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Amor's Newfound Love for Farming

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Participants of the Training on Digitalized Knowledge Products Development during their script-writing activity

ATI trains FITS Center and FITS Kiosk Staff in producing digitalized IECs

Aiming to improve the delivery of services of Farmers Information Services (FITS) Centers in region 10 through digitalized extension strategies, the Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center X conducted the Training on Digitalized Knowledge Products Development.

A total of 21 Farmers Information Services Specialists (ISS) and Learning Site for Agriculture (LSA) FITS Kiosk representatives from the different municipalities in Bukidnon were the participants of the four-day activity.

The activity was focused on topics such as principles of layout and design for digital IECs, scriptwriting for short technology-based and promotional videos, and editing through Canva for IECs and Filmora for videos.

The participants appreciated the activity as it was timely and would be of great use to help farmers promote

their farms and product, and for their FITS Centers to be able to package and produce their own techno-based IECs which they can distribute in their municipalities.

“Most of the LSA farm owners in our municipalities are seniors and are mostly not ICT-inclined, and we have been planning to help them promote their farm and products, but we still don’t have the skills to do it. Now, this training helped us learn what we need to learn to help them,” said Carlo Dodji Jumaos, a participant from FITS Center Kalilangan.

Kalilangan is one of the municipalities with many successful Learning Sites for Agriculture established in the region, with this, Jumaos further said *“We want their farms and products to be known not just in Kalilangan, but also in Bukidnon, and even in the whole region of Northern Mindanao.”* Participants have undergone workshops on digital IEC

development, script development, and video editing which also were their major outputs required in the training. They produced and submitted a digitized IEC which they posted on their respective FB page, a script, which served as their guide in editing a two-minute video. The materials on which they based their outputs were technologies and practices of their farmer-partner.

“Thank you ATI for the constant push, for pushing us to go beyond the limits,” said Jenelyn Balandra, of FITS-Kibawe, which she loud and proudly posted on her social media account after being able to submit all their outputs.

The activity was held at The Margarettes Business Hotel, Maramag, Bukidnon on October 25-28, 2022.# (Honeylou C. Bastasa)



GANTIMPALAY Awardees during FY 2022 Year-end Assessment for RCEF-RESP in Region 10

GANTIMPALAY sa ATI, awards outstanding RCEF LSAs and Farm Schools

Breakthrough Award

LA Farm, Misamis Occidental

Rising Star Award

Mr. DEGA Farm, Misamis Occidental

Best in Social Media Presence

DJE's Farm, Lanao del Norte

Most Collaborative Award

TESDA LNNAIS, Lanao del Norte

RCEF Farm School with Highest Local Engagement

Luis-Sesay Farm, Bukidnon

Highest Social Media Engagement

DJE's Farm, Lanao del Norte

Farm School Influencer

SN Farm, Lanao del Norte

Since the start of the implementation of the RCEF Program in 2019, the Center has been ever supportive in the implementation of community-based RCEF-related activities like the conduct of Farmers Field School on the Production of High Quality Inbred Rice, Seed Certification, and Farm Mechanization among others through the RCEF LSAs and Farm Schools in Region 10. Their accomplishments, best practices, and innovations in the conduct of these activities are always being presented during mid-year and year-end assessments together with the accomplishments of the different implementing agencies namely: DA RFO 10, TESDA, PhilMech, PhilRice, LBP, and DBP in Region 10.

RCEF-LSAs serve as “farm models” that highlights the application of modern agricultural technologies and rice-based farming systems which are all essential especially in the conduct of the RCEF-Farmers Field School (FFS). Seeing the farm models firsthand will be a driving force for the farmer participants to embrace new knowledge, skills, and changed attitude when it comes to rice farming technologies

The Center recently held its FY 2022 Year-end Assessment for RCEF-RESP in Region 10 on December 14-16, 2022 at Marianne Suites Inc., Cagayan de Oro City. Select RCEF Farm School owners from

Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, Lanao del Norte, and Misamis Occidental were given time to present their accomplishments and best practices, as well as their issues and concerns in the conduct of their activities for 2022. TESDA Region 10, represented by Ms. Nur-Ain Albani, presented the agency's accomplishments for the year 2022 as well as their targets for 2023. Moreover, ATI RTC X, represented by Ms. Jhoylie Mae R. Caumban, also presented the Center's accomplishments for 2022. Farm School owners with outstanding best practices and innovations, the most number of involvements in their communities such as being tapped as resource persons, and facilitators, among others, and the highest number of social media engagements through their Facebook posts, were given due recognition during the GANTIMPALAY sa ATI.

The GANTIMPALAY sa ATI is the first awarding ceremony of the Center for outstanding RCEF Farm School owners. ATI RTC X shall continue to monitor, review, and evaluate the accomplishments, as well as the issues and concerns of the RCEF-LSAs in the region, and continually recognize those who have shown outstanding best practices and innovations in the implementation of the different RCEF-related activities. # (Angelli C. Doña)

Online Orientation-Meeting of the Educational Grants for Extension Workers (EdGE) Scholars held

