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# Government launches National Rubber Development Program



DA Secretary Domingo F. Panganiban delivers his address during the launching of the National Rubber Development Program in Kidapawan City, North Cotabato.

**A**s first step to support the Philippines' position as 4<sup>th</sup> biggest player in the world natural rubber industry, the National Rubber Development Program (NRDP) was launched at the provincial gymnasium of Amas, Kidapawan City, North Cotabato on 31 Aug.

2006.

The growing domestic and global demand for natural rubber and the increasing price in the world market prompted the government to implement a national rubber development program. This program is along the Department of Agriculture's (DA) goal of

developing new lands for agribusiness development and to fulfill President Gloria Arroyo's agenda of job creation, and balance of trade through exports.

At present, the total area planted to rubber in the country is pegged at 81,925 ha with Zamboanga Sibugay having the largest area followed by North Cotabato and Basilan provinces in Mindanao.

In his welcome address, North Cotabato Governor Emmanuel F. Piñol said that it is about time the Philippines do something about being left behind by other rubber producing countries such as Thailand (number one producer of rubber in the world), Vietnam, India, and Indonesia. "The name of the game is world market. If we could plant rubber in 100 million ha, we will earn revenues of about P120 billion in a year and create at least 500,000 jobs in the countryside directly for rubber farmers," said Piñol.

Piñol added that the rubber development program will be an effective reforestation program as well since it projects planting 500 million rubber trees nationwide. Agriculture Secretary Domingo F. Panganiban, who was also guest of honor and speaker during the launching, said that at least 475 ha were identified for rubber planting this year. He said that the DA is encouraging the local government

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## DA Sec instructs BAR to lead the way

**T**his was the gist of Agriculture Secretary Domingo F. Panganiban's message during the 19th BAR Anniversary and National Technology Forum & Seminar Series on 7 August 2006, RDMIC Lobby, Visayas Ave., Diliman, Quezon City.

To lead the way to prosperity in the agriculture and fishery sectors, Secretary Panganiban instructed the Bureau to become a key player in the

biotechnological revolution in the country. This is done by bringing technologies from R&D to make farmers and fisherfolk earn more and maintain the country's food security.

In his speech, he commended BAR for its efforts in modernizing agricultural production and implementing technological advances. He likewise urged the whole DA system to "mobilize,

*see DA Sec instructs...page 8*

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## BAR Chronicle

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It provides regular updates on the activities on BAR's activities as R&D coordinator and news and features concerning NARDSAF-member institutions.

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# Director Eleazar graces NBN's *Serbisyong Bayan*



BAR Dir. Nicomedes P. Eleazar (middle) chats with Ms. Baby O'Brien (left) and Mr. Allan Allanigue (right), hosts of NBN's *Serbisyong Bayan*.

The Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) Director Nicomedes P. Eleazar was guest at NBN Channel 4's *Serbisyong Bayan*, 30 August 2006. In a live interview, Dir. Eleazar talked about BAR as a staff bureau of the Department of Agriculture that directly reports under the Office of the Secretary.

On the first thrown question, Dir. Eleazar discussed BAR's vision to provide a stable and progressive future for the Filipinos through excellence in research and development in agriculture and fisheries.

He mentioned that the Bureau coordinates and funds agricultural and fishery research and development activities, develops partnerships and linkages with local and international research organizations, sources out funds from local and foreign donor institutions, strengthens institutional capabilities of the agriculture and fisheries sectors, manages knowledge, and advocates policies toward improved governance and progressive agricultural and fishery sector value chain.

Dir. Eleazar emphasized that aside from supporting the implementation of various R and D programs, BAR also supports the improvement of product packaging which is essential in enhancing competitiveness of our product both for domestic and international markets. He cited the example of Benguet State University's (BSU) various agribusiness

products. This is one way of promoting and elevating agribusiness to one that is globally competitive.

The Director stressed that BAR is actively supporting and advocating the "linking farmers to market" approach wherein the entire supply chain is strengthened. Appropriate support systems institutionalized through relevant R and D practices are essential in accessing global markets. He cited the DA-BAR's current effort of accessing the European market, a potential and promising market for our local products like the Queen pineapple. This is possible through strengthened and effective implementation.

