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CPAR boosts seaweed production in Bicol

A fisher harvests lato (native seaweed) at Pilar Bay, Sorsogon, site of the CPAR Seeweeds Showcase Project.

PHOTO BY: RITA DELA CRUZ

"Seaweed farming doesn't only provide livelihood for the local people but also increases its production making Brgy. Pilar, Sorsogon the leading source of seaweeds in the Bicol region," revealed Mr. Jose Razel Monzales, chairperson of the Pilar Seaweeds Farmers and Traders Association (PSFTA) to a group from the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) who went to monitor and evaluate its Community-based Participatory Action Research (CPAR) project on seaweeds on 16 January 2006.

The group from BAR headed by Dr. Catalino dela Cruz of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) with Mr. Tito Arevalo of the Regional Coordination Division (RCD), and Ms. Digna Sandoval of the Technology Commercialization Unit (TCU) met with officials from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Regional Office V (BFAR-V), the Sorsogon State College (SSC), and the Pilar Local Government Unit (LGU) who were all co-implementers of the CPAR project. The group visited Pilar Bay, site of the "CPAR Seaweeds Showcase Project" with Ms. Aida Andayog, Regional Fisheries R&D Center (RFRDC) manager for Region 5.

According to Ms. Andayog, this CPAR project aims to define and refine technologies on seaweeds with the fisherfolk as active partners of the researchers in

see CPAR boosts...page 8

Sec.Panganiban approves NTCP guidelines

Secretary Domingo F. Panganiban has recently approved the National Technology Commercialization Program (NTCP) document and operational guidelines through DA Administrative Order (AO) No. 3 Series of 2006 dated 06 February 2006. The approval of the AO is timely since the programs of the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) are now aligned and focused on technology commercialization with R&D still as the front liner. The NTCP document and guidelines serve as guide and reference for program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. They also serve as bases to address researchable areas outside the usual fields in the physical and natural sciences. Within the technology commercialization process, researches could address socio-cultural interactions, community and development studies, and the impact of technologies used by key players and stakeholders.

The preparation of the NTCP document went through a series of consultations, briefing-discussions and revisions from May-December 2005. Through BAR's initiative studies on the

see Sec. Panganiban...page 4

IN THIS ISSUE

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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Tissue culture restores small scale banana industry

Dr. Agustin Molina, regional director for International Network for the Improvement of Banana and Plantain (INIBAP) in Asia Pacific, said that the adoption of tissue culture technology is working its way in restoring the banana industry in the country. He expressed this optimism in a seminar held this month at the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR).

In the business section of Philippine Daily Inquirer, an article said that banana is among the country's top exports in 2005, pegged at $39.86 million with Mindanao dominating the production of these bananas with only five private companies ruling the export.

Dr. Molina identified pests and diseases in bananas as the main production constraints that saw the collapse of the thriving Lakatan and Latundan banana industry in Luzon. "We have seen the days when bananas from the provinces in Luzon were enough to supply the big markets in Manila until the notorious banana bunchy-top virus (BBTV) and bacterial fusarium wilt razed banana plantations," Dr. Molina said.

The R&D collaboration among INIBAP, BAR, state universities and colleges (SUCs), and other government agencies is now bent on implementing the banana rehabilitation program. The project's target beneficiaries are the banana small-holders who were displaced by the BBTV and fusarium wilt epidemic and those who produce bananas only for the local market.

According to Dr. Molina, the program is reaping early success in Luzon particularly in the provinces of Quirino, Isabela, and Cavite. The availability of affordable seedlings produced from tissue culture improved farmers' BBTV management and thus increased their production.

"By late 2005, about 85,000 tissue-cultured planting materials of the different introduced and local cultivars were distributed to SUCs and farmer cooperators in test locations. About 150 farmers received nursery and field management trainings," he said.

The use of tissue culture by the meristem technology has been widely adopted by the exporters in the country. It can produce millions of superior banana seedlings that ensure quality and quantity of bananas produced that is required by the export market.

Lapanday Corporation, one of the major banana exporters in the country located in Mindanao, sold 400,000 Lakatan from tissue-cultured plantlets in 2005. Each seedling sells at P5 each. Dr. Molina says nursery owners can raise them until they are ready for planting and then sell the ready-to-plant seedlings to banana growers at P15 to P25 each.