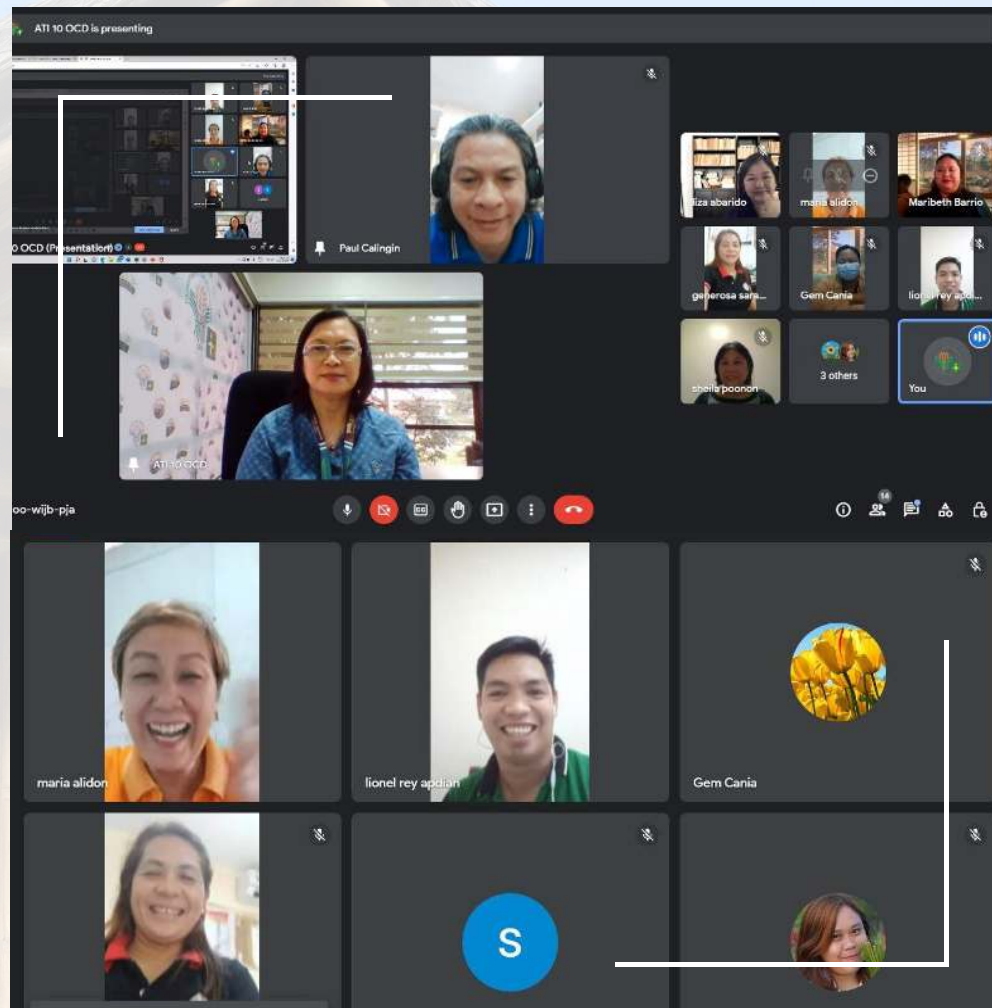
As part of its effort to empower its extension workers in advancing their career development, the ATI have extended its scholarship program offering through the Educational Grants for Extension Workers (EdGE).

The EdGE Scholarship Program aims to produce a pool of professionals, competitive and well-equipped extension workers who are ready to serve the agri-fishery sector. The target beneficiaries are capable and deserving Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs) from the Department of Agriculture (DA), State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Local Government Units (LGUs). It also intends to develop a pool of community management professionals and subject matter specialists on social and production technologies through the provision of degree scholarships.

OIC-Training Center Superintendent II/ Scholarship Focal Maria Lydia A. Echavez convened today an online meeting with the nine EdGE scholars of the region. During the meeting, she congratulated everyone and proceeded to present the scholarship coverage, privileges and support that they will receive throughout their scholastic journey. Submission of documentary requirements, general and their evaluation criteria are also required from them.

Ms. Echavez also reiterated their responsibilities as indicated on their terms of condition, obligations and responsibilities as scholars as well as their accountability, in case of a breach or default of the scholarship contract.

The scholarship grantees are as follows: Shiela C. Poon of Lantapan,



Online orientation-meeting of the EdGE Scholars with ATI--RTC X Center Director, Ms. Maria Lydia A. Echavez

Bukidnon, Gemma G. Cania of Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon; Cyd Cherrisse U. Gayonan of Talakag, Bukidnon; Generosa B. Saraos of Dangcagan, Bukidnon, and Liza L. Abarido of Manolo Fortich,

Bukidnon for the Doctorate Degree. For the Master's Degree: Maria Josefa D. Alidon of Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, Cheryl A. Ladaga of Cagayan de Oro City,

Misamis Oriental, Lionel Rey G. Apdian of El Salvador City, Misamis Oriental, and Maribeth G. Barrio of Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

The ceremonial signing of the scholarship contract will push through once schedule is finalized. #

(Text and screenshot provided by: Ms. Shirley J. Delos Reyes, OCD)

Regional 4-H Youth Camp showcases knowledge sharing on agriculture and new farming technologies



Participants of the Regional Youth Camp on their farm tour at Alomah's Place and Nature Farm, Dahilayan, Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon

Developing the youth is a continuous challenge for government extension service workers, particularly in the agriculture sector. Poverty in rural areas where agriculture is the primary source of income is prevalent. Since most youth associate agriculture with poverty, it discourages them from pursuing their dreams through farming since they prefer to take chances in the cities and take blue-collar jobs.

Taking a closer look, those who practiced conventional or traditional agriculture often remains at the threshold, if not below the poverty level. In spite of the effort of the Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs) to bring the newest farming technologies, farmers still tend to hold on to their old practices, like monocropping, conventional farming, and planting before finding their market, or selling their produce fresh instead of adding value before marketing. More often than not, they

usually treat farming as a livelihood instead of a business. Meanwhile, the declining interest of the youth in agriculture should not be ignored, and those young people should be exposed to the best practices and be taught the principles of entrepreneurship by successful farmers.

The Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center 10 (ATI-RTC 10) in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture-Regional Field Office 10 (DA-RFO 10) conducted a Regional Youth Camp (RYC) with the theme: "4-H Level UP: Leading Excellence in Agriculture through Viable Innovations, Empowering Leaders, and Unleashing 4-H Potentials" on July 26-28, 2022 at Alomah's Place and Nature Farm, Dahilayan, Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

The activity was conducted to instill among the youth participants that farming is a business and there is

money in it. Also, it aims to enhance the participant's knowledge and skills on the latest agricultural technologies, develop leadership and artistic abilities, share the best farming experiences, and foster healthy competition.

The activity was participated by 20 participants composed of 4-H Club members and coordinators from the Province of Bukidnon and from Cagayan de Oro City.

In one of their activities, the participants were able to learn and identify how to manage their stress by knowing themselves better towards positive mental health. Likewise, the participants were inspired by the sharing of best-farming practices from the resource speakers who are themselves successful young-agripreneurs like Ted and Bong Quemado of Mushroom City, and from Ms. Grace Marie Amor Mahistrado-Luceñara. Some of their learnings include the importance of

agritourism and the use of social media like Facebook as one of their marketing tools in selling their products and farm produce.

Part of the highlights of the annual RYC activity is the conduct of 4-H ceremonies like flag ritual, opening ceremony, candle lighting ceremony, and various contests such as Promotional Video Making, 4-H Debate, Innovative Technology on Organic Fertilizer Production, Indigenous Chandelier Making, Canvass painting with the theme: "Pagsasaka sa Kanayunan tungo sa Masaganang Kinabukasan", 4-H Trivia Party Quiz; and Search for Lakan at Lakambini ng 4-H Club 2022. Physical activities like amazing race were also conducted.

Lastly, a certificate of recognition was awarded to all contest winners and also a certificate of appreciation was given to all partners and participants:

Search for Lakan at Lakambini ng 4-H

- Lakan ng 4H 2022: Erap L. Paayas
- Lakambini ng 4H 2022: Chaasa Angela Billones
- 1st Runner-up for Lakan ng 4H 2022: Cuthbert Kyrus C. Batoy
- 1st Runner-up for Lakambini ng 4H 2022: Glydel S. Manila

Promotional Video Making Contest

Champion: Judha Mae E. Abalde

Innovative Technology on Organic Fertilizer Production

Champion: Maydene V. Demesana
1st Runner-up: Inah Kris O. Esmao

Indigenous Chandelier Making Contest

Champion: Angel V. Demesana

4-H Debate

Champion: Ariel C. Padojinog
1st Runner-up: Erap L. Paayas

Canvass Painting

Champion: Clear Jerome C. Balaba
1st Runner-up: Philip Kenn M. Silicay

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(With reports written by Cristine A. Galupo, Agriculturist II)



ATI NorMin celebrates NRAM and OA Month, promotes local rice and organic agriculture

Every year, a month-long celebration every November is observed in the Center through Presidential Proclamation No. 524, s.2004 and Proclamation No. 1030, s.2015 making the month of November the National Rice Awareness Month (NRAM) and Organic Agriculture (OA) Month. Starting 2022-2028 the NRAM Celebration is guided by the theme "Be RICEPONSIBLE everyone has a part to play!" and "Maunlad na Pagsasaka, Garantisado sa Organikong Agrikulturang Sinaliksik" for the OA month, respectively.

While the NRAM has been celebrated for quite some time already, the Organic Agriculture Month is still in its 8th year of promoting organic agriculture by focusing national attention on the importance of organic agriculture in enhancing

global competitiveness and environmental integrity, increasing food security and safety, and alleviating poverty.

This year, the Center had a series of activities lined-up for the said celebration.

A kick-off activity through a Sabayang Tanghalian transpired on November 7-11, 2023, where we encouraged our partner agencies and Learning Site for Agriculture/Farm Schools to send us a short video clip while they are having lunch together, ensuring that the rice, be it local rice or pigmented/colored rice, is visible on their table and exclaiming in unison the theme "Be RICEPONSIBLE everyone has a part to play!".

(Continue on Page 9)...



ATI-RTC X staff poses after the Chef Wars Contest as part of the NRAM and OA month celebration at the ATI-RTC X Grounds, November 17, 2022



“Don’t Panic: Let’s eat Benignit, Arozcaldo, and Champorado” feeding program organized by the ATI staff in El Salvador City

...continued from page 9. ATI NorMin celebrates NRAM and OA Month

Moreover, the PALAYhigalaay sa ATI: Rice and Organic V3.0, officially commenced on November 17-18, 2023. This is a yearly activity composed of fun games and challenges that promotes the camaraderie and teamwork of the staff.

Among the highlights conducted during the opening program on November 17 is the staff’s wearing of the national costume of their chosen rice-eating countries. While in the afternoon, four teams battled out for the test of wits during the Quiz Bigas via Kahoot, where scope and coverage are topics related to Rice and Organic Agriculture, and at the same time vying for the title of chef de partie for this year’s Chef Wars: Organic & Rice Edition. On November 18, a “Don’t Panic: Let’s eat Benignit, Arozcaldo, and Champorado” feeding program was organized by the ATI staff intended for drivers, students, and selected locales in El Salvador City. The hanging of tarpaulins for local rice traders, which intends to raise awareness among public consumers to buy locally-produced rice at the El Salvador Public Market was also done, as led by Center Director Maria Lydia Echavez together with PMEU Chief Mael Japheth G. Alvarez, Information Services

Section (ISS) Chief Maria Eloisa A. Akut, and ATI-RTC X RICE/RCEF staff. In the afternoon, the Amazing Rice Organic & Rice Edition, where ATI staff unleashed their sportsmanship and competitive selves got the ball rolling. Four teams contended against each other, conquering the challenges of the six stations manned by the RICE/RCEF staff.

