

# Balitang DAR

Official Newsletter of the Department of Agrarian Reform

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## Thousands of poor farmers emancipated under Duterte administration in 2017



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# Thousands of poor farmers emancipated under Duterte administration in 2017

By Alexander D. Lopez

**QUEZON CITY** – The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) has once again achieved milestones in 2017 when it emancipated thousands of poor farmers from landlessness and poverty through the distribution of farmlots and the provision of much-needed support services.

From January until December of this year, DAR facilitated series of distributions of certificates of land ownership award (CLOAs) and the delivery of support services to agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs), a clear manifestations of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's political will to defeat poverty and raise the standards of living in the countryside.

President Duterte's mandate to DAR since he assumed office in 2016 was clear: Fast-track the processing and release of CLOAs and the delivery of support services.

## 434 farmers in Quezon

After more than two decades of struggle, 434 farmer-beneficiaries from the towns of San Narciso, San Andres,



**Dulcesimo Sotto, 84 and his wife Soledad, 82, residents of Barangay Bahay, San Miguel were among the 921 ARBs who received their CLOAs during the distribution ceremony held last December 8, 2017, in Carigara, Leyte.**

San Francisco, Buenavista and Mulanay in Quezon province finally received their CLOAs, covering 1,270 hectares of agricultural land.

The covered landholdings include 844.23 hectares in Barangay Tala and 213.62 hectares in Barangay Camflora, both in San Andres town; 172.72 hectares in Barangay Busok-busokan and 16.76 hectares in Barangay Vigo Central in San Narciso; and 22.28 hectares in Barangay Tayuman in San Francisco.

Undersecretary Rosalina L. Bistoyong, who then served as OIC Secretary, and Undersecretary Karlo S. Bello of Field Operations Office (FOO) led the CLOA distribution ceremony last October 25, 2017 at the municipal gymnasium of San Narciso town.

"This is a triumph not only for ourselves but for our children and the future generation," President Rodrigo Roa



**After more than two decades of struggle, 434 farmer-beneficiaries in Quezon province finally receive 1,270 hectares of agricultural land from the DAR in a ceremony held in October last year.**

Duterte said in a message read by Bistoyong.

Bistoyong added that support services, to include the distribution of P2.5 million worth of seedlings and farm machineries, will soon be provided to the ARBs in the area.

She also told the ARBs not to mortgage or sell their newly acquired farmlots.

The ceremony was graced by Board Member Vincent Reyes, the fourth generation of the Reyes clan that owned the Hacienda Reyes.

Reyes said: "I understand the struggle and determination of the farmers to own the land they till. I hope you will protect these farmlands the way our family valued it," he said.

## 1,652 farmers in Cordillera Region

In a two-day distribution ceremonies led by DAR at the Gestdan Centrum in Baguio City on November 8 and 9, 2017, 1,652 ARBs in the provinces of Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mt. Province, which are under the Cordillera Administrative Region, received their CLOAs, covering 937 hectares.

Bistoyong led the first batch of CLOA distribution and the turn-over of support projects to ARBs while the second batch of CLOA distribution was led by Undersecretary Bello of FOO.

"We want you to be empowered," Bistoyong emphasized even as she encouraged the ARBs to fully develop their lands as she recognized the vital role of farmers in securing the food needs of the Filipino nation.

DAR Cordillera Region Regional Director Atty. Marjorie P. Ayson said that 387 ARBs from Mt. Province received their CLOAs covering a total of 45.4614 hectares; 379 ARBs from Kalinga, 191.9154 hectares; 376 ARBs from Ifugao, 225.4345 hectares; 351 ARBs from Benguet, 299.0722 hectares; 120 ARBs from Apayao, 134.7007 hectares; and 39 ARBs from Abra, 40.7926 hectares.

Ayson added that two projects, the Community-Managed Potable Water Sanitation and Hygiene (CPWASH) worth P240,000 and the Village-Level Processing Center Enhancement Project (VLPCEP) worth P900,000, were turned-over to ARB organizations and cooperatives.

The CPWASH covers three agrarian reform communities (ARCs), consisting of 38 households in Benguet, while two ARCs Atok, Sablan and Tuba in Benguet would benefit from the VLPCEP.

Among the recipients of VLPCEP projects are the Arabica Coffee Growers Marketing and the Agrarian Reform Community Multi-Purpose Cooperatives in the area.

Governor Cresencio Pacalso expressed gratitude to DAR, saying that the lands distributed and projects turned over are of great help to his farming constituents.

Baguio City Mayor Mauricio Domogan, who also served as the Regional Development Council Chair of Cordillera, thanked the Duterte administration for prioritizing the pressing problems of the farmers in the country, particularly on poverty and landlessness.

## 123 farmers in Camarines Norte

In Camarines Norte, 123 farmers were from landlessness after receiving their CLOAs, covering 222.94 hectares in a ceremony held on November 21, 2017.

DAR Undersecretary Bello of FOO led the distribution of CLOAs, during which he emphasized that farmers deserve to own the land they till.

"President Rodrigo Duterte mandated the DAR to give the farmers what is due them without any discrimination, for as long as they are qualified and meet the requirements as beneficiaries," Bello said.

Labo town farmer-beneficiary Norma Ramirez vowed: "We will take care of our farmlands so that we will have something to pass on to our children and our

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# DAR cites women's role in community dev't

By Richard B. Gallardo

SORSOGON City, Sorsogon – The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) recently spearheaded the “2017 Rural Women Caravan” that recognized the role of women in community development in the province of Sorsogon.

The DAR was joined by various government agencies and local government officials recently to pay homage to the marvelous jobs the women of Sorsogon rendered, both as housewives and members of the society.

The caravan also cited senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PWDs), some of whom remain productive despite their infirmities as a result of old age and physical defects.

Lawyer Althea Oliveros of the DAR Public Assistance and Media Relations Service (PAMRS) said women should be treated fairly since they play key roles in nation-building as much as men do.

“Women should be given the chance to exercise their rights, like their rights to pursue their careers and to be consulted on matters involving family affairs,” Oliveros said, adding that “under the law, men and women are equal.”

Sorsogon City Mayor Sally Lee said women should take pride in what they can do because “we have that virtue of patience that men do not.”

“If you give a man a work, he will do it. But if you give a woman a work, she will do it better because a woman de-



Lawyer Oliveros stresses the importance for women to know their rights.

livers,” Lee said. She explained that a woman bears a child in her womb for nine months, for which she develops that virtue of patience, “the patience to wait and the patience to do something about it.”

All that is needed, Lee said, is for women to have access to information. “Give her all the information she needed and she will surely deliver.”