The thrusts and programs of the Bureau were briefly discussed. Ms. O'Brien commented that the Bureau is not only static. It serves as a dynamic institution that provides funding support mechanisms for R and D. Moreover, it has an essential support system in transferring information and technology to end users, e.g. farmers and fisherfolk,s and linking them to the market.

Before the program ended, Dir. Eleazar was given the chance to plug the upcoming events of the Bureau, namely: (1) the National Research Symposium on 4-5 October 2006; and (2) the Technology Commercialization Forum on 3 October 2006.

The interview is part of the program of the *Serbisyong Bayan* to feature the agricultural sector. It was hosted by Ms. Baby O'Brien and Mr. Allan Allanigue. (Ma. Eloisa E. Hernandez)



## 1<sup>st</sup> corn postharvest processing facility opens in North Cotabato



(L-R) Kabacan Mayor Luzviminda Tan, RFU XII Dir. Abusama Alid, NFA representative, Governor Manny Piñol, DA Secretary Domingo Panganiban, and USM President Virgilio Oliva (slightly hidden) lead the ceremonial ribbon cutting for the launching of the 1st Corn Postharvest and Trading Center at Kabacan, North Cotabato.

Farmers in North Cotabato will no longer dry their corn kernels along the national highway. This is the expectation of the local government of North Cotabato after the inauguration of the 1<sup>st</sup> corn postharvest processing and trading center in the Philippines at National Food Authority (NFA) Compound, Brgy. Osias, Kabacan, North Cotabato on 31 Aug. 2006.

The NFA donated the warehouse where the facility was built and it is managed by the Department of Agriculture (DA), provincial local government unit of North Cotabato, and the National Agribusiness Corporation (NABCOR). Gracing the event were Agriculture Secretary Domingo F. Panganiban, North Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel F. Piñol, Kabacan Mayor Luzviminda J. Tan,

NABCOR President Allan Javellana, and University of Southern Mindanao (USM) President Virgilio Oliva.

Governor Piñol said that they chose Kabacan as the site of the facility since it is now the center of agricultural activities in Central Mindanao. Mayor Tan said that they expect Kabacan to become the corn granary of North Cotabato soon while President Oliva expressed high hopes that the facility will be effective in improving the mechanism of corn processing and trading.

Secretary Panganiban meanwhile said they expect higher quantity and quality of corn produced in the province through the facility and committed to add a couple of these facilities next year in Cotabato, if the Center's operations prove successful. He also recognized the role of NABCOR in providing financial and technical assistance to corn farmers and in the acquisition of the facility.

The event was attended by visiting provincial mayors of North Cotabato, representatives of different government agencies, academe, corn farmers, and private sector. Quedancor President and CEO Nelson C. Buenaflor were also present. The distinguished guests led the inaugural switching of machineries and plant tour.

After the inauguration, the Usufruct Agreement was signed by USM, NFA, and NABCOR followed by the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on the Convergence Initiative in Almada, North Cotabato by the DA, Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the provincial and municipal government of Almada. (Miko Jazmine J. Mojica)

## Training needs of regional R&D partners assessed

Performance and goal attainment are anchored on human resource development. As such, the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) conducted its capability evaluation for regional R&D personnel, specifically on technology commercialization and management. The evaluation focused on the training needs assessment (TNA) of researchers who are directly conducting research and who are supportive to the new initiative of the Department of Agriculture on the National Technology Commercialization Program (NTCP) being coordinated and managed by the DA-BAR.

The objective of the evaluation was to determine the level of understanding of the regional researchers

on the general framework of technology management and commercialization of agriculture and fisheries under Philippine condition. In support to the objective, the evaluation further identified training needs of the researchers to enhance their capability for research and development, development and management, and technical aspects of crop, livestock and poultry and fisheries.

Results were obtained through a structured TNA instrument covering five parts, namely: the personal profile, work profile, relevant trainings, understanding technology management and commercialization, and designing training programs. The structured TNA instrument was distributed to all the regional integrated R&D centers for agriculture and fisheries from February 2006 to July 2006. A total of twenty-eight (28) R&D centers

submitted the accomplished TNA instruments. The documents were consolidated, interpreted and analyzed using descriptive and narrative methods.