To conclude the month-long celebration, a house-to-house distribution of locally grown rice and IEC materials were distributed through “Bigas Bigayan”. Fifty selected senior citizens, who are residents of El Salvador City, received 10 kilos each of locally-milled rice. The successful activity transpired in partnership with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) through the Office of the Senior Citizens Affairs (OSCA).

The month-long celebration was sponsored by ATI-RTC X PASS Chief and Organic Agriculture Coordinator Javier P. Andalan, together with ATI RTC X RICE/RCEF staff headed by their coordinator Jhoylie Mae R. Caumban, along with Bryan Jay V. Cabugwason, Reymard M. Galarrita, Angelli C. Doña, and Daisy Joy R. Sales.# (Angelli C. Doña)



Bukidnon LSA Operators Become Regional Trainers - Undergo 3-day TOT on Digital Farmers Program

ATI RTC X hits 2/2 of its Training of Trainers (TOT) on Digital Farmers Program target for the CY 2022, with its 2nd batch recently held at Malaybalay City, Bukidnon.

Ten pairs of certified Learning Site for Agriculture cooperators, both young and adult, were invited to join the said program. With the program's aim to equip farmers with knowledge and skills on how to use basic digital farming tools, they have undergone a 3-day rigid discussion, workshops, and demo back sessions on the lessons from Digital Farmers Program (DFP) 101 and 102. These include the use of social media, climate and weather monitoring applications, and online payment options.

The opening program was graced by a message from Ms. Maria Lilith M. Turan, Supervising Agriculturist of the Provincial Agriculture Office of Bukidnon, where she encouraged the

participants to take on the challenge of going digital. *"You are here to become trainers, and it is your task to put your learnings into action through sharing this to the people in your community."*

As requirements of the course, the participants were able to create their own social media and online payment accounts with QR code, create marketing posters using canva app, social media plan, and a dream board, which they presented for critiquing. The final activity was micro-teaching with their assigned topics.

Femichah Sasing, a participant from Abellanosa Diversified Farm, shares how grateful she was for having the opportunity to join the training. *"I am actually an education graduate, but I haven't really used my skills yet since I have not been employed as a teacher. However, through this training, I will be not just be able to use my skills in*

teaching, but also share the learnings that I have gained from here to our future participants... God may not have opened the doors for the schools for me yet, but He has surely given me this opportunity."

Having undergone the TOT, the participants are then expected to conduct a DFP rollout in their respective communities by the year 2023.

The participants, who stood above the others, during the workshops and demo back sessions also received prizes for their exemplary performance. Mr. Eugenio Hubayan and Mr. Recarte Bacus received samsung tablets as award for the 1st best in microteaching, and Mr. Jomari Hubayan and Mr. Yeltsin Kaiser Mercader received hard drives as 2nd best in microteaching. # (Honeylou C. Bastasa)



A farmer-youth tandem participant using the basic digital farming tools



Amor's

Newfound Love for Farming

Her career aspiration was to finish school, take the accountancy board exam, hit abroad as an OFW, and support her parents financially. When things did not go as planned, she responded to a different calling, a calling closer to home.

A Love of Mountains and Horses

When Amor was 13 years old, she was awarded Lady Rider of the Year in 2006 by the Philippine Horseman Federation in Cebu City. That same year, she has also adjudged the Champion in the Obstacle Race (Ladies Division) during the Kabayo Festival, a National Horseshow and Competition organized by the LGU of Mandaue.

Amor's interest in nature and animals was heightened at an early age. Most of her adventures in the farm were spent helping out with house chores and riding horses. Her interest in

horse riding was instinctive, since father Benjohn was into it, both as a hobby and as a professional horseman.

As the eldest child of Benjohn and Grace Mahistrado, Amor has witnessed firsthand the fun and function of a family farm through Alomah's Place and Nature Farm in Dahilayan, Bukidnon.

Establishing Alomah's Place and Nature Farm in 2015 was not a walk in the park. Benjohn and Grace had to work odd jobs and get their hands busy on other opportunities to make ends meet. Amor had witnessed firsthand what her parents have gone through to make the farm what it is today.

With an initial farm area of four hectares which is now called Area 1 back in 2015, it has presently expanded with Area 2, a one-hectare area, and Area 3, a three-hectare area in a matter of five years. Area 2

is the expansion of their lettuce and other high-value crops, while Area 3 is dedicated to other crops such as abaca, taro, coffee, and livestock such as chicken, goats, cows, and more thoroughbred horses.



With their flourishing family farm and bigger plans waiting to materialize, the Mahistrados envisioned establishing succession in the family, not just for productivity but for sustainability.

At the moment, Alomah’s Place and Nature Farm is one of the most successful farms, in terms of productivity and agritourism in Northern Mindanao. The farm settled in the beautiful pineapple-abundant Municipality of Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon at Barangay Dahilayan.

Surviving Setbacks

“I have never envisioned myself as a full-time farmer. My original plan was to be an accountant and work abroad. That is how I perceived success and that was my only way to help my family,” Amor said, her voice soft and steady against the cold Bukidnon breeze.

Amor earned her Bachelor of Science in Accountancy degree at the University of the Philippines-Iloilo in 2015. As earlier planned, she immediately had her review for the Certified Board Examination and took the exam that same year. Although she did not pass the examination, she never gave up. She tried for the second time but failed again.

Rather than sulking over her failures, she tried chasing her dreams again.



She worked at the Luxe Hotel in Cagayan de Oro City for six months as one of their accounting staff. It was what she thought was the beginning of her journey toward her dream career. A dream she has, not just for herself, but for her love for her family and the goal of giving them a better life.



“I thought at first that this is what I really wanted [job], but I never felt the satisfaction and fulfillment I thought I would have.” she added. *“I was tired and burnout from making plans that don’t work at all.”*, Amor quipped with a wry smile.