Mayor Carolyn Reyes of Pilar, Sorsogon echoed: “An informed woman is an empowered woman.”

Reyes urged all participants in the caravan to pass on to others whatever they learned here so that others may be empowered, too.

“Women can achieve more if they are empowered,” Mayor Sharon Escoto of Gubat, Sorsogon said. “Let’s grab all the opportunity presented to us. Let us be the best that we can be.”

Army Major Brelyn Bitoy said women should be active in community development for they play a major role in keeping the family together.

Bitoy said that housekeeping is a noble profession every woman should be proud of. “This includes protecting our children from the many threats to their well-being.

She cited the human traffickers and the terrorists who are lurking at every corner waiting for the opportune time to snatch away their innocence and lure them into doing something against the law.

“We, women, should not belittle ourselves. I am a mother, too. You may think that we are just at home. But the fact that we are attending to the needs of our loved ones to keep each one of us together is already something that we should be proud of.”

## IPs to embark on entrepreneurship

By Joie Ceballos  
Caraga Info. Officer



BUTUAN City, Agusan del Norte—The DAR recently conducted an entrepreneurship forum for the indigenous peoples (IPs) to enhance their technical know-how and increase their income from their enterprise operations.

Some 200 IPs from various tribes attended the forum hosted by the Project Convergence on Value Chain Enhancement for Rural Growth and Empowerment (ConVERGE), a flagship project of the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

DAR Regional Director Felix Aguhob, the project’s Regional Manager, explained that ConVERGE aims to promote sustainable livelihood activities of farmers and IPs based on key commodities of Mindanao regions, such as rice, rubber, coffee and cassava among others.

“The forum expects to integrate the IPs in ConVERGE’s entrepreneurial activities. We are targeting not only the IPs but also the women and the youth to benefit from the project,” said Aguhob.

Aguhob said he expects 30 percent increase in income in at least 15 percent of the indigenous peoples in areas.

The IP communities are among the priorities for the implementation of development programs and services under the administration of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte.

In his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) last year, President Duterte recognized the issuances of Ancestral Certificates Domain Titles (ACDTs) to various IP groups in the country. The ACDTs serve as legal tool for the IPs to improve their financial, economic and social conditions.

During the forum, five IP entrepreneurs shared their business practices. They are Daniel Viscaya of Trento, Agusan Sur; Heidy Ilaga of Santiago, Agusan Norte; Rosilito Rosell of Libona, Bukidnon, and Rosalinda Camarador and Rolando Penuela of Zamboanga del Sur.

Rosell, Production Manager of the Kapehan Multi-Purpose Cooperative, said: “We are starting and we are seeing where we are going. From our initial capital, we have seen great future ahead of us,” he added.

IFAD Management Consultant for Project ConVERGE Gomer Tumbali shared the existing profile of IP entrepreneurs in regions 9, 10 and Caraga, how the sector can be of help, and how they will benefit from the project.

## DAR forms team for ‘Bangon Marawi’

By Joy Chua  
Northern Mindanao Info. Officer

CAGAYAN de Oro City, Misamis Oriental – The DAR recently initiated the creation of a Convergence Project Management Team (CPMT) for Task Force Bangon Marawi to address the immediate concern of reconstruction, rebuilding and improving the lives of survivors and victims of the Marawi siege.

DAR-10 Regional Director Faisar Mambuay said the CPMT is comprised of government line agencies, non-government organizations, the United Nation-World Food Project (UN-WFP) and United Nation-Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO).

Mambuay added that the DAR and the Department Agriculture (DA) would jointly spearhead the CPMT.

“The CPMT will assist President Rodrigo Duterte’s Task Force Bangon Marawi in rebuilding the lives of the Marawi people. We in the DAR, will do our best to help our farmer-beneficiaries regain their lives through our support services,” he pointed out.

Mambuay also said that the CPMT have already identified five barangays which are under the Agrarian Reform Community



DAR Undersecretary for Foreign Assisted Special Projects Sylvia Mallari, Northern Mindanao Director Faisar Mambuay and staff gesture thumb-up signs during site visit to the five barangays.

(ARC) of Malimono-Dulay, and they would be provided with immediate help and assistance. These barangays include Cabasaran, Dulay Proper, Dulay West, Guimba and Malimono.

The five barangays were recently visited for assessment by the members of CPMT coming from the DAR, which include CPMT Chair Mambuay, DAR Undersecretary for Foreign-Assisted Projects Sylvia Mallari, DAR Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officers Ali Scissor Andig and Mu’ammur Mesug Pangandaman Unda.

“They are pilot areas. Other villages in Marawi will be given help as we start the networking and linkaging for support services and relief assistance,” Mambuay said.

*Secretary's Note***Carrot and Stick**

CHRISTMAS signifies unity, forgiveness and celebration.

But then, I must admit that I have two families. The first one is God-given: my wife, Marifel, and two sons, Atty. Lorenzo and Atty. Miguel. The second is government-given: the officials and staff of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

You, in the DAR, are the new members of my official family, and I stand as the father. As a father, it is my duty to look after the welfare of every member of my new family. So, before you, I promise to promote and fight for the interests of each of you.

My marching order, therefore, to our elder brothers and sisters in the DAR, our undersecretaries and assistant secretaries: To immediately place our employees to their respective designated positions so that we can enhance their interests and welfare, and for them to serve our department well in a better position and for us to eliminate altogether the demoralization that is creeping in our department.

While I am willing to give what is due to you, I will not hesitate to bring out the stick and give you a lashing or a beating if you commit mistake. As a father, it is my duty and obligation to punish the erring children, who are not performing their roles in the family. In the same manner, I am more than willing to immediately relinquish this position should the president be not contented with what I am supposed to do. What is important for me is to meet the standard, the duties and functions, the president wanted me to do. I hope that is very clear.

That's why, when I talked to the President and sought his advice as to what we shall do in the department, he expressly stated that he wanted us to perform according to what the law has mandated us to do. For that matter, I told him: "Yes, Mr. President, we will do it because that is your expressed mandate and order to us." So, let this be a reminder to each and every one of us that we must perform our duties and obligations in accordance with what is expected of us.

So, my Christmas message is best illustrated in the event that took place more than 2,000 years ago: The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was only one purpose: Him being given as a sacrifice, a willing sacrifice. He was hanged on the cross and died for us to be saved from our sins. I think that is the very essence, of Christmas, the giving of one's life.