Among the new hybrids/varieties produced through tissue culture, FHIA 17 and 23 which are said to have similar taste with the local Cavendish Bungolan have the potential for local acceptance, while FHIA 3, 18, and 21 are found to be value-adding particularly as processed foods.

Dr. Molina encouraged the government especially the R&D community to be active in promoting livelihood and social equity by empowering the small scale farmers to manage banana production constraints and gain easy access to affordable technologies.

Dr. Molina also asked the researchers to exert efforts in locating the gradual proliferation of Tropical Race 4 besides treating prevalent banana pests and diseases BBTV, fusarium wilt, black sigatoka, and Moko. Tropical Race 4 is a disease previously nonexistent in the country but recently attacked Davao Cavendish, a banana variety the country largely exports. He said that resistant varieties must be identified and susceptible varieties must be quarantined since they can infect the banana plantations in just a few months. *(Miko Jazmine J. Mojica)*

BAR awards IDG to strengthen fisheries R&D center in Bicol

BFRDC Manager Aida Andayog (second from left) shows the old building of the Brackishwater Fisheries Research Center Demo Farm and Nursery in Brgy. Cabid-an, Sorsogon City, which was granted the IDG. Also in the photo are: Ms. Digna Sandoval (right), Dr. Catalino dela Cruz (second from right), and Mr. Tito Arevalo (right) of BAR.

PHOTO BY: RITA DELA CRUZ

The Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) though its Institutional Development Grant (IDG) released P1.96 M for the "Rehabilitation and improvement of the Bicol fisheries, research and development center and the provision of information technology and laboratory equipment." The upgrading of the existing R&D facilities in Region 5 covers three main components, namely: 1) rehabilitation of the Brackishwater Research Outreach Station Administration Building (P700,000); 2) repair and improvement of the regional central experimental pond system (P150,000); and 3) procurement of information technology and laboratory equipment (P150,000).

The IDG is under the R&D Facility Development and Maintenance Program of BAR and is awarded to qualified R&D centers under the National R&D System for Agriculture and Fisheries (NaRDSAF). The grant covers the renovation and construction of research facilities as well as the purchase of scientific equipment and other needs.

According to Ms. Aida Andayog, manager of the Bicol Fisheries Research & Development Center (BFRDC), the rehabilitation and improvement of the fisheries R&D Center is crucial in attaining sustainable fishery productivity in the region. Its performance as a research institution depends on its resource capability (manpower and R&D facilities) to effectively operationalize its activities.

Specifically, the rehabilitation and improvement project aims to: a) improve the R&D center into functional, effective, and efficient arm of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to be able to orchestrate the regional network of the RDE system; b) develop strong and research-oriented personnel and provide upgraded research facilities and equipment; c) provide physical structures and facilities conducive to a more creative and productive research work; and d) foster strong linkage and coordination with regional network members and fisheries stakeholders.

During the recent visit of BAR to the site, Ms. Andayog who oversees the project, said that the rehabilitation will take off as soon as the bidding process is finished. *(Rita T. dela Cruz)*

DA advised to streamline core functions

The Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary's Technical Advisory Group (STAG) held its annual planning workshop on Feb. 3, Holiday Inn, Ortigas to discuss the DA's critical activities for the year such as its rationalization process, department strategies, and STAG's proposed agenda with Secretary Panganiban. Atty. Anthony A. Abad, chairperson of STAG, opened the activity.

Assistant Secretary Romeo Recide, vice-chairperson of the Change Management Team (CMT), presented the proposed rationalization of the Department.

The STAG believes that the Department's core functions are inadequate in performing its steering functions and called on the DA to come up with clear concepts with the functional relationships with its several attached offices such as the Regional Field Units, agricultural and fisheries research centers and offices, and other elements of its bureaucracy. They said the Department needs to streamline its functions so as to deliver better results in implementing its goals.

In addition, Assistant Secretary Recide also presented DA's development agenda and strategies for the agriculture and fisheries sector for 2005-2010. The STAG sees the need to focus on highly productive posts in the bureaucracy which are output-oriented and can carry out concrete accomplishments. They recommended the establishment of a critical mass policy to address conflicts between the regulation, research and development (R&D), and information, education, and communication (IEC) functions of the whole DA system. Moreover, they suggested that the DA should create a legislative agenda in support of agricultural reforms and benchmark its performance structure.