Amor realized that after all the struggles, she was in dire need of rest. She stayed at their farm for a while, when one day, her mother asked her to attend a Mindanao-wide training on organic agriculture sponsored by the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) for 10 days at ATI-RTC 12, Barangay San Felipe, Tantangan, South Cotabato.

“I was reluctant at first because it was really out of my league. But I took the challenge, and to my surprise, I completed the course.” she added.

Amor proudly shared that she also passed the NC 2 Certification for Organic Agriculture. Most importantly, she met new friends and a community of COOs (Child of the Owners) from Northern Mindanao who motivated her. The motivation and knowledge gained also stirred in her a newfound love for farming.

Later she attended more trainings. She was trained in agro-entrepreneurship by TESDA, and ATI trained her in Training Management in Bulacan.

She immediately saw the potential of agro-entrepreneurship and agritourism. Something that their farm

could capitalize given all the resources they have. She helped around the farm by implementing all that she learned from her trainings.

“I was really grateful for all the opportunities ATI and other partners like TESDA, and the Local Government of Manolo Fortich have given me.” Amor declared.

A Change of Heart

Amor’s newfound passion made her life a quick 360 degrees turn around. This paved way to more life-satisfying chances through her involvement in their farm. Amor did not waste time and applied what she learned from her first training.

“Why would I work for others, when my family needs me to work with them?” she said. In 2017, she became the official farm accountant. Aside from doing administrative and accounting work, she was involved in the training and extension work of their farm with ATI and TESDA-Region 10. It was also in the same year that Alomah was accredited as a TESDA Farm School. (Continue on Page 17.)

Value-Adding

helped augment income of this FBS Graduate



Photo Credits: [facebook.com/milagros.oclarit.3](https://www.facebook.com/milagros.oclarit.3)

“Baslan ang government nga nitabang namo ma uplift mi.” Mila Oclarit was all praises as she spoke of how the Agricultural Training Institute – Regional Training Center X turned her life around through the implementation of the Farm Business School (FBS) in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

Milagros Oclarit was once a housewife who occasionally cooks and sells kakanin products, such as kuntsinta, suman, and biko, at a military camp where her husband works as a soldier.

Back in 2015, then-43-year-old Mila, who simply had a keen interest in cooking was invited by Gemma G. Cania, the Municipal Agriculturist

of the Municipal Agriculture Office Manolo, to join the Farm Business School program. Curious to what she proposes, and due to her love for cooking, she joined the pioneering batch of FBS.

Hesitant and unconfident as she was, she ventured first on corn products that did not work well for her. However, that did not stop her from reaching her hopes of success. No matter the failures that came her way, she now relishes in the result of her hard work and persistence, all thanks to peanuts. Mila currently markets crunchy roasted peanuts with a variety of flavor like salted, sugar-coated, chili, and salted-spicy, as well as peanut butter; and peanut roll – which she cooks using wok over firewood. She puts her products on sale all around Manolo Fortich, in particular at the Department of Trade and Industry’s Go Negosyo; Riley’s Cafe; FBS Organic Showroom; and Damilag Pasalubong. Adding that, she is oftentimes invited to display her products during trainings conducted by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and Department of Agriculture (DA).

She emphasized that everything she has now came with a price. To get

to where she is, attending trainings, seminars, and workshops, which she thought to be time-consuming, is a must. On the other hand, Mila currently experiences the lack of raw materials due to the rising demand of her products and due to rat infestation. As resourceful as she is, she purchases the peanut harvest of her neighbors and those close to her with peanut plantation just to catch up with her growing market. This truly tested her skill in maximizing her utilities and resources, and proved her remarkable commitment in bettering her business venture at the age of 50.

Mila enumerated variables in achieving success, (1.) Determination (2.) Prayer (3.) Kakugi (Hard work) (4.) Sakripisyo (Sacrifice). She, too, was all praises as she talked about how the Farm Business School gave her the confidence as an entrepreneur. Specifying the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) as the backbone of her achievements.

She hopes for the future to endow her a production area of her own, and to be FDA-certified. She also longs to venture into coconut products soon. # (Chelsea L. Asiñero)



Photo Credits: [facebook.com/LGUManoloFortichOfficial](https://www.facebook.com/LGUManoloFortichOfficial)



Teen sets eyes on a career in Farming and Food Technology

Is it possible for someone so young to radiate so much confidence and self-assurance while maintaining such a sweet and pleasing demeanor? With the eldest daughter of Mark Anthony and Reggie Macahilo, it is. And her name's Dorothy. Seeing Dothy, as she would like to be called, approach and greet us wearing light blue plaid sleeves, paired with cowboy boots and a hat - so chic! Dothy's aura spoke even before she did. Indeed a fair mixture of magnetic appeal and meekness at only 17 years old.

No to idle Land Next generation farmer Dorothy M. Macahilo recalled that their farm land was once a dumping site owned by her grandmother. It was supposedly up for sale, but her mother Reggie, who had a keen liking to planting, thought it would be such a waste to give the farm's potential to someone else. Reggie took the initiative to manage it herself, accompanied by her husband who has a profound knowledge on farm management due to his family's history. Hence, MR. DEGA FARM

in Manga, Tangub City, Misamis Occidental was established, and is a certified Learning Site for Agriculture (LSA) partner of the Agricultural Training Institute – Regional Training Center X (ATI-RTC X) for three years now.

Early farming experience while most girls her age would most likely care about teenage stuff, Dothy's childhood was spent early on in their farm. She gained first-hand experience of the farm animals' growth, describing it as a fond memory to live by.

Being the eldest among five siblings, Dothy came foremost to have been taught the farm's ups and downs, and all its nitty gritty. She recalled that at six years old, her mom would take her and her siblings to sell pre-packed vegetables that they would carry over her head in a winnow (nigo). They would each then have percentages of the income. Since she was taught at an early age to market products, she got used to it. If one would imagine

teenagers nowadays, one would visualize glossy lips, curled lashes, a smartphone in hand, a tote bag on a shoulder---all packed up for school. But in Dothy's case, remembering at age 13, she readied for school with school supplies on a backpack and bayongs in each hand, filled with vegetables and eggs, all prepped for both learning and selling. The teachers would fancy her, especially the quality of products she offered and eventually become her suki.

From helping her mother sell vegetables and eggs at the age of 6, she gets a percentage of the income. Life as a student and a nextgen farmer Just like any other farms or business ventures, oversupply can be such a burden. When products do not do well in the market, they find other means to sell it. Oftentimes, eggs not sold in the market would be sold to her aunt who owns a bakery, and if not, they would simply give the rest to their close family members or use it up for their own consumption.

This Fabulous Nextgen Natural Farmer is a Good Role Model to Young People



My plans for the organic movement is about leaving an impact in the community through organic agriculture. I'll start with the youth in our village.



Vic Jason Kristoffer F. Tagupa, or VJ, fondly recalled how he was directed to farming after five years of working in the corporate world. "It was in 2019 when I was fortunate enough to be part of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) Asia Organic International Course by Asian Local Governments for Organic Agriculture (ALGOA). There were 21 of us from Southeast Asia, and I was one out of the four representatives from the Philippines. It was an 11-day exposure to organic agriculture in South Korea, and the experience was life-changing. When I got back home, I realized that it is not every day that you get to experience being a scholar, and I told myself that I have to put my experience into action. Organic agriculture sparked something in me, why not affect others as well?"

True enough, VJ founded the SAFE Young Organic Farmers in their hometown Balingasag, Misamis Oriental. It was during the height of the pandemic when he saw the opportunity of building and nurturing young minds to love organic agriculture. He shares that if it was not because of the pandemic, he could not have stayed. "The pandemic brought us together here, and eventually if you love what you are doing, you will stay. I tried it, I liked it, and I stayed," he said.

Influencing the community with Organic Agriculture

VJ's unexpected farm stay became a way of bringing the community together in an even more fruitful cause. He says, "I think the most

apparent effect, besides teaching them organic farming, is the bond and the relationship that we have built as neighbors, sharing the same cause, working for something to an organization, the technical skills, record-keeping, marketing, these are some of the few things that I have shared to them, and that I am proud of." There were definitely times where the organization was put to the test by certain challenges, but VJ firmly says that in any failure, one should learn from it, take it as a lesson, and avoid repeating the same mistake.

In practicing organic agriculture and staying with the SAFE Young, he says, "If you know your personal self, everything in the universe conspires for you to reach it, and for me, I'd like to say that I am slowly reaching it.

I have to make sure that the SAFE Young works, I will take charge of this, and I will make this work.”

Founding the SAFE Young Organic Farmers

The Tagupa family donated three plots of land to be cultivated by the 15 youths from their community who were eager to learn organic farming. “I came up with the SAFE Young Organic because I wanted to teach them, and let them see the value that the safest way of farming is doing it the organic way. And since our farm, SAFEGCC (Sustainable Agriculture Family-centered Entrepreneurial Group of Co-Creators) is a corporation, the SAFE Young is our social responsibility since SAFEGCC’s mission is to contribute in ending hunger with safe and nutritious food, and empowering family farms by making them climate-resilient.” VJ said.

SAFEGCC Inc., being an ATI-accredited Learning Site for Agriculture (LSA), fulfills their duty to share their farming technologies to the clients, which makes the SAFE Young very lucky to have both Mr. Victoriano F. Tagupa, and Ms. Marivic F. Tagupa as their mentors in organic farming. In a farm day’s work, VJ provides a free training about organic agriculture, the basics of planting and plot management. The Tagupa family then provides the initial seeds or seedlings for planting as well. The three plots will be tended by the 15 core youths for them to manage from planting, to harvesting, up to equal sharing of profit.

“We teach them mainly about organic. We do not promote or encourage them to use chemicals in their plots. Since we make and have our own organic foliars, they can use it instead of resorting to using chemicals. They also have access to our composts and naturally-made fertilizers. Aside from that, we also impart knowledge on biodynamic agriculture, and as much as possible, we encourage them to try the biodynamic calendar.

As to the whereabouts of the 15 youths since the pandemic, they are all still active today since they

are planting for consumption and experience. We are aspiring to become the main lettuce producers here in Balingasag although making that happen is a challenge. I am currently eyeing on other international organizations which organize contests or can provide and grant us funds for small and starting group like ours. If I can find one, I’m really leaning on coming up with lettuce production to concentrate on for Safe Young.

The dynamics and increased popularity of Safe Young is making the farming community of Balingasag notice and aware of the group’s existence. VJ shares that the biggest challenge is getting the attention and sustaining the interest of the members to get involved, but with his parents backing him up, it was more of a ‘challenge accepted. As VJ says, “You cannot expect them to be effective in what they do if they do not have the slightest idea about it,

but if you also get their interest, you would have to make sure that they understand what they are doing, and why they are doing it.”

Sexuality and preference not an issue

As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, VJ was candid that people around him, whether in his hometown or even abroad, have no issues with his lifestyle and personal preference.

“I never had any issue at all. When I had my 10 days Organic Foundation Course last 2019 in South Korea with 20 other international students, it was not issue. It was not even brought up at all! I guess we were all just focused on studying organic farming. Even during the International Rice Conference in Bislig City in Surigao del Sur last 2018 where I worked as the Project Assistant during the event, I don’t think it mattered at all.



Youths from their community learning organic farming

I think that the international community are not particularly hard on the LGBT community. I even stayed in the same accommodation for a week with the President of IFOAM Asia and the Executive Director of IFOAM Asia. It was not an issue at all.” VJ said.

With VJ’s presence and visibility in the farming community, SAFE Young is also making a safe place for young people who identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ and who also happens to love farming and agriculture.

Connections they did not see coming

“On a personal assessment, I must be doing something good, because I never thought we would receive funds from organizations and companies,” VJ said when asked how he sees the outcome of the organization he has built.

Young as the organization is, they have already received numerous funding from various organizations, and from people who believe in its cause. The organization is thankful to

VJ also takes pride in being the interim president of the Youth in Agriculture in the Philippines, where the SAFE Young was also recognized and featured internationally. The organization is indeed overwhelmed with the positive feedback they receive from people telling them that they are an inspiration to them, and hopes they continue with their movement.

On a side note, VJ also thinks that being a graduate of Development Communication has also helped him a lot in expressing their vision



VJ Tagupa with the members of SAFE Young

CITIBank, the former company where VJ used to work, and Naturland Germany for paving a way for the SAFE Young members to have a farm educational tour at Alomah’s Place and Nature Farm in Manolo Fortich Bukidnon. Alomah’s Place and Nature Farm was instrumental in teaching VJ how to plant lettuce and the implementation of other agri-technologies.

of growing safe and nutritious food. “I think being a DevCom graduate has helped me a lot, especially when you have a solid foundation of what communication is and its dynamics, and of course, my skills in communicating definitely led me to the right people, people who believed in SAFE Young.” (Angelli C. Doña and Vic Thor A. Palarca)

continued from Page 10. *Amor's Newfoundland Love for Farming*

Giving Farming a Try

Considered a “window of opportunity”, Amor was encouraged by her parents to give farming a try. The two years of farm engagement sustained her interest to engage in the day-to-day activities in their farm. Since attending various trainings outside the region, Amor’s farm involvement includes giving lectures and sharing farming technologies with others. It felt natural for her to re-echo and share what she has learned from the various trainings she has attended.

It was during this experience that Amor got inspired by the tales of empowered women (and men) after sharing her story.

“I started getting invitations to be a resource person since I shared my personal experience. It is inspiring to know that I am inspiring others because of my testimony of setbacks which I used as leverage to involve in farming.” Amor confessed.

She credited Semilya sa Kinabuhì, another Learning Site for Agriculture (LSA) partner of the ATI, for giving her the concept and idea of the farm-to-profit approach in farming.

“As to farm-to-profit, the approach prompts us to make use of the resources we have. It also gave me the realization that I don’t have to go abroad and work overseas to earn and make a living.” Amor added. For a typical person, one’s perception of farming only involves hard toil and laborious tilling of land. For Amor, it goes way beyond that.



Sharing her love for Farming

“I am training Diego to do the farm tour”, she said. Diego is Amor’s younger brother. Amor shared that all of them have been taking important farm work, from simple chores to personally dealing with walk-in visitors. Diego also works with other farm workers in some of the farm’s production areas, especially on livestock.

Dave is the farm’s in-house chef. He is the one in charge of preparing Alomah’s famous vinaigrette. He is also involved in the delivery of online orders of fresh lettuce, lettuce seedling and herbs to nearby areas which fetches 40 thousand pesos to 50 thousand pesos per delivery, on separate location points in Cagayan de Oro City and Iligan City. Dave is a graduate of Agribusiness Management while Diego, the youngest sibling is currently taking up Veterinary Medicine in Central Mindanao University (CMU).

“Everyone in the family has a particular responsibility. My husband

helps during the weekends too. We are really a team on this.” She added.

As the eldest, Amor never failed to be a good model to her siblings. The sacrifices of choosing her family over her then dream have translated across beautifully.

“I chose to prioritize my family over my plans, and that is how I found true fulfillment.” Amor proudly said.

Strong Family (Farm) Ties

“The pandemic season has been our greatest challenge,” Amor said. She said further that it has tested the resilience of the farm’s recouping mechanism of untimely adversities. With the help of its next generation, the younger Mahistrados have intensified their farm’s social media presence. They are still preoccupied with online selling and scheduled meet-up deliveries in Cagayan de Oro and Iligan City. Amor emphasized that complementation among every member of the family is one of the secrets of their success.

More than surviving the pandemic together, their greatest aim is to survive a lifetime together, grow, sustain, and expand what their parents have started at Alomah’s.

“Agriculture is a diverse field, I believe that whatever your field or specialty is, you will always have something to contribute to the development of your farm,” Amor concluded. (Honeylou C. Bastasa)



continued from Page 13. *Teen sets eyes on a career on farming and food technology*

During the pandemic which brought everyone a great deal of dread, as well as with lockdowns and home quarantine protocols, they still get to help her parents. Dothy and two of her siblings would each be assigned to a farm cow, taking responsibility in making sure it is grass-fed. By the time their cow gets sold to the market, they would each get a percentage out of the profit. She described that it was never a burden to help her family, in fact, she gets a lot of fun taking care of her cow.

At present, every sibling, except her two-year old younger brother, has an area in the farm to tend for. Dorothy is in charge of feeding the chickens, even the newly hatched, as well as harvesting quail eggs and layer eggs.

Being a Senior High School student, she too, has school obligations. She makes an effort to be able to juggle everything in between. She mentioned feeding her designated farm animals at 7:30 AM, then heads out for school at 12:00 noon. As she gets home by 6:00 PM, she feeds them again for the second time. Way to go Dorothy! To date, as Dorothy nears college, she hopes to pursue Bachelor in Science in Food Technology. Not only does she have a keen interest for food and cooking, she also deemed it as an advantage for their farm, especially in product formulation and preservation.

Unfortunately, the course is not available anywhere in the Province of Misamis Occidental. Even so, Dorothy, with clear conviction, shared that her mother fully trusts her in leaving home for school for a while, because her mother herself taught her to be independent. Thus,

all she has to do is to weigh her choices, and deliberate with the course and school offerings.

“Di ko gusto nga mawala ang gi-haguan sa akong mama ug papa.” When asked about the future, all she longs for is Nextgen farmer Dorothy Macahilo proves that farming is fun and fulfilling, to preserve the legacy her parents spent blood and tears on.

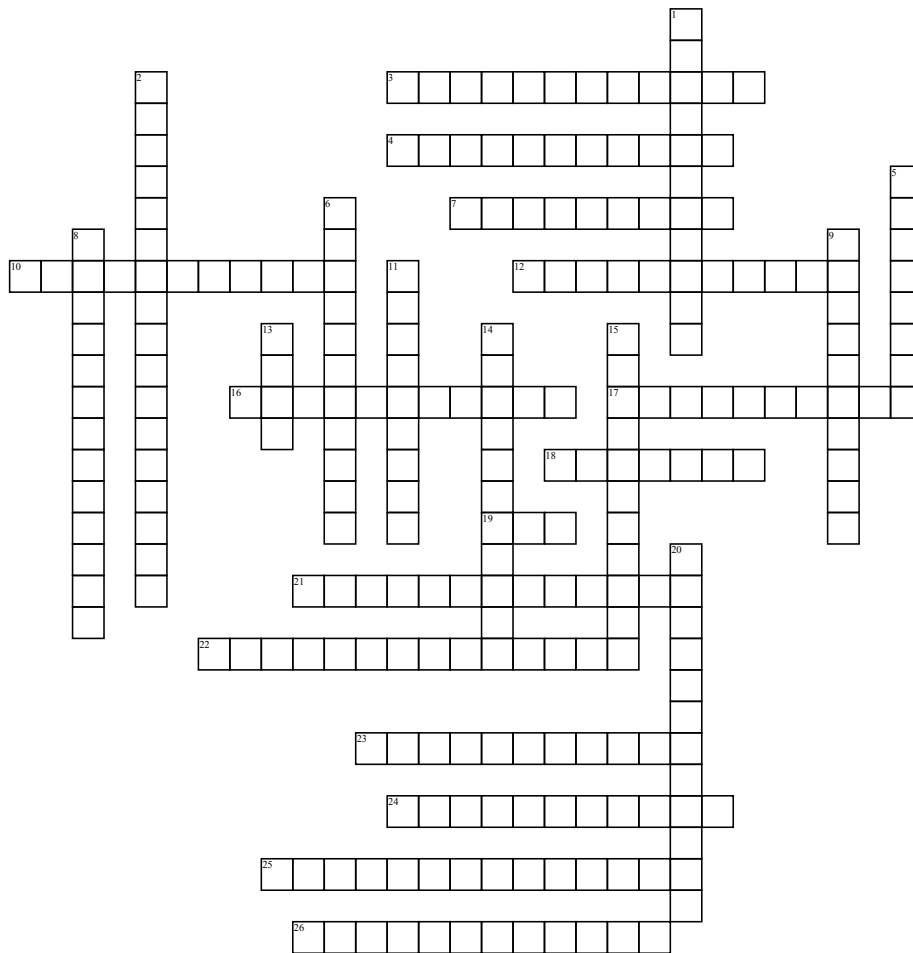
“Dili dapat ikaulaw kung unsa ang naa ninyo, kung unsa inyong gi dakoan.” She added that there is no such thing as a small deed. No matter how simple you think your actions are, trust that time will lead you to a bigger and grander outcome only if you keep working for it. She also called for young people to find their interest. “Once you find it, just go for it and focus on it”, Dothy concluded. #
(Chelsea A. Asiñero)



Once you find it,
just go for it and
focus on it.



Agriscience



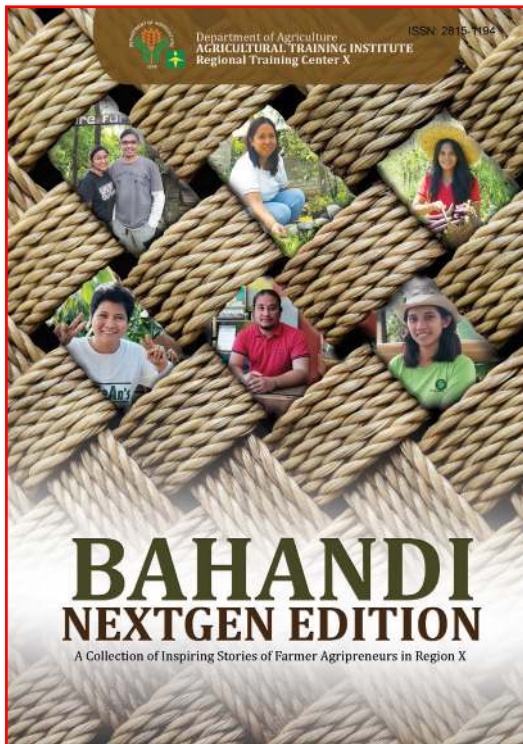
Across

- 3. The science of producing, processing, and marketing fruits, vegetables, and ornamental plants.
- 4. All jobs relating in some way to plants, animals, and renewable natural resources
- 7. Type of resources provided by nature that can replace themselves.
- 10. The study of the properties and management of soil to grow plants.
- 12. Activities concerned with the production of plants and animals, and the related supplies, services, mechanics, products, processing, and marketing
- 16. Food that has been grown without the use of certain chemical pesticides.
- 17. Science of insect life.
- 18. Basic science of the plant and the animal kingdoms.
- 19. Abbreviation for pest control program based on multiple-control practices.
- 21. Application of engineering principles in agricultural settings.
- 22. