wanton preparation; polvoron with *malunggay* leaves; oatmeal cookies and dinner roll. They also learned how to cook *ube halaya*, banana muffin, pastillas, hotdog waffle, pretzel and other side dishes.

During the closing program, the trainees through their representatives, thanked the NTA for coming up with the training and said that they will use the knowledge and skill that they gained to put up a business and generate additional income for their families. Some participants requested the agency to help them with the needed capital for the business as they will start the venture in the coming days. Manager Corpuz responded positively to their request.

The trainees also thanked the Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte for sponsoring their training fee and some of their fare. 🌿

Promotion, appointments at NTA Candon

ROMAN J. Raganit Jr., newly promoted Chief Agriculturist, took his oath of office before Estrella G. De Peralta, Manager of the Candon Branch, on January 23 at the NTA Candon Office in Candon City. He replaced Juan B. Begonia who retired from government service last year.

Before his regular appointment, Raganit was Supervising Science Research Specialist and officer-in-charge of the Farm Technology Development Division of the Farm Technology and Services Department in Batac City. He is a cum laude graduate of Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from Ilocos Sur Agricultural College (now Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College).

He is the main author of the paper “Venturi Furnace for Flue-Curing Virginia Tobacco and Grain Drying,” which won first place during the ILARRDEC Regional Symposium of R & D Highlights, Research Category, in 2009. He also conducted several researches that were incorporated in the package of technology, such as flue system design for one-hectare barn module, automated rice hull dispenser as fuel substitute, suckerides, among others.

Raganit is the third senior staff promoted to Chief Agriculturist last year, after Ped Ruben B. Barbero of NTA Abra (promoted July 17) and Luzviminda U. Padayao of NTA Ilocos Norte (promoted September 4).



Raganit, with Branch Manager Estrella G. De Peralta

New Agriculturist I John James B. Canosa, and three new TPROs Julius Mark Lester L. Flores, Mark Anthony C. Artates, and Fayrene Kay A. Pascual, also got their original appointments for the Candon Branch Office. They took their oath of office before Manager De Peralta on separate schedules. 🌿

Forester conducts evaluation of KPP projects in La Union

by Candido I. Liangao

SEGUNDINO U. Foronda, registered forester hired by the agency as consultant of the Kahayang Pangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan (KPP) Project, visited the KPP projects implemented by the NTA La Union on January 19 to 20.

Foronda visited the project sites in Macalva Norte, Agoo, La Union, particularly the half-hectare *ipil-ipil* plantation of KPP farmer-cooperator Jessie Laroya.

Prior to the conduct of the evaluation, he met with the Branch Office senior staff and extension workers for a brief dialogue. He said that constant

monitoring of the trees must be done to determine their growth performance and he proposed that a particular unit or a division be created to oversee the project.

Foronda stressed the importance of matching the kind of trees to grow with the type of soil in the area. “Poor type of soil must not be planted with fast growing trees as it will only lead to failure of expectation,” he said.

The output or results of the findings of Foronda in La Union and the KPP projects of other provincial branch offices will be presented to the NTA Board of Directors for guidance on the continuity of the KPP project.

KPP is a component of the Renewable Fuelwood Energy Farm Project of the agency, established in 2013, to address the fuelwood and other forest resources requirements of the farmers in the curing of Virginia and other types of tobacco, as well as assist in the reforestation efforts of the tobacco growing regions.

For the five-year implementation of the project (2013-2017), NTA La Union has involved 1,148 farmer-cooperators for its KPP fuelwood project, with a total of 1,185.11 hectares planted to *ipil-ipil* trees; and 257 farmer-cooperators for its KPP bamboo production, covering 200.25 hectares. 🌿

50 trainees complete butchery course at AgriPinoy Training School

A total of 50 scholars of Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) received their Slaughtering Operations National Certificates (NC) II from the NTA AgriPinoy Training School on Monday, January 22 at the AgriPinoy food processing facility in Nanguneg East, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur.

NTA Administrator Dr. Robert L. Seares, who graced the joint graduation ceremony for Batches 6 and 7, congratulated the graduates and challenged them to utilize the skills they have gained to make their lives better. “You can earn higher income, if you prefer to work abroad, like in Canada, UAE, Qatar, and America. Just do not forget your passion for work, and the right attitude towards work,” said Seares.

Speaking in behalf of the scholars, outstanding trainees Sheila Marie Comiso and Mark Allen Sylvania expressed their gratitude to TESDA for their scholarship grant and the agency for their opportunity to learn the course using its modern facilities for its operation.

Also present during the ceremony were Arnel Gallardo, Supervising Specialist IV of TESDA Provincial Office in Vigan City; Nora A. Corre,



Administrator Robert L. Seares poses with the latest batch of trainees who completed Slaughtering NC II at AgriPinoy Training School.