The STAG also recommended

see Sec. Panganiban...page 7

Duck egg production strengthens agribusiness development in Region 5

Engr. Wilfredo Lanusga and his wife, one of the successful farmer-cooperators of the 'Diversified Farming Systems Agribussiness Development Project in Bicol Region.'

PHOTO BY: RITA DELA CRUZ

There is money in duck raising," Engr. Wilfredo Lanusga or simply *Mang Fred* proudly said during the recent visit of a group from the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) to monitor and evaluate one of its Community-based Participatory Action Research (CPAR) projects in Bicol. The evaluation and monitoring group headed by Dr. Catalino dela Cruz of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), included Mr. Tito Arevalo of the Regional Coordination Division (RCD), and Ms. Digna Sandoval of the Technology Commercialization Unit (TCU). Ms. Corazon Orbon, assistant manager of the Bicol Integrated Agricultural Research Center (BIARC) and CPAR coordinator for Region 5, accompanied the group to the project site.

Mang Fred is one of the farmer-cooperators of the project, "*Diversified Farming Systems Agribusiness Development Project in Bicol Region*" wherein one of its main component is duck egg production, salted egg and *balut* making in an irrigated lowland eco-zone.

This CPAR project took off in 2002, initially with its rice-based agribusiness development component that aims to provide opportunities for rural employment, increase family income and food sufficiency, and empower the communities through farm and crop intensity and diversification. It also aims to enhance the capability of the farmers to manage their own farm resources towards sustainable diversified productivity and develop in them initiative to become responsible members of the community.

The CPAR program of BAR is in response to the twin goals of the DA of giving priority to the agribusiness development of communities, thus the establishment of the micro-enterprise on duck egg production and salted egg processing in Brgy. Hibago, Ocampo, Camarines Sur, the site of the project.

Within one year of its implementation, the group from BAR that evaluated the project found a great potential of this CPAR rice-based farming project not only at the individual level but also of the whole community.

Mang Fred who discovered a treasure in duck egg production is now one of the progressive and financially capable farmer partners of this project. According to him, the return of investment (ROI) in product processing more than doubled which encouraged them to pursue it as a micro-enterprise in the community. The project has kept the people busy and provided livelihood and extra income for their family.

Aside from duck raising, other support services are being provided, namely: distribution of vegetable and legume seeds for crop integration, facilitating certified and hybrid seed procurements, and providing technical assistance on crop cultivation and animal raising.

As cooperators of this project, the farmers were awarded 50 ready-to-lay ducks and as counterpart, the farmers constructed two additional housings for egg processing. To ensure the sustainability of the project, farmers must coordinate with other backyard duck raisers to enhance and strengthen this micro-enterprise being developed.

BAR is the implementing agency in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture-Regional Field Unit 5 (DA-RFU 5), BIARC, and the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Ocampo. The project will be completed in December 2008.

From the initial six farmer-cooperators of the project and 21 members of the Hibago Model Farm Association (HMFA), it now involves the whole community. *(Rita T. dela Cruz)*

Sec Panganiban...from page 1

different technology commercialization programs of different countries such as USA, Canada, Australia, Thailand, Malaysia, etc. as well as our own were carefully reviewed to develop strategies to effectively identify, prioritize and commercialize technologies generated through R&D to modernize our agriculture and fisheries sectors.

The NTCP is managed and coordinated by the Technology Commercialization Unit headed by Dr. Marlowe U. Aquino with Ms. Digna L. Sandoval, Mr. Anthony B. Obligado, Ms. Jennilyn C. Razonable, Ms. Faith Santiago, and Ms. Evelyn H. Juanillo. Dr. Manuel F. Bonifacio provides technical advice and the different technical divisions and units of the Bureau support its implementation. *(Marlowe U. Aquino, Ph.D.)*

TCU conducts seminar on community-based strategies for watershed management

In a seminar series conducted for the technical staff of the Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) through the Technology Commercialization Unit (TCU) provided new concepts, perspectives and strategies in community development for better program conceptualization and development for rural and urban communities including specialized groups.

The seminar series aimed to enhance the capability of the technical personnel through information sharing on latest and innovative approaches in community mobilization, organization, planning and programming; identify issues and concerns related to community development and suggest solutions to address the identified issues and concerns.

The activity was divided into three main courses. These are: Course I – Community Development (Concepts and Perspectives), Course II – Community Mobilization and Organization including strategies in community planning and programming, and Course III – Participatory Rapid Community Assessment (PARCA) as an innovative approach to community assessment and analysis for program and project development.

The expected outputs attained during the whole duration include an increased awareness and appreciation of community development concepts and perspectives, methodologies and approaches, redirection of the program staff to be more proactive and dynamic in program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and process documentation.

With the information and knowledge gained, the BSWM technical personnel signified their role to further improve soil and water management research and development, watershed management and community-based activities to upgrade the living condition of their clientele.

For its part, BAR will continuously initiate innovative activities such as the seminar series to support its clientele in a more proactive, responsive and dynamic role. This kind of seminar series particularly on community development will be done based on needs of other technical staff working on R&D and other interest groups for agriculture and fisheries modernization and development.

The seminar series was conducted every afternoon of February 13, 14, and 22. Activities included were lecture-discussions, group dynamics and interaction activities, and some practical application analysis. Also, the said activity is part of the technical requirements and needs of the project of BSWM which is funded by BAR titled, "*Community-based Watershed Management to Improve Livelihood Opportunities in Selected Areas.*" *(Marlowe U. Aquino, Ph.D.)*

Central Visayas CPAR project evaluated

Immediately after the Intellectual Property Awareness Seminar-Workshop held in Cebu on 15-16 February 2006 for DA-Regional Field Unit staff and guests from the state universities and colleges and local government personnel, the DA-Central Visayas Integrated Agricultural Research Center (CENVIARC) Community-based Participatory Action Research (CPAR) projects were evaluated.

Three projects conducted in the provinces of Cebu and Bohol were evaluated. The evaluation is part of the regular activities of DA-CENVIARC to ensure that there is continuous exchange of experiences and discussion of lessons learned during project implementation. On the part of BAR, the results of the evaluation will be used as input in improving the strategies of CPAR as well as its complementation with the Technology Commercialization projects particularly Agribusiness Systems Development.

The projects evaluated were: a) CPAR High Value Vegetable Agribusiness Development Project in Dalaguete, Cebu; b) CPAR Corn-based and Ubi-based Cropping Systems in Guindulman, Bohol; and c) CPAR Green Corn and Grain Corn-based Cropping Systems in Dauis, Bohol. It was noted by the evaluation team that the CPAR projects focused more on on-farm research and little on marketing and processing because of limited technical capabilities of the implementers. Specifically, this was observed in the CPAR ubi-based cropping system in Guindulman, Bohol. Farmer-participants cannot market their produce because of the inconsistencies in tuber color and quality. According to the farmers and researchers, this was due to lack of tuber planting materials. It was suggested that the research component of CPAR would further test the utilization of tuber as planting materials and compare it with the vines and plantlets.

In general, the CPAR projects implemented by the DA-CENVIARC with the provincial local governments of Cebu and Bohol and farmer organizations are gaining momentum in the two provinces. Markets are being identified and other support services will be provided. Furthermore, strategies to improve the CPAR into a more commercialized venture through enterprise development were introduced as part of the commercialization activities for the different commodities. The provincial local governments and DA-CENVIARC will continuously address the technological and market needs of the farmers in the two sites. *(Marlowe U. Aquino, Ph.D.)*

Assessing commodity-specific industries: A step to commercialization

by: MARLOWE U. AQUINO, Ph.D.

The Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) has recently conducted a series of consultation-meetings to assess the commodity specific industries for agriculture and fisheries.

The series of activities tackled postharvest, post production and management of fruits and vegetable technologies (February 17), coconut technologies (February 20), and agricultural machinery and small farm implements (February 28). The consultation-meetings are part of the activities on product research and development, coordination and management initiatives, and linkage and networking between and among stakeholders of development.

A training needs assessment of all the DA-Regional Integrated Agricultural Research Centers (RIARCs) and the Regional Fisheries Research and Development Centers (RFRDCs) was conducted in support to these consultation-meetings. The aim is to identify, prioritize, and design training to suit the needs of the researchers and key players of the technology commercialization (Tech Com) program at the regional level with the end goal of enhancing the knowledge and skills of the key players and stakeholders in the planning, implementation and monitoring activities of Tech Com.