Based on the results, majority (94%) of the regional R&D centers have limited knowledge on technology management and commercialization. However, they were certain that a capability enhancement course on technology management and commercialization can develop their skills and increase their level of understanding on the matter. Furthermore, the study highlighted that research managers must undergo a series of research management training course to effectively coordinate the researches and their respective R&D programs including project planning,

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# NTCP localizes technology forum



one of the top programs of the Department where the gains and outputs of research and development will be used and available to all who are interested. The regional technology forums must also showcase the technological breakthroughs of R&D through product display and exhibition

and other promotional activities. For its part, BAR ensures that these activities are institutionalized and operationalized within the regular regional programs through financial and technical assistance. With enough funds, projects and activities are timely implemented and evaluated at the national and regional levels.

The localized agriculture and fisheries technology forums are categorized by regional clusters. There are five (5) regional clusters created in the three major islands of the country. These are Cluster 1 (Luzon A for Regions I, II and CAR), Cluster 2 (Luzon B for Regions III, IVa and IVb and V), Cluster 3 (Visayas Regions VI, VII and VIII), Cluster 4 (Mindanao A for Regions X, XI and CARAGA) and Cluster 5 (Mindanao B for Regions IX, XII

and ARMM). Each of the clusters will highlight mature technologies on crops, livestock and poultry and fisheries. These are supported by technology clinic and assistance for local government units, farmers and fisherfolk, local commodity industries, private sector and other interest groups. The cluster groups are also supported by the major DA GMA banner programs (Rice, Corn, HVCC, Livestock and Poultry, and Fisheries) and the DA-AMAS, DA-AFIS, DA-ATI, selected SUCs, and credit and financial support agencies like Quedancor, LBP and other rural banks.

The clustered regional technology forums have been scheduled and to be held in strategic locations in the country. Cluster 1 (Luzon A) will be held on 09 November 2006 at Batac, Ilocos Norte, Cluster 2 (Luzon B) on 25 October 2006 at Lipa City, Batangas, Cluster III (Visayas) on 06 September 2006 at Iloilo City, Cluster IV on 17 August 2006 at Davao City, and Cluster V on 12 July 2006 at Koronadal City.

By bringing mature technologies at the local level, DA's goal to make the agriculture and fishery modernized from resource-based to technology-based will be achieved. With emphasis and utilization of agribusiness approach, these will be transformed and attained with key players working together through technology commercialization and utilization, our agriculture and fishery products become more competitive domestically and in the international market. (Marlowe U. Aquino, Ph.D.)

After conducting the national agriculture and fisheries technology forums and seminar series, the Bureau of Agricultural Research's (BAR) National Technology Commercialization Program (NTCP) decided to localize its initiative to bring the agriculture and fisheries mature technologies at the regional level for more interactive and participative activities. This was the decision made by Dir. Nicomedes P. Eleazar when he emphasized that technologies must be for key players and stakeholders especially the farmers and fisherfolk who benefit from the entire program.

Supported by the pronouncement of Secretary Domingo F. Panganiban during DA-BAR's 19<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the NTCP will be

## Training needs...from page 3

implementation, monitoring and evaluation and even impact assessment. In addition, all researchers pointed out that project and process documentation should be included in the whole package of training courses.

With the training needs identified and finalized, DA-BAR through its Institutional Development Section of the Program Development Division and the NTCP, the trainings requested will be prioritized and implemented accordingly to further enhance the capability of the key players of agriculture and fisheries R&D including technology management and commercialization activities at the national and regional levels. (Marlowe U. Aquino, Ph.D.)

## Government launches...from page 1

units nationwide to open new areas in provinces identified to have potential for natural rubber production such as Sultan Kudarat, Isabela, Maguindanao, Benguet, Camarines Sur, Palawan, Antique, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental, and Mindoro Occidental.

"To be successful, the rubber development program requires sustained collaboration among the national government agencies, local government units, private sector, non-governmental organizations, academe, and financial institutions. Of course, this will be realized with an effective program of action," said Secretary Panganiban.