OIC Project Manager and Training School (TS) Director; Dr. Mikael Benedict G. Crisologo, consultant for AgriPinoy Projects; and Arturo D. Castillanes, TS trainer.

With the seventh batch of trainees, the training school now has a total of 165 graduates for the short butchery/slaughtering course accredited by TESDA since its launch in October 2015.

According to Corre, the next batch of trainees (Batch 8) will start in March. (Text and photo: Melanie Rapiz Parel) 🌿

CorPlan hosts annual agency planning workshop

THE National Tobacco Administration conducted its annual Agency Planning Workshop for its managers and senior officers from the branch offices, department managers, project officers and other focal persons for the presentation and validation of accomplishments and targets among the various units and the determination of priority projects for CY 2018-2019.

The two-day meeting, facilitated by Corporate Planning Department OIC Manager Fortuna C. Benosa and staff, was held at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City last January 29-30.

Benosa presented the workshop objectives and the performance commitments of the agency to the national government, the Department of Agriculture, and the Governance Commission for GOCCs (GCG). She also discussed the Major Final Outputs (MFOs) and programs/projects that contribute to the agency's goal of a sustainable Tobacco Industry.

Resource speaker Johnry A. Castillo, Chief Budget and Management Specialist of the Department of Budget and Management, discussed the Guidelines for 2018 Budget Execution and the 2019 Budget Preparation and the Annual Cash-Based Appropriation.

According to Castillo, fiscal year 2019 budget will be an annual cash-based budget. With annual cash-based appropriations, agencies can only incur contractual obligations and disburse payments for goods delivered and services rendered and inspected within the fiscal year, with an extended payment period of three months. This will effectively limit agencies to submit budget proposals reflecting payment of goods and services that will actually be delivered for the year.

In his message, Administrator Robert L. Seares reminded the participants of their important responsibility in the said workshop. "Your commitment and



leadership, especially your analysis of the current situation of the tobacco industry in relation to our role as the sole government agency that looks after the industry, and our individual functions and competence will provide a critical input into our budget plans for the coming years," he said.

Deputy Administrator for Operations Atty. Mel John I. Verzosa was also present as the different branch offices and departments presented their respective physical and financial accomplishments for 2017 and their targets for 2018.

In an open forum during the second day, Atty. Verzosa addressed some issues and concerns raised by the branch and department managers, and discussed some recommendations to enhance program and project implementation.

Also discussed was the Risk Management Process, presented by Internal Audit Service Manager Dinah E. Pichay, which will be incorporated in the planning process. 🌱

Pre-trading meeting with farmers, FCs in Badoc, Ilocos Norte

by Divina D. Pagdilao

IN preparation for the trading operations in February, the local government of Badoc, Ilocos Norte, headed by Mayor Maximo D. Cajigal, met with farmers and field canvassers (FCs), with NTA Ilocos Norte acting as facilitator.

The one-day event, held at the Municipal Function Hall on January 23, was attended by 42 farmer-leaders, barangay officials of tobacco-producing barangays, and other LGU officials.

NTA Ilocos Norte Branch Manager Mario E. Corpuz discussed the proper documentation/recording during the trading, using the certificate of purchase (COP) and purchase invoice voucher (PIV).

He also reminded the field canvassers of the revised trading rules and regulations, particularly on the endorsement from a buying station as a prerequisite of the approval of their authority to buy tobacco from NTA.

Mayor Cajigal enjoined the farmers and the local leaders to safeguard their tobacco produce by closely monitoring the trading operations in the municipality. Manager Corpuz agreed with the mayor, as he stressed the importance of establishing a monitoring point, especially at the boundary of Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur, and creating a monitoring team at the barangay level.

Mayor Cajigal and the members of the Sangguniang Bayan also assured the local farmers of the LGU's support, with the cooperatives or associations as conduit of short-term financial assistance for the farmers. 🌱



Irrigation Project in Cabugao, I. Sur

SITIO Beckes small reservoir irrigation systems situated at barangays Aragan and Carusipan in Cabugao, Ilocos Sur is now fully functional, according to NTA Vigan Branch Manager Minerva P. Mizal after site visitation with Chief Agriculturist Faustino O. Taal early this year. The irrigation system, constructed under the agency's Irrigation Support Project for Small Tobacco Farmers (ISPSTF), has an estimated service capacity for 100 hectares of tobacco and rice lands that benefit around 150 tobacco farmers of the two barangays including Brgy. Alina-ay.

NTA is implementing the ISPSTF, which includes the construction of new irrigation systems and the rehabilitation of existing communal irrigation systems, in collaboration with LGUs, to ensure adequate water supply for crop production. This is in addition to extending facility assistance directly to the tobacco farmers by providing them with irrigation pumps and other irrigation facilities. Aside from Sitio Beckes, the NTA has four other irrigation projects all situated in Sinit, Ilocos Sur, comprising the first batch of the project for the first district of Ilocos Sur.

Tomasito G. Taloza