That is the idea, the objective of our department: To give ourselves for our people. Instead of spending our time with our families, we will spend it more for our people. That is the supreme sacrifice: Serving our country and our Filipino nation.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

*(Speech delivered during DAR Christmas Party at the DAR Gymnasium on December 20, 2017)*

**Dignified**

I've been in private and government services for years with tasks and responsibilities that directly connect with the common people. As a media personality, I talked to countless individuals and came to know of the realities that surround their everyday lives. As the former information officer of then-mayor and now President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, I got associated with various sectors. I moved around places to help ventilate real issues that need speedy actions by the local government of Davao City. I dearly cherish those experiences that I treasure and consider priceless.

Lately, I begin to go through an out of the ordinary impressions, new realizations that wrapped my thoughts and emotions since I joined the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). Working at the Public Assistance and Media Relations Service (PAMRS) brought me closer to farmers that face various issues in different parts of the country. Their stories and lamentations could be summed up in one common problem – the lack of dignity.

Undignified, as I see in their faces and heard directly from conversations, because of the absence of the right to own the land that they till for years. Sweat and even blood, a farmer leader told me, are the real proof that they can show on how – for the last 10, 20 and 25 years of laborious cultivations, they were able to develop, produce and contribute to the food requirements of the country.

We call them "the backbones of our society." Yet, for a long period of time, they were denied to own the land they've nurtured. The very essence of their existence as our "backbones" rely on the status



of their ownership to the farmlands they cultivate in their lifetime. Land ownership is the foundation of their being farmers and food producers.

Then I see hopes in the past months of this year. Since he assumed office, President Duterte instructed the DAR to fast-track the processes on the release of certificates of land ownership award (CLOAs).

Since January, I witnessed how the farmers expressed happiness as they felt in their hands the CLOAs they longed for years. In Quezon province last October, I had a glimpse of an agrarian reform beneficiary, who, after receiving his CLOA, simply went back to his seat and stared at the CLOA for about three to five minutes. Then, he slowly put it carefully in a plastic envelope. The farmer then embraced the plastic envelope as he listened back to the speeches. It was a scene that I also witnessed in CLOA distributions in Leyte, Baguio, Davao del Sur, Iloilo, and Pampanga.

Dignified, I told myself. The long wait is over. The farmers are assured of winning the land they till under President Duterte's term.

Support services are also in the pipeline to assist the ARBs as they go back to their farmlands. I am sure that come 2018 and the years ahead, more CLOAs will be handed to the farmers. The work to accord dignity and serve justice to our farmers will continue despite the odds, snags, and hindrances.

Prioritizing the distribution of individual land titles to the farmers is among the marching orders of President Duterte to the DAR.

And do it we must.

**Balitag DAR**

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# Convergence is it!

By Katrin Anne Arcala

IT WAS nine in the morning and I met 77 year-old farmer Socorro Calibio, mother of five, one of the 16,000 farmers in the small town of Mahayag in Zamboanga del Sur. She said during the interview, that her plate is always full, keeping up with the daily activities in her one-hectare rice farm.

“We’ve been planting rice ever since I can remember. But now, me and my husband are too old for that,” Socorro says. “Two of our kids, Genaro and Maristel, are doing the physical work with the help of other neighbors and farmer-friends.”

She is currently handling most of the financial management of their only source of income. While only a high school graduate, she learned the ins and outs of the industry through time. “It has helped us send all our kids to school, with two of them finishing degrees in agriculture.”

Other difficulties they encounter is the limited pre- and post-harvest facilities in the town, the lack of paved roads and the absence of market, other than the traders they have known for the longest of time. No partnerships, even. Hence, the monopoly of the price by the traders.

## Project ConVERGE

According to the data gathered by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), farmers in Regions 9, 10 and 11 are each earning a measly Php17,582 annually, barely enough to fill stomachs.

The three regions were identified as the poorest in the country even as they are gifted with abundant resources. Because of this, project Convergence on Value Chain Enhancement for Rural Growth and Empowerment (ConVERGE) came into being precisely to help them harness their resources for their own right.

By design, Project ConVERGE is created to address the needs of the select beneficiaries in the provinces of the covered areas so as to develop the selected crop of each and increase income of the farmers.

It follows a scheme called Value Chain Analysis and Planning. The Value Chain approach does two things: studying an area and its crop to identify their problems and gaps, and second, implementing a system to resolve these problems.

“When DAR designed Project ConVERGE, what it had at its core was a complete intervention for the farmers – one that allows their lives to be uplifted by making sure that crops are improved from its current state of quality and quantity of production,” National Project Director



*Couple Rogelio and Socorro Calibio with their children and grandchildren in Sta. Cruz, Mahayag, Zamboanga del Sur.*

Together with the departments of agriculture (DA), environment (DENR), trade & industry (DTI) and Science & Technology (DOST), the DAR will work with these agencies in giving appropriate trainings and technical support to farmers so that new information on technology and practices can be transferred.

Meanwhile, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) are assisting in the rural construction and/or rehabilitation of infrastructure subprojects for all eleven ARC Clusters.

The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) also backs the development of activities sensitive to the members of IP Communities.

The convergence of the above-mentioned agencies is the main strategy of IFAD and DAR. By tapping these government arms, the project has a well-rounded operation so that farmers are supported in all fronts.

Moreover, the 300,500 farmer beneficiaries targeted to benefit from the effort may expect diversification of sources of income through development of alternative livelihood/agri-enterprise activities in partnership with the private sector. This includes a wider network for their market as certain studies have already factored in the forging of collaborations with national and international companies.

## The roadmap

When she recalled about ConVERGE, Socorro couldn't help but feel happy and a bit apprehensive.

There is a lot more work to do. But I am happy that there are aids like these. Hopefully, farmers' lives will improve," she said.

The designs for the rural infrastructures have already been finalized and by next year, these will be rolled out one by one. Marketing contracts will be firmed up by the second half of the implementation to allow more time for the beneficiaries to improve their production.

“In six years' time, we expect to see optimized farmer's products and improved farmer's lives,” Mambuay said.

It is still a long road, a bumpy one at that. But Socorro and the other farmers in Mahayag are well aware of this.

But what they also know is that in this journey, the farmers will not be left to fend for themselves. Project ConVERGE is here to lend a hand. ●



Faisar Mambuay said.

Socorro said she and other farmers are grateful for Project ConVERGE especially when it covered her village in Zamboanga del Sur. With the intervention, the Salug Valley ARC Cluster is set to receive additional processing services, including a combined harvester and a milling facility. Better farm seedlings and inputs will also be provided.

The same is true for other target provinces in Caraga, Central Mindanao and the rest of the Zamboanga Peninsula. The enterprise programs will redound to the benefit of ARBs and non-ARBs through the provision of farm inputs and equipment, such as high-grade seedlings and new processing facilities, and infrastructure, like roads, bridges, and irrigation systems.