The conduct of the consultation-meetings is one of BAR's moves towards modernizing the agriculture and fisheries sectors from a resource-based to technology-based and a market-driven approach. Mature technologies of the different commodities identified were evaluated, refocused and directed to support DA's initiative programs. BAR's responsibility is to utilize these mature technologies to support and enhance the development of better quality products and sustainable quantity for both the market and processing. This responsibility resulted to a more coordinative and responsive relationship between and among key players, stakeholders, technology generators, and developers from the national research and development research centers, DA staff bureaus and attached agencies research and development workers, private sector, regional field unit staff, local government units and other groups like the Department of Trade and Industry, CITEM and Food Development Center.

Postharvest and post production technologies

Philippine fruits and vegetables will be boosted through commercialization activities. This was the vision of a group of experts who met on 17 February 2006 to come up with a national program of fruit commercialization. This includes sustainable production of quality products, value-adding for better processing and product development, and improved market matching and linkages locally and internationally. The initial target is the European countries since they have limited or no restrictions on sanitary and phyto-sanitary requirements. The priority fruits to be worked on are lanzones, rambutan, solo pineapple, mango and mangosteen. R&D activities in terms of transport, handling, storage and processing which are not yet well established and developed will be given importance. The targeted pilot sites will conduct initial testing of mature technologies in the area and match the strengths and opportunities posted by the different commodities.

Coconut technologies

After the success of the coconet in the international exhibition in Europe last year, the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) and BAR discussed ways and means to commercialize mature technologies for our coconut-based farmers and interest groups. Among the mature technologies identified were virgin coconut oil (heat and cold process technique), coco textile (soil conditioner and soil fertilizer), coconut sugar from *tuba* and *makapuno*. Based on the initial discussion, PCA will develop a model that will suit and initiate a coconut enterprise using the lessons learned from the COCOGEN Project which is also being funded by BAR. Other activities include market research for specific coconut technologies and product development at the community-level or at a smallholder enterprise level. Private sector and non-government organizations will be tapped to support the other services in the commercialization of mature technologies.

Agricultural machinery and small farm implements and technologies

Another commodity-specific discipline that needs emphasis and focus is the agricultural machinery and small farm implements and technologies. The Bureau of Postharvest Research and Extension (BPRE) which is assigned to take the lead in this activity will be supported by the University of the Philippines Los Banos – College of Engineering and Applied Technology (UPLB-CEAT), Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) – Agricultural Engineering and Machinery Division, Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) – Agricultural Engineering Division, and Fiber Industry Development Authority (FIDA). The initial meeting which was held on 28 February 2006 at BAR tackled machinery and small farm implement promotional activities, product R&D and commercialization with the support of the private sector and non-government organizations.

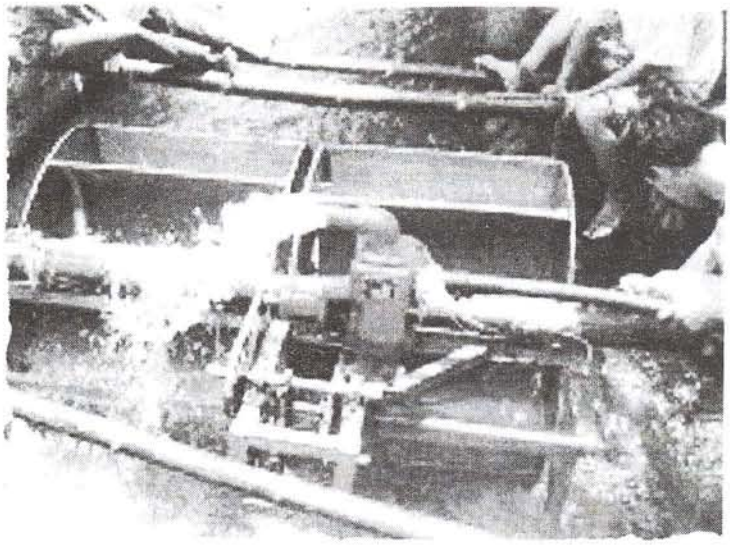
Through the technology commercialization program, the different agencies will develop a program proposal to support the mechanization and modernization of the agriculture and fisheries sector while utilizing promising mature technologies. Within two years, the agencies involved will have enhanced the capabilities of stakeholders and institutionalize support for the proposed specific commodities and areas. ■

Getting water to the farms cheaply

by: MARIA LIZBETH SEVERA J. BAROÑA

Farms that are idle during summer months due to scarcity of water can now be made productive. This is what a newly developed hydro-powered water pump guarantees.

"Using water to pump water" is how Dr. Reynaldo C. Castro and Mary Ann Baradi of the Philippine Rice Research Institute – Batac, Ilocos Norte, the developers of the machine, sum up what the technology they developed is about. The hydro-powered water pump uses the energy generated by the movement of a flowing water to drive a commercially available water pump to allow water from its nearby source to flow to the farms.



Hydro-water pump developed by PhilRice scientists.

PHOTO BY: PHILRICE

The technology is especially useful during dry months when farmers choose to leave their farms idle because transporting water from its sources which are usually far costs too much. This means foregone productivity and income that should have come their way had their lands been used.

The study cites that in Ilocos Region alone, there are 34,860 ha of farm whose agricultural productivity is not optimized due to lack of facilities for irrigation. The problem is due to the expensive pumping of water from its sources to the farms.

Although motorized pumps are available in the market, farmers do not have the resources to buy them. Hydraulic rams, designed to aid the transport of water from its sources to farms, only work on places with sufficient drops in elevation. In addition, hydraulic rams are also expensive. Treadle pumps, aside from being laborious, are also limited by their pumping capacities and the height where water could be pumped.

This lack of cost-effective alternative makes the hydro-powered water pump appealing.

After two experiments and going back to the drawing board to improve the prototype, the researchers came up with a hydro-powered water pump that is simple, effective, and economical. The final prototype of the machine, after undergoing modifications, can pump up 102 cubic meters of water per day – more than the water requirements of one hectare of corn.

This hydro-powered water pump may not have the sophistication most often looked for in newly developed machinery, but it has the potential to increase agricultural productivity and income, employment, and sustainability.

The researchers suggest that an aggressive promotion and use of the hydro-powered water pump will lead to productivity of idle lands during dry months, and increased productivity and income for our farmers. ■

Source:
"Using Water to Pump Water; The Hydro-Powered Water Pump", Reynaldo C. Castro and Mary Ann U. Baradi, Philippine Rice Research Institute, Batac, Ilocos Norte (This paper was an entry to the 2004 National Research Symposium sponsored by BAR under the applied research category)

DA advised... from page 3

the identification of commodity experts who can determine the competitive advantage of a particular product. Further, the DA was advised to prioritize the balance in production and consumption of agriculture and fisheries commodities which should be attained by 2009.

Secretary Panganiban discussed with STAG its proposed agenda. He said that he is receptive to the recommendations of the STAG and assured the group of the department's conscientious study of each proposition.

The STAG's priority concerns are divided into six clusters, namely: socio-economic policy; trade, agribusiness, and market development; advocacy for biotechnology and agriculture; training, extension, and rural development; organizational and research management; and environment and natural resource management.

The other STAG members present during the meeting were Dr. Leonardo Gonzales, Dr. Rolando Dy, Dr. Mary Ann Sayoc, Dr. Emil Javier, Dr. Rogelio Cuyno, Dr. Benigno Peczon, Mr. Senen Bacani, Mr. Meneleo Carlos Jr., Mr. Augusto De Leon, Ms. Elisea Gozun, Dr. Gabriel Lagamayo and BAR Director Nicomedes Eleazar. Dr. Elizabeth Manugue of the Development Academy of the Philippines facilitated the planning workshop. *(Miko Jazmine J. Mojica)*

We have the best tasting fruits in the world but...

There is no question about the lip smacking quality of Philippine fruits, but having them accepted in the world market is entirely a different story.

"Our fruits and vegetables are among the best in the world, but their quality deteriorates when they get transported elsewhere from the country." This was the resentment of BAR Director Nicomedes Eleazar on the difficulty the country faces in exporting our perishables. This observation was corroborated by DA officials from different attached bureaus and agencies during the consultation-meeting held this month at BAR to discuss the prospects of exporting our fruits and vegetables to the EU market.

The officials were quick to point out the most glaring loopholes that contribute to the problem, which are poor agricultural practices and postharvest handling. These setbacks are taking their toll on both our agriculture and fisheries sectors while our neighboring countries like Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam are making names as credible exporters in US and Europe.

In an effort to bolster export of agricultural products to generate big revenues for the agriculture sector, the Technology Commercialization Unit (TCU) of BAR, UPLB Postharvest Horticulture Training and Research Center (PHTRC), and various agencies from the DA met to secure commitment and delegate responsibilities on tapping the EU market.

Dr. Edralina Serrano of PHTRC expressed her view on this endeavor. *"Bakit* EU (Europe)*? Anong* advantages*? Una, wala silang* strict quarantine measures unlike sa US. *Pangalawa, maraming* market *sa* Europe *na iisa ang* standard especially with regard to production. *At alam naman natin kung gaano kalaki ang market ng* Europe (Why EU? First, they don't have strict quarantine measures unlike in the US. Second, countries in Europe usually require the same standards especially with regard to production. And we know how big Europe's market is).

However, she acknowledged the short shelf-life of our perishables that jeopardizes our export venture. Although she is positive on the impact of exporting our produce to Europe, she said there is still no study about its economic viability.

PHTRC is proposing a program that would increase the profitability of agricultural products through export to the EU market, with the aim to establish Codes of Practice for the production of tropical fruits such as lanzones, mango, rambutan, solo papaya, and pineapple.

The program proposal indicated BAR as the funding agency while the collaborating agencies include Bureau of Postharvest Research and Extension (BPRE), Bureau of Agricultural Fisheries and Product Standards (BAFPS), Food Development Center (FDC), Agribusiness Marketing Assistance Service (AMAS), and producer cooperatives and commodity clusters.

During their meeting, the officials discussed the problem of high transport cost of exportation and the slow commercialization of technologies that can enhance postharvest handling techniques such as blast freezing and controlled atmosphere in the country.

The officials also pushed for establishing quality standards on the production and postproduction handling of our crops to measure up to the phytosanitary standards of other countries. Moreover, they are concerned on the sustainability of supply to satisfy the demand of the market at all times.

In the meeting, they also discussed the opportunity of exporting other crops which are not yet circulating in the export market so the country could take control where it has competitive advantage. Some of the crops which surfaced from the discussion were okra, calamansi, *kaimito* (star apple), alugbati, mangosteen, herbs, and *pili* nuts. Kaimito (brown variety), alugbati, and mangosteen are said to have high antioxidant properties which are favored by importers. On the other hand, the *pili* nuts from Bicol region are starting to attract chocolate companies who want to substitute the more expensive macadamia nuts with pili.

While the proposal appealed to the representatives of collaborating agencies in the meeting, they said that it will still undergo refinement to clarify the responsibilities of each agency. *(Miko Jazmine J. Mojica)*

CPAR boosts...from page 1

understanding and improving local seaweed farming system. The idea is for the community to showcase the best performing seaweed species, *Kappaphycus alvarezii*, using appropriate management practices to expand farming areas, and improve productivity to meet the volume enough for commercialization. The management of the seaweed farms is undertaken by the farmers thus, allowing them to investigate and observe for themselves the comparative advantage of the technology being tested vis-à-vis their practice.

Ultimately, the project aims to make an efficient and competitive seaweed-based industry ensuring its sustainability and contribute to the economic growth of the region by providing sufficient livelihood to the local fishers. The main beneficiaries of the project are members of PSFTA together with the nine barangay associations in the Bicol region.

Specifically, the objectives of the "CPAR Seaweeds Showcase Project" are: 1) develop and verify seaweeds technologies responsive to the needs of the fisherfolk and in turn, accelerate technology transfer and commercialization, 2) produce quality seaweed seed plants, 3) improve and increase seaweed production from 3 to 7 tons/ha, 4) increase farmers' income from 50% to 100%, 5) strengthen seaweed farming commercialization, and 6) develop appropriate preventive management and control measures of seaweeds diseases.

Now on its second year, its sustainability is maintained through a memorandum of understanding signed by BAR, BFAR-5, SSC, and LGU Pilar. BAR is responsible for project coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and financial assistance and management. *(Rita T. dela Cruz)*

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