The NRDP is an initiative of the Department of Agriculture together with its attached agencies, bureaus, and corporations such as Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC), Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service (AMAS), Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR), Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), Field Operation Service (FOS), High Value Commercial Crops (HVCC) Program, National Agribusiness Corporation (NABCOR), National Agricultural and Fishery Council (NAFC), and ZNAC Rubber Estate Corporation (ZREC), in collaboration with the provincial government of North Cotabato. (Miko Jazmine J. Mojica)



# Agriculture Consultative Forum held for sustainable agriculture



Mr. Sixto Dorato Macasuet of CODE-NGO (right) gives his comments on the two policy papers presented. Also in the photo are BAR Asst. Dir. Teodoro Solsoloy (left) and Dr. Buenaventura Dargante of LSU (center).

An Agriculture Consultative Forum bearing the theme *Making Agriculture Programs Work for the Poor: Policy Discussions* was held 22-23 August 2006 at the NSQCS Conference Room, Bureau of Plant Industry, Visayas Ave., Diliman, Quezon City. The topics discussed were focused on the coconut and fisheries sectors and sustainable agriculture. Assistant Director Teodoro S. Solsoloy of the Bureau of Agricultural Research served as reactor during the first day.

The Agriculture Consultative Forum was organized by the Economic Policy Reform and Advocacy (EPRA) in partnership with the Caucus of Development NGO network funded by USAID. The project seeks to promote and facilitate a transparent, participatory, and multi-stakeholder approach in the formulation and implementation of meaningful policy reforms to improve productivity, income and performance of the Philippine agricultural sector.

The policy discussions after each sector presentation will serve as sound bases for the civil society's policy agenda. The forum further discussed focused strategies to guide the Department of Agriculture in its efforts to effectively address age-old problems besetting the whole agricultural sector. This is included in the Department's core policy programs as part of the rationalization efforts.

Representatives from the government policy makers, civil society groups, and the academe attended the forum. Dr. Solsoloy, representing the government sector, gave his reactions on two policy papers entitled: (1) *Upland Agriculture in the Philippines: Issues and Directions Towards Poverty Alleviation, Agricultural Sustainability and Global Competitiveness* and (2) *Sustainable Agriculture for Poverty Reduction*. The program presentors were Dr. Antonio Contreras, dean of De La Salle University, Liberal Arts and Mr. Roel

Ravanera, dean of Xavier University, College of Agriculture, respectively.

Dr. Solsoloy mentioned that each concerned institution should work together in addressing poverty and agricultural productivity. There is a need to integrate the systems and approaches that address problems in the upland. Hence, the need to look at the uplands as ecological zone for policy formulation and articulation outside the bureaucratic boundaries drawn by the state institutions.

The Agriculture and Modernization Act (AFMA) serving as DA's guiding vision rests on three important objectives: poverty alleviation, sustainable agriculture, and global competitiveness. Although RA 8435 sets the correct vision and direction, specific provisions for upland agriculture shall be polished. The Department can strengthen the AFMA but the necessary budgetary muscle was not provided which has compounded existing weakness in implementation.

In response, DA has the following initiatives: (1) under the EO rationalizing the DA, BSWM will be strengthened and transformed into the Philippine Institute for Sustainable Agriculture to provide leadership in the development and implementation of a national research and development agenda on sustainable agriculture; (2) the National Action Program (NAP) serves as effective policy instrument and convergence program for DA, DENR and DAR in combating land degradation, rehabilitation and preservation of threatened ecosystems; (3) a project on *Community-based Watershed Management Approach in Improving Livelihood Opportunities in Selected Areas* develops employment opportunities; and (4) the 7 Key Action Plans in Reducing Hunger in the Philippines.

Also, Dr. Solsoloy enumerated suggestions for upland agriculture to be globally competitive. These include the development of farm to market roads, planting crops such as *Jathropa* and high value commercial crops, investing in livestock, harnessing maximum technologies as products of research and promoting industrialization.

Dr. Solsoloy ended his reaction with a quote from Dr. John Pender saying "With the right policies in the right places, opportunities are ripe to reduce hunger, poverty, environmental degradation and inadequate agricultural production". (Ma. Eloisa E. Hernandez)

## BAR participates in 5th National Coconut Festival

The Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) participated in the recently concluded 5th National Coconut Festival on 24-27 February 2006, SM Mega Trade Hall 2, Mandaluyong City. The festival is part of the celebration of the 20th National Coconut Week. The Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) led in the celebration in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), and the PCA-Employees Multi-purpose Cooperative.

This year's festival featured a trade fair and exhibit with the theme, *Coconut is Life*. It showcased the versatility of the coconut tree which has been referred to as the "tree of life". The list of products and by-products from coconut continue to expand, making the coconut industry a consistent dollar earner for the country and providing livelihood to millions of Filipinos.

The festival provided venue for information-sharing and trading activities as it paid tribute to the coconut growers, processors, and industry stakeholders for their hard work in ensuring that Filipinos continue to generate benefits from this so-called "tree of life."

In the festival, BAR showcased commercially-viable agricultural technologies of the National Technology Commercialization Program (NTCP), an initiative by Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Domingo F. Panganiban. The NTCP highlights research and development (R&D) breakthroughs and mature technologies generated and developed by R&D institutions. It serves as a vital tool for the development of enterprises and the improvement of agriculture- and fisheries-related industries anchored on appropriate activities emphasizing technology transfer, promotion, adoption, utilization, and commercialization.

Among the technologies that BAR highlighted during the festival were products from coconut that are commercially like virgin coconut oil (VCO), coconut soap, and coconut wine; and other technologies funded and supported by BAR like sweet sorghum and pigeon pea. Aside from the trade fair and exhibit, the festival was also highlighted by success stories, techno-symposium, lectures and study presentations, book launching, and technology demonstrations. (Rita T. dela Cruz)



# Agribusiness keeps us together

MIKO JAZMINE J. MOJICA



**A**gribusiness will stamp out poverty," said Dr. Guillermina T. Gabor, former Tourism Secretary and now founder and president of the Philippine Small and Medium Business Development Foundation (PhilSMB), during her talk in the seminar series in celebration of the Bureau of Agricultural Research's 19<sup>th</sup> BAR Anniversary.

As an active advocate of agriculture and tourism, Dr. Gabor, in her presentation, discussed the trade, prospects, and challenges in agribusiness in Asia and the Pacific focusing on Philippine setting. She said that agribusiness is among the world's largest industries. "Agribusiness employs nearly 1.3 billion people and annually produces goods worth \$1.3 trillion. It includes all activities in the production, manufacturing, distribution, and wholesale and retail sales of agriculture commodities," she said.

With regard to the trends for 2006 and beyond on hot agri-based businesses for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), she highlighted the potentials of niche food businesses such as on-line food retailing, tea house, and one-food restaurant; and agritourism which she said may generate additional income from

products produced in the farms.

Dr. Gabor said that agritourism is now a big thing in agriculture-oriented countries such as Taiwan where tourists enjoy "experiential travel". For example, the tourists come to farms and they are educated on their operations by letting them try different activities such as harvesting fruits, planting crops, or even grating coconut from its shell using indigenous

materials. This way, the tourists get the feel of the culture of the locals and entertained at the same time.

Dr. Gabor, who is also founder of CITEM and has been the host of a local TV program featuring exportable Philippine products for nine years, expressed her dismay in the enormity of wastage of fresh agricultural produce in the country caused by oversupply, referring particularly to coco pith, papaya, calamansi, and truckloads of unsold vegetables that rot in the murky streets of Divisoria. She said that agribusiness research must correct this problem and stressed that researches on postharvest handling technologies must be prioritized.

Further, she, being a businesswoman herself (she is also the incumbent president of the Pasay City Chamber of Commerce and Industry), pointed that business opportunities abound in the Philippines which can be sourced from agriculture and fisheries such as organic farming and contract growing.

"Contract growing is the "in" thing in agribusiness today. It reduces the risk of farmers since link to market is assured and more important, it makes them learn new techniques that could improve the quality and

quantity of their produce," said Gabor. She cited Sri Lanka, which is now one of the model countries in contract farming. "The Philippines was once in the forefront of aquaculture but we weren't able to maintain the standard expected from us. Hence, sustainable contract farming is still one of our greatest challenges", she added.

Besides developing postharvest techniques such as setting up of cold storage facilities, Gabor promotes the dissemination of information materials and e-marketing where a repository of market updates are shared by cooperatives to determine key commodities and current trade price. She also encourages the organization of cooperatives since it minimizes the problem of financing hence allowing the farmers to produce more and share their knowledge. "In other agricultural countries, farmers develop their own information materials such as product brochures to entice the market. The farmers know their agribusiness well, they process their own products and they dictate the price unlike here where traders do all these things, thus, leaving the farmers with a meager income," Gabor said.

During her presentation, Gabor encouraged the government to develop and disseminate manuals or how-to pamphlets complete with a simple cost-benefit analysis and market connection to empower more people to get into agribusiness.

Moreover, she stated three marketable commodities that the Philippines should consider focusing into. These are the production of native chickens (organic), goat raising (the kid's skin is one of the most expensive leather material), and production of pili nuts and extraction of its oil which, according to her, is one of the most important oils in the world. "The world is ready for another nut," Gabor quipped. She also encouraged the production of native cattle and the export of our mango, mangosteen, and other quality fruits and vegetables.

Gabor said that she makes it a point to research and learn about the potential and condition of our own resources and products as part of our responsibility to contribute in the development of our country. "A positive culture is also an important force in agricultural development. We must be proactive in setting our priorities because lost time cannot be relived," she said. ■



# Innovative uses of *abaca* fiber: A great boost to the Philippine fiber industry

RITA T. DELA CRUZ

**K**nown the world over as Manila hemp, *abaca* remains to be one of the most endemic treasures of the Philippines being favorably competitive over the *abaca* produced by Ecuador, the only other commercial producer of *abaca* in the world. In a paper presented by Administrator Cecilia Gloria J. Soriano of the Fiber Industry Development Authority (FIDA) during the National Agriculture and Fisheries Forum and Seminar Series on 8 August 2006, RDMIC Lobby, Visayas Ave., Quezon City, she detailed the competitive advantage of Philippine *abaca* in the international market.

According to her, the industry continues to contribute and sustain the country's economic growth and development being the lead exporter of *abaca* fiber. Likewise, the industry remains as one of the country's major sources of employment and foreign exchange earnings. She cited that it sustains more than 1.5 million Filipinos who directly and indirectly depend on *abaca* for their livelihood.

Currently, there are 135, 958 ha planted to *abaca* spread in almost all parts of the country giving livelihood to 82,450 *abaca* farmers. Annually, the country produces an average of 69, 118 mt of *abaca* fiber. From this, 24% are exported in raw form while 86% are locally processed into pulp, cordage, and other fibercrafts. Most of these processed products like pulp are also being exported, earning for the country US \$79 million a year.

Eighty-five percent of the *abaca* production is monopolized by the Philippines while 15% comes from Ecuador. The *abaca* of the Philippines has two strong points compared to the *abaca* produced by the rival country. For one, applications- and marketability-wise, the Philippine *abaca* has considerable edge. Second, quality-wise, it is more competitive and preferred than the *abaca* of Ecuador.

According to Soriano, Philippine *abaca* has nine grades for each type of cleaning compared to the five grades of



Ecuador. As a result, Philippine *abaca* presents a wider spectrum of quality requirements and answers the various needs of different manufacturers like the papermaking business.

While opportunities for Philippine *abaca* continue to open and serve as good market potential for the country, there are also threats. One of these is the threat imposed by Indonesia. According to Soriano, there are reports that Indonesia is currently developing more than 1 million ha of *abaca* plantation with Filipino experts as consultants. But whether there is truth to this or not, Soriano cautioned the industry of not being too complacent but strive to maintain the country's supremacy in *abaca* trading.

One of the highlights of Soriano's presentation was the development of new end-use of *abaca* fiber that could further heighten the country's competitive advantage in the world market. Topping the list is the use of *abaca* fiber in the automotive industry particularly in Germany where it is being used in the outer cover of the spare wheel compartment on the three-door version of the Mercedes-Benz A-class. According to the report of Soriano, using *abaca* instead of fiber glass would bring primary energy savings of 60% and would significantly reduce carbon dioxide emission. For this technology, the German car company would need some 70, 000 mt of *abaca* fiber a year.

Another innovative end-use for

*abaca* is a research result showing the effectiveness of the fiber as composite material for the construction of boats.

Meanwhile, the enzyme of *abaca* is now being widely used in cosmetics, particularly in the production of organic, hand-crafted therapeutic skin care products like *abaca* soap and beauty creams. Soriano revealed that *abaca* soap, which has anti-aging and therapeutic properties, is now marketed in the United States, Japan, and even Europe.

Another potential market opportunity is penetrating the local textile industry through the production of tropical fabrics like what has been prescribed as office uniforms by FIDA. Administrator Soriano is hopeful that the *abaca* fiber could be eventually known in the world market the way the Thai silk is popularly known.

The Philippine *abaca* industry is also looking into China as potential market for pulp as the country imports it for the manufacture of tea bags. China, being one of the biggest tea-drinking countries in the world, is now using tea bags for their tea instead of the traditional way of preparing them. This is a trend from the "instant" or "on-the-go" drinks that are proliferating in the market today.

There is a great potential for our fiber industry, but the threat is also looming high and if the industry fails to meet the challenges of the present time, other country might grab these opportunities. To end her presentation, Administrator Soriano, being the head of the lead government agency for Philippine fiber, made a call for the R&D industry together with other concerned stakeholders to be more aggressive in their efforts and pledge their support to the industry.

*This article was based from the paper, "The Competitive Advantage of Philippine Fibers in the International Market: A Learning Experience," presented by Administrator Cecilia Gloria J. Soriano of the Fiber Industry Development Administration (FIDA) during the 19th BAR Anniversary and National Agriculture and Fisheries Technology Forum & Seminar Series on 8 August 2006, RDMIC Lobby, Visayas Ave., Diliman, Quezon City.*



## BAR supports dev't program for watershed of Makiling

In the interest of providing knowledge and skills on appropriate technologies and techniques in sustainable farming system for the farmers, the Bureau of Agricultural

Foundation, Inc. (UPLBFI) through the MCME in cooperation with the Institute of Agroforestry (IAF) and Forestry Development Center (FDC) of the College of Forestry and Natural



Research (BAR) supports the project, "Participatory Upland Development Program in Dampalit Watershed of the Makiling Forest Reserve (MFR)" to be implemented from April 2006 – April 2008.

BAR Director Nicomedes P. Eleazar visited the Makiling Center for Mountain Ecosystems (MCME) and the project site in Dampalit, Los Baños, Laguna on 4 Aug. 2006 to discuss the project with the implementing agencies and beneficiaries of the project.

The objective of the project is to ensure the productive and sustainable management of the Dampalit watershed through the empowerment of the upland communities by providing them adequate information, skills, and means of livelihood from farm-based activities. The project is implemented by the University of the Philippines Los Baños

Resources and the Institute of Community Education (ICE) of the College of Public Affairs (CPAf), UP Los Baños.

MCME Director Portia G. Lapitan, overall project coordinator, presented the current accomplishments of the project through a seven-minute video production. Among the significant accomplishments during the first quarter of its implementation include site reconnaissance, community and farm mapping, and production of information, education, and communication (IEC) materials, and partnership with the officials of Brgy. Lalakay, Los Baños and the people's organization, Samahan ng Magsasaka sa Mataas na Lupa sa Bundok Makiling (SAMALUP). (*Miko Jazmine J. Mojica with reports from MCME*)

### DA Sec. instructs...from page 1

upgrade, and disseminate knowledge and technologies for increased productivity." With this endeavor, DA would be more result-oriented with streamlined regulatory function to give flexibility a proactive play of market forces. Particular emphasis should be given to disseminating the results of research and biotechnology down to the grassroots—where they are needed the most.

He tasked BAR to lead the National Technology Commercialization Program (NTCP) and improve the research extension system through the Community-based Participatory Action Research (CPAR) which is slowly reaping fruits through agribusiness development. He likewise instructed BAR to strengthen its ties with the local governments and SCUs. To date, there are 99 new projects undertaken in line with the National Regional Integrated Research and Development Extension Agenda and Programs (NIRDEAPs), which the Bureau is also leading.

In its bid to improve the lives of the Filipinos, BAR is at the helm of the Department's drive for technology information campaign in the agricultural research community in the form of techno fora, field demonstrations, and regularly-held seminar series like the one initiated and coordinated by BAR. (*Rita T. dela Cruz*)

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