## SMFFMPC Microfinance sandigan ng 'maliliit' sa Hilagang Palawan

**Fedeleo L. De Guzman**  
*Palawan Information Officer*

MAKAILANG beses ko na ring narinig ang "microfinance" pero naintindihan ko lamang kung ano at para saan ito matapos kong mabisita ang San Miguel Farmers and Fishers Multipurpose Cooperative (SMFFMPC) sa Roxas, Northern Palawan.

Maituturing na matagumpay ang kooperatibang ito dahil sa mahusay nilang napaglilingkuran ang kanilang mga kasapi gamit ang Microfinance Innovations for Cooperatives o mas kilala sa tawag na MiCoop.



**Si Mercy habang nagbabayad ng kanyang daily amortization sa development officer ng SMFFMPC na gumaganap din bilang collector ng kooperatiba.**

Ang MiCoop ay magkasamang pinasimulan ng Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) at National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO) upang mabigyan ng pagkakataon ang mga mahihirap na mamamayan na makapangutang sa mababang interes. Layunin nito na makamit nila ang maayos na pamumuhay kaalinsabay ang maging kabalikat ng pmahalaan sa pagsupo ng kahirapan sa bansa.

Nagulat ako sa aking nakita: Salitan

ang dating at pag-alis ng mga tao, ang ilan ay upang mag-apply ng loan habang ang iba naman ay mag-impok o dili kaya ay magbayad ng utang.

Ayon kay MiCoop Branch Manager SMFFMPC Richard Bungay, ang kooperatiba at ang pinangangasiwaan nitong microfinancing ay nagbibigay-serbisyo sa 2,646 miyembro, karamihan ay mga ito ay magsasaka, mangingisda at maliliit na mamumuhunan sa kanilang bayan at maging sa mga karatig munisipyo ng Dumaran, Taytay, San Vicente, at El Nido.

"Ang tagumpay ng isang kooperatiba ay hindi lamang nasusukat sa maayos at mahusay na pagpapatakbo ng sistema o sa dami ng mga miyembrong napaglilingkuran nito kundi sa pakinabang at ginawang naidudulot sa mga kasapi nito," ani Bungay.

Isa na rito ang 40 taong gulang na negosyante na si Mercedita Mandapat, dating maliit na mamumuhunan sa pamilihing bayan ng Roxas at ulirang maybahay ng isang kawani ng local electric service cooperative. Sila ay may tatlong anak na may edad 18, 15 at 13.

"Naging miyembro ako noong 2011 bunsod ng paghahanap ng pandagdag-puhunan sa aking maliit na negosyo ng mga prutas at mga gulay. Ngayon, tatlo na ang aking pwesto sa palengke. Bukod sa panindang prutas at gulay, mayroon na rin akong carinderia supplies, styro products, roll and sando," ani Mandapat na mas kilalang Mercy.

Nagsimula siya sa hiniram na P10,000.00 sa kooperatiba. Pero kwidaw kayo kasi base sa record niya aabot sa P800,000.00 ang kanyang nautang bilang single borrower loan account holder, gamit bilang collateral ang titulo ng kanilang bahay at lupa na may 120 meters parisukat.

Aniya, ang tatlong (3) porsiyentong tubo kada buwan ay di hamak na mas mababa sa 10-porsiyentong tubong hirit ng dating inuutangan niya.

"Bukod sa mabilis na serbisyo, gumaan ang lahat dahil sa mababang tubong ipinapataw ng kooperatiba. Noon hirap talaga kami lalo na at sabay-sabay

na nag-aaral ang aming mga anak" sambit niya.

Sa ilalim ng microfinance, ayon kay Manager Bungay, ang utang ay binabayaran sa loob ng anim na buwan. Kay Mercy, inaabot lamang karaniwan ang kanyang pagbabayad sa loob lamang ng apat na buwan.

Isa pang magandang halimbawa ang pamilya naman ni Dyosa Legaspi sa tagumpay ng SMFFMPC. Isang karaniwan pero may malaking pamilya na namumuhay sa bukirin sa Bgy. Tagumpay na may 12 kilometro ang layo sa kabayanan ng Roxas.

Ayon sa 53 year-old na si Dyosa, simulanang maging kasapi siya ng SMFFMPC noong ika-5 ng Agosto 2010, mistulang nakasumpung sila ng masasandigan sa panahon ng kagipitan.

Aniya, maaasahan talaga ang kooperatiba para makahiram ng puhunan sa pagsasaka.

"Napakalaking tulong ng 50,000.00 puhunang pansaka para sa 3-4 ektaryang sakahan namin. Kahit naranasan naming pumalya ng dalawang beses sa pagbayad sa loob ng 12 buwang palugit ay napakaginhawa pa rin dahil sa kababaan ng tubo. Kaya kami pumalya sa pagbayad ay dahil sa pagkalugi dulot ng natural na kalamidad at nauunawaan ito ng kooperatiba," ani Dyosa.

Upang hindi mahirapan magbayad ang mga kasaping nanghiram, ang mga development officers ng kooperatiba ang personal na bumibisita sa mga malalayong tahanan ng mga kasapi upang maningil ng kanilang buwanang amortisasyon.

Siya nga pala, anim na sa mga anak nina Dyosa ang mga propesyonal na ngayon. Isang registered nurse, isang civil engineer, at apat na marine engineer. Ang tatlong iba pa nilang mga anak ay tuloy pa rin sa pag-aaral.

Sa ilalim ng mahigpit na patakaran ng kooperatiba, ang kanilang mga kasapi ay patuloy na nagdaragdag ng kanilang saping-puhunan, emergency at regular savings na binibigyang halaga sa kanilang financial literacy na itinuturo sa mga miyembro at isinasabuhay ayon sa diwa ng microfinance.

Sa kasalukuyan, mayroon ng 17 milyong pisong loan portfolio o halagang naipahiram ang SMFFMPC sa mga kasapi nito.



Pero ang tagumpay ng kooperatiba ay hindi nangyari sa loob lamang ng isang pitik ng daliri.

Noong ika-29 ng Nobyembre 2006, nang isagawa ang unang pagpupulong na pinangasiwaan ng DAR upang buuin ang SMFFMPC at maging kabalikat sa sa Hacienda De Caramay Agrarian Reform Community (ARC) at sa paghahatid ng support services sa mga farmer-beneficiaries at iba pang mamamayan.

Naitatag ang kooperatiba sa pamamagitan ng 30 miyembro nito noong ika-23 ng Hunyo 2007, nang sila ay opisyal ng kilala ng Cooperative Development Authority (CDA). Ang kanilang paid-up capital noon ay P96,000.00 lamang.

Naranasan ng SMFFMPC kung paano ang madapa matapos pumalpak ang pinasok nilang Balatan Culture, Crab Fattening at Fish Cage Projects na galing sa pinagsama-samang tulong ng Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPA), Bureau of Aquatic Resources ng Department of Agriculture (DA-BFAR) at DAR.

Ayon kina dating Punong Barangay Armando Dullana, kasalukuyang Vice-Chairman Orlando Cadawasan at ilan sa mga pioneer member ng SMFFMPC, unti-unting nalusaw ang panimulang puhunan kasama ang halagang ginugol ng gobyerno sanhi ng kakulangan sa kaalaman sa pagpapatakbo ng kooperatiba.

Taong 2010 nang magbago ang hihip ng kapalaran ng kooperatiba nang maipasok sila ng DAR sa ilalim ng MiCoop Program. Nang panahong iyon, binuksan ng NATCCO ang kanilang ikadalawampung MiCoop branch sa bansa kung saan ang SMFFMPC ang kanilang nagsosolong partner-organization sa ARC hindi lamang sa bayan ng Roxas kundi maging sa buong lalawigan ng Palawan.

Hindi naman binigo ng SMFFMPC

ang tiwalang ibinigay sa kanila at muli silang bumangon. Sa pamamagitan ng sistematikong pagpapatakbo ng kooperatiba, binuksan ang mala-bangkong opisina nito at ang mga serbisyong kapareho sa mga iniaalok ng credit at banking institutions tulad ng savings, microfinancing, at agricultural loan services hindi lamang sa mga miyembro nitong magsasaka at mangingisda kundi maging sa iba pang itinuring na qualified borrowers mula sa limang mga katabing bayan ng Roxas.

Sa ngayon, nadagdagan na rin ang iniaalok nitong mga serbisyo makaraang pasukin ang insurance, money transfer, at 24-hour ATM.

Matapos maging ganap na MiCoop branch ang kooperatiba, biglang lumobo ang kasapian nito mula sa panimulang 30 kasapi hanggang sa 130 miyembro sa loob lamang ng taong 2010. Sa kasalukuyan, patuloy pa ring dumarami ang nais maging kasapi nito.

Ang CBU ng SMFFMPC ay umaabot na sa P10,135,826.91 habang ang kanilang total savings mobilized ay aabot na sa P4,535,702.98. Taglay rin ng kooperatiba ang total assets na aabot P20,132,310.60. Ang kanilang fixed assets ay kinabibilangan ng 474 square-meter property sa Bgy. San Miguel kung saan nakatirik ang kanilang Cooperative Center. Kasama rin sa naipundar ng kooperatiba ang mga computers at iba pang office equipment.

Masasalamain sa tagumpay na ito ng SMFFMPC na nagtagumpay din ang pamahalaan sa pakikipagtulungan ng NATCCO na palakasin at patatagin ang mga kooperatiba, mabigyan ng masasandigan at unti-unting naiaahon mula sa kahirapan ang mga salat na mga mamamayan sa kanayunan gamit ang ginhawang dulot ng tunay na may pakinabang na microfinance. ●

## Thousands of poor... from page 2

grand children.”

DAR Bicol Regional Director Engr. Rodolfo S. Pangilinan said that 42 ARBs from Labo town received their CLOAs covering a total of 96.45 hectares; 18 ARBs from Jose Panganiban, 28.9 hectares; 12 ARBs from San Lorenzo Ruiz, 29.32 hectares; 12 ARBs from Capalonga, 15.54 hectares; nine (9) ARBs from Basud, 19.18 hectares; nine ARBs from Daet, 5.33 hectares; six ARBs from Mercedes, 10.32 hectares; five ARBs from Sta. Elena, 3.78 hectares; four ARBs from San Vicente, 7.11 hectares; three ARBs from Paracale, 5.15 hectares; and three ARBs from Vinzons, 1.86 hectares.

### 149 farmers in Pampanga

Then DAR OIC Secretary Bistoyong and former President and now Pampanga Second District Representative Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo distributed land titles, covering 163.1058 hectares, to 149 ARBs last November 29, 2017 in Lubao, Pampanga.

They also launched of the Portable Agrarian Reform Collection System (PARCS) of the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), and the release of the P800,000.00 financial assistance, under the Agrarian Production and Credit Program (APCP), to the Women's Unity Multi-Purpose Cooperative (WUMPC) was also facilitated during the ceremony.

### 19 farmers in Cebu

After years of dreaming to own the farms they till, 19 farmers from the towns of Ronda, Alcantara, Badian, and Barili, Cebu realized their aspirations after receiving 21 CLOAs, covering 21.2299 hectares.

OIC-Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officer Elvira B. Bation, who led the distribution of CLOAs, told the beneficiaries: “Make your lands productive and become part of the continuing effort of the government on food security,” Bation said.

### 77 farmers in Davao del Sur

Last December 1, 2017, Undersecretary Bello of FOO, Director Villareal of PAMRS,

Director Joseph H. Orilla of DAR-11 and Elmerito N. Gerigdig, PARPO II of Davao del Sur, handed to 77 farmers their CLOAs that covered around 48 hectares of lands. The farmlands were part of the Dominador Magabilen Estate in the area.

“We are so blessed. Thank you DAR and President Duterte,” said Cecilia R. Cabaniero, 58, a widow with three children.

Undersecretary Bello reiterated the President's thrust of issuing individual titles to the ARBs even as he lauded the DAR in Davao region for fast-tracking the release of CLOAs.

For his part, DAR-PAMRS Director Leomides R. Villareal encouraged the 77 farmers “to develop the lands they could call their own.”

### 921 farmers in Leyte

In the super typhoon Yolanda-battered Tacloban City, 921 ARBs finally received their CLOAs, covering 941 hectares, in a turn-over ceremony held last December 8, 2017, in Carigara, Leyte.

DAR Undersecretary Bello of FOO led the distribution of farmlots, along with Director Villareal of PAMRS, DAR Region 8 OIC Regional Director Maria Fe Malinao and Leyte OIC Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officer II Renato G. Badilla.

### 77 farmers in Iloilo

A total of 77 farmers from six towns and one city in the province of Iloilo expressed gratitude to the Duterte administration for the release of their certificates of their CLOAs.

The ceremony was led Assistant Regional Director Florentino D. Siladan of DAR Region VI and OIC PARPO II Sally A. Ortega of DAR Iloilo province, with PAMRS Director Villareal witnessing the proceedings.

Marmolejo, 75 from Oton, Iloilo and one of the ARBs who received his CLOA last Wednesday, thanked President Duterte for making their dreams, the awarding of farmlots, possible.



Last December 1, 2017, a total of 77 farmers from Barangay Panaglib in Kiblawan, Davao del Sur expressed thanks to the administration of President Duterte and to DAR for the release of their CLOAs.



Ira Sheena Howard-Magayanes

“IT ALL started with a joke. A joke I never thought anybody would take seriously,” Binanuaanan Farmers Community Development Association (BFCDA) Chairman Edison Petalio recalls.

Composed of 223 members, the BFCDA is an agrarian reform beneficiary organization (ARBO) that is being assisted by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). Based in Barangay Binanuaanan, Pili, Camarines Sur, it was organized and registered under the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on October 19, 2009.

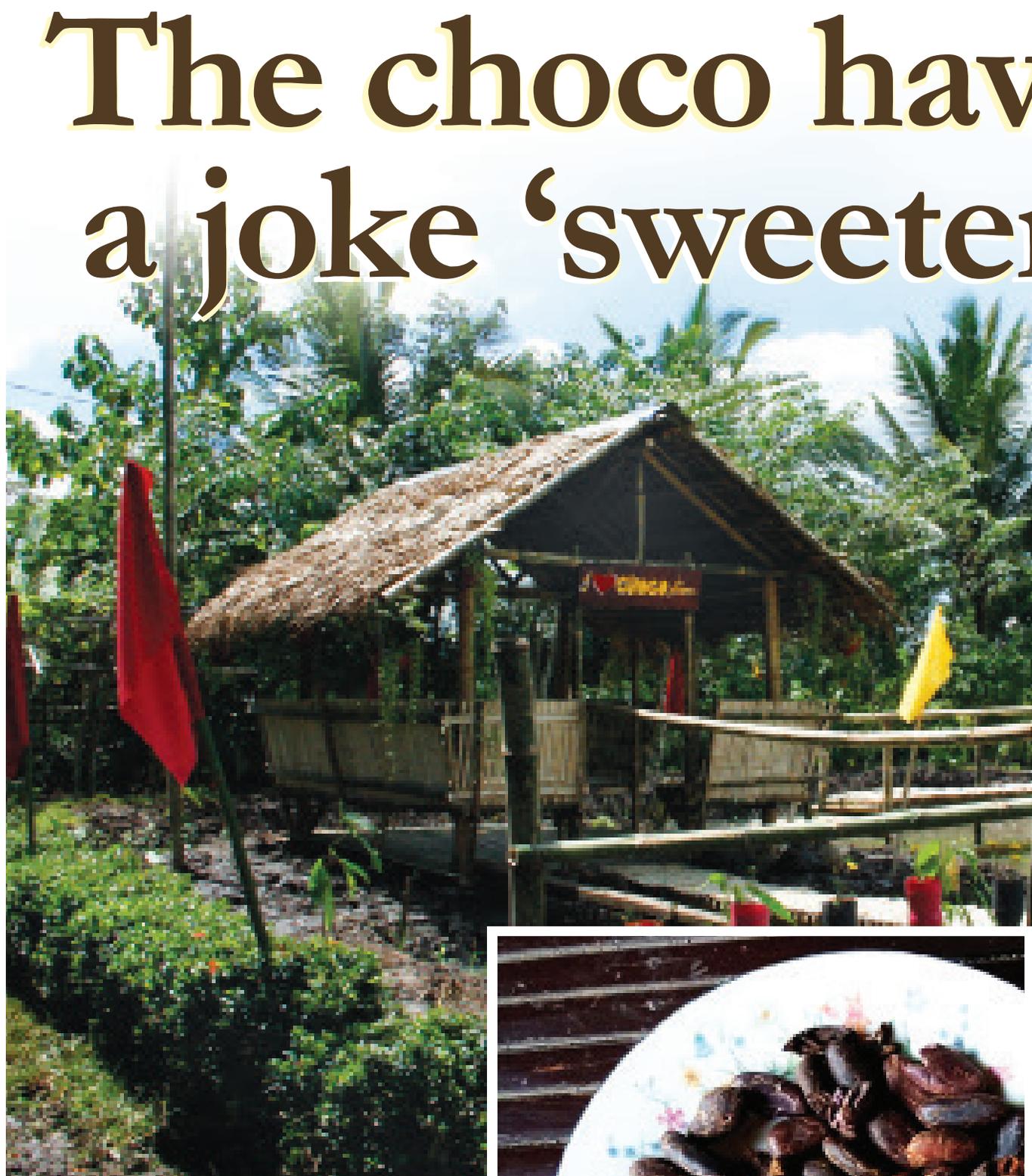
Originally, BFCDA wanted to venture in meat processing, from longganisa to meat loaf. The members were also very interested in making street foods that they wanted to supply the local business establishments in Pili and in nearby municipalities and cities.

However, it was discovered that there were inadequate raw materials in the area, in addition to the BFCDA’s difficulty in raising start-up capital for their dream business. This resulted to the disapproval of the business proposals the group crafted with the help of the DAR.

Feeling dismayed, Petalio cracked a joke out of the blue: “Better to make tablea then!”

It was a joke Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officer II Maria Gracia R. Sales took seriously and it prompted her to validate if there were sufficient farms planted with cacao.

Three months after Petalio made the joke, BFCDA officers and members assisted by DAR staff, gathered information on cacao farms in the area. They found out that there were about 700 cacao planters in Barangay Binanuaanan alone. Upon the invitation of the DAR and the Dept. of Trade and Industry (DTI) Convergence on Tablea Making, 40 BFCDA members quickly volunteered. They were taught on how to make



sweetened and unsweetened chocolate balls – the first step of the cooperative’s arduous journey to success.

The DAR, Department of Agriculture (DA), and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) saw the potential of the group’s cocoa business so that they offered machines and equipment for cacao processing.

Fast forward, the BFCDA’s tablea de cacao products made the association a household by-word because of its product’s superb taste. They were constantly displayed in many trade fairs such as the Bishop Gainza, Orgulyo Kan Bikolano (OKB), Pusuan Mo Ako, Bes, which were sponsored by various private and government agencies. Last November 7, 2016, BFCDA’s Tablea de Cacao and Choco Farm was even featured in ABS-CBN’s



# Women that 'ned up'



entrepreneurial informative show, “Swak na Swak,”

But, the tablea de cacao business, like any other business, was not always rosy. It also had its share of bitter challenges.

In October 2014, Typhoon Glenda struck the Bicol Region and destroyed most of the farmlands, leaving the BFCDA with nothing but a ruined cacao farms. With their source of livelihood in shambles, they hanged on, regrouped themselves and started picking up the pieces. Their optimism, persistence, and commitment led them to try another livelihood project: ginger tea (salabat) making. They were able to produce variants such as instant salabat turmeric, instant salabat lemongrass, instant salabat pandan, instant salabat extra strong special and instant salabat 10-in-1.

The newfound business enterprise enabled them to generate servings sufficient not only to revive their cacao-tablea business and sustain their ginger tea (salabat) business, but also to open the door for other business opportunities such as, mushroom production, candy making, producing and marketing spices and herbs, and organic liquid fertilizers.

The group's determination was again brought to a test when in the latter part of 2016, Typhoon Nina hit the region and left its choco farm badly damaged. Again, the group rose up and worked on what was left to produce tablea de cacao that they sold on Valentines' Day. With the money they generated, they explored other variants of tablea such as tablea jam, tablea candies, tablea

cookies, and the like, which the consuming public patronizes. They are even considering using cacao peels to produce scrubs.

“I really admire the people who make up the BFCDA for their commitment, determination and persistence. They do not give up easily. They also keep an open mind when it comes to business ventures. They are creative and risk takers. They embrace opportunities and are never afraid to fail or face challenges. They even know how to transform bad experiences into wonderful prospects for the welfare of the organization. Best of all, the members' strength is rooted in their faith among themselves,” Maria Evangeline Salak, the Agrarian Reform Program Officer I formerly assigned in the area, stated when asked about the members who comprise BFCDA.

Recently, BFCDA was identified as one of the Partnership Against Hunger and Poverty (PAHP) sites in Camarines Sur. The program seeks to adopt a holistic approach in battling hunger and poverty issues in the country by educating and training farmers on organic vegetable farming and marketing their products to DSWD Day Care Centers and other markets. It is also continuously receiving social infrastructure and local capability building (SILCAB) trainings from DAR-Camarines Sur II, such as Records Management Training/Workshop, Coaching & Mentoring on Amendments of By-Laws & Articles of Incorporation, Review & Reformulation of VMGO, and Training on Good Governance.

*(Tablea is a Spanish word-meaning tablet, and tsokolate is a Filipino word-meaning chocolate. It is a thick hot chocolate specially made from cacao balls. The tablea can also be a thick disk or flat, and even in square form, but the balls are the most popular form.)*

**Ilocos Region**

# DAR vows to revitalize garlic, onion industry in Ilocos Region

SAN JUAN, La Union – The DAR sought to revitalize garlic and onion industry in agrarian reform areas in Ilocos Region.

Regional Director Virgilio L. Acuna said a dialogue with onion and garlic farmers was recently conducted to arrest the decline in the production of onions and garlic in the area.

The decrease in onion and garlic production in Ilocos Region resulted to the importation of onion and garlic from other countries, Acuna said.

Acuna said latest numbers showed that 94% of the supply of garlic and 60% of onion in the Philippine market are already imported from foreign markets.

He cited among others plant diseases and the lack of quality seedlings as the reason for the decline in the production of the said commodities.

The entry of imported and smuggled garlic and onions, he said, further exacerbated the problem adding “it led to the drop in the prices of locally produced onions and garlic that eventually incurred losses to the local farmers”.

Acuna also took note of the lack of new production technology to local garlic and onions producers also contributed to the problem.

“The dialogue seeks to determine the possible types of assistance that can be provided to the farmers by the government and private sectors such as technical assistance, inputs, production and post-harvest facilities, support infrastructures, credit, farm types of machinery and assured market support among others,” Acuna



**Regional Director Virgilio L. Acuna stresses a point during a dialogue on revitalizing garlic and onion industries in agrarian reform areas in Ilocandia.**

pointed out.

DAR’s Head Executive Assistant Shiela Enciso emphasized DAR’s support to the onion and garlic industry in the country.

La Union provincial agrarian reform program officer Maria Ana B. Francisco said the prolonged

rainy seasons during the recent years and the severe attack by a fungus also affected the farmers’ harvests.

The activity was participated by farmers from the provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union and Pangasinan.

**CARAGA Region**

## DAR, IFAD extend P21-M financial package to 847 abaca farmers in Agusan Norte

BUTUAN CITY - The DAR and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) are extending P21-million financial package to 847 agrarian reform beneficiaries in the province (ARBs) under the from a partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) project called Convergence on Value Chain Enhancement for Rural Growth and Empowerment (Converge) Project.

IFAD Project Managing Consultant Gomer G. Tumbali, said the project seeks to increase agricultural productivity of abaca farmers and promote their welfare and development.

“The project is expected to help reduce poverty incidence by engaging the farmer-groups in value chain-based agricultural processes for abaca production in the area,” Tumbali said.

The recipients of the funds are farmers belonging to 21 peoples’ organizations (POs) and one cooperative identified as San Isidro Upland Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative.

DAR Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officer Andre B. Atega said the funds would be utilized to enhance the production of farmers in 700 hectares of abaca plantation in the municipalities of Tubay, Jabonga, Kitcharao and Santiago.

“It [the funds] will be used to purchase 27 units of portable abaca stripping machines and a 10-wheeler hauling truck for the farmers,” he added.

Atega said the DAR is now in the process of procuring the stripping machines and a hauling truck.

While waiting for farm machines, DAR also partnered with the Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA) to help train the farmers in abaca production.

“At present, the farmers are undergoing various training on capacity-building and modern farming technologies in abaca production,” Atega said.

● (Gil Miranda)

**Central Visayas**

## Bicol Region



Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officer Roseller R. Olayres cuts the ceremonial ribbon at the opening of the Smoked Fish Processing Center. With him are: PARPO Del Monte, Mayor Pajarillo' representative, and Barangay Chairman of Hinipaan PB Pardo together with ASSKA members.

## Smoked fish processing hub to boost income of farmers in Camarines Norte

MERCEDES, Camarines Norte- Farmers here see better days ahead after the DAR recently handed over a newly-completed smoked fish processing center.

Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officer Roseller R. Olayres said the smoked fish (tinapa) processing center aims to increase the household income of farmers and add value to their fish product.

"This tinapa food processing facility is perfect for the farmers because Mercedes is a coastal municipality and fishing, apart from farming, is another source of income for them," said Olayres.

Officers and members of Asosasyon ng Samasamang Kababaihan Tungo sa Kaunlaran went through various trainings and seminars about business and product development to ensure the production of quality smoked fish.

The DAR in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Science and Technology, and the Bureau Fish and Aquatic Resources, facilitated the trainings.

"With the processing facility and the farmers' newfound knowledge on food processing and entrepreneurship, our farmers can now compete in a wider commercial market," Olayres pointed out.

The construction of the processing center is a joint project and effort of the local government of Mercedes through Mayor Alexander L. Pajarillo and DAR-Camarines Norte under the Village Level Processing Center Enhancement Project.

"The VLPCEP is a partnership program that empowers farmers by providing them technical know-how and much-needed facilities and infrastructures," Olayres said. ●

(Roma Amalia Dava)

## DAR to PARCCOMs: Report illegal land conversion

CEBU CITY— Undersecretary Rosalina Bistoyong alerted chairpersons of the Provincial Agrarian Reform Coordinating Committees (PARCCOMs) to be vigilant against illegal land conversions in their areas.

"Report illegal land conversions in your areas," Bistoyong said during the three-day 2017 national assessment in Cebu City.

Bistoyong said the illegal conversion of agri-lands to commercial and others use has limited the production of food for the country.

"Because of massive illegal conversion, we are now having problems on food security. Agricultural lands are decreasing resulting to fewer lands being farmed for food production and livestock raising," she said.

Bistoyong also stressed the need for DAR, Departments of Agriculture (DA), Interior Local Government (DILG), Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB), the local government units to harmonize procedures on reclassification of lands to ensure that prime agricultural lands are preserved and lands devoted to other purposes properly delineated in accordance with approved land use plans.

"Procedures have to be streamlined so that meaningful development can be pursued side by side with preservation of prime agricultural lands for food security," Bistoyong explained.

Because of land conversion, large landholdings are removed from CARP coverage.

"As PARCCOM chairpersons, help us implement the State mandate on agrarian reform so that social justice will prevail," said Bistoyong.

PARCCOM are the provincial counterparts of the PARC Executive Committee (ExCom). They are tasked with coordinating and monitoring the programs and activities implemented by the agrarian reform program implementing agencies in the field level. ●

## Central Mindanao

## North Cotabato farmers sees brighter days ahead

NORTH COTABATO – Corn Farmers in North Cotabato are expected to increase their income with the establishment of the Php4.7 million corn post-harvest facilities through the Mindanao Sustainable Agrarian and Agriculture Development Project (MinSAAD), a foreign-assisted project under the DAR.

DAR Undersecretary Sylvia Mallari for Foreign Assisted and Special Projects Office said the corn post-harvest facilities implemented under the corn production, processing, and marketing sub-project of the DAR-MinSAAD project.

"These corn harvest facilities are expected to help farmers in increasing the production volume and improving quality of corn through processing, and marketing, which will boil down to increasing farmers income by at least 20%," Mallari said.

Foreign-assisted projects, one of the vital components of the support services of DAR continue to boost the capabilities of ARBs in the provinces.

Mallari said the sub-project cost Php 4,766,153.34. It was turned-over to Palao Farmers Association as the lead ARB Organization situated in Palao, Libungan, North Cotabato.

Mallari further elaborated that the corn post-harvest facilities will be used for more or less 2,030 hectares of corn plantation benefiting more than 250 corn farmers from other participating organizations such as the Sinapangan Farmers Association, Kitubod, Farmers Association, Kiloyao MRDP-CFAD Consortium, and Cabpangi MRDP-CFAD Consortium.

Meanwhile, Palao Farmers Association President Pedro Bayog said the corn post-harvest facilities was really an answered prayer for the farmers and the association. ●

(Rodel Orejudos)



DAR Undersecretary for Foreign Assisted Special Projects Sylvia Mallari leads the ceremonial ribbon-cutting together with Project Manager Eduardo Suaybago, Libungan Mayor Amping Cuan, and Palao FA President Pedro Bayog during the turn-over of corn post-harvest facilities at Barangay Palao, Libungan, North Cotabato.



## ‘The humble public servant’ Undersecretary Karlo S. Bello

By Pinky Roque

SHY and unassuming, Undersecretary Karlo S. Bello of the Field Operations Office is the epitome of dedication and hard work. He is at his desk by 6:30 in the morning and usually ends his work day by 8:00 in the evening.

“I am really a workaholic. More so now because I don’t have my family to go home to at night,” explains Karlo.

His staff describes him as quiet, patient but very strict with time, especially with deadlines. Cherry, his secretary, said her boss is also very thoughtful. “He always has food to share with all of us.”

Karlo loves basketball. “I grew up idolizing Robert Jaworski. I’m such a big fan of him so that people close to me started calling me Kalowski, and the nickname stuck,” he said with a chuckle.

During his free time, Karlo loves to reminisce happy times with family and friends. “I love looking at photos. It always lifts me up knowing I have a family who’s behind me in everything I do and true friends who are with me through good times and bad times.”

Growing up in Davao City, Karlo completed his grade school at Ateneo de Davao University. He finished his high school at Ateneo de Manila (ADMU). His stay in Manila continued until college where he took up A.B. Political Science major in Public Administration at the University of the Philippines. He took up his Juris Doctor in ADMU and was admitted to the Philippine Bar in 2007.



Prior to his appointment at DAR, he previously served as a Councilor in the third district of Davao City. During the last elections of 2010, he garnered the most number of votes among all the three districts making him the No. 1 Councilor for Davao City. He was elected twice as City Councilor of Davao City from 2007-2010 and again in 2010-2013.

For nine years (2007-2016), he served as Chairman of the Civil Policies and Human Rights Committee of Davao City. He also co-founded the law firm Tiongco Siao Bello and Associates.

Karlo comes from a family of politicians. He specializes in administrative law, and has had extensive experience liaising with all branches of government. His father is labor and employment Secretary Silvestre Bello III.

Married to Atty. January Faye Risonar-Bello (yes, she’s the late Undersecretary Marcos Risonar’s daughter—ed.), they have two daughters, four-year-old Reme Veronika and two-year-old Maryam Isa Veronika.

One of the greatest goals he wants to accomplish in his lifetime is “to raise my two daughters as successful and independent individuals who can make a difference.”



1. What do you like about working in DAR?  
*The work is very challenging and the folks are nice.*
2. If you could invite a famous person to dinner, who would it be?  
*The President, Rodrigo Roa Duterte.*
3. What is the weirdest thing you have ever eaten?  
*Frogs.*
4. What is a perfect day for you?  
*It’s when I have accomplished so much in one day.*
5. What do you do when you’re stressed out?  
*I take long walks.*
6. What makes you nervous?  
*The unknown.*
7. What is your favorite comfort food?  
*Chicharon and rice with Knorr seasoning.*
8. If you go alone on a road trip, where would you go?  
*Banaue because I love the mountains.*
9. Which bad habits of other people drive you crazy?  
*Rumor mongering and crab mentality.*
10. Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?  
*Back in Davao City with my family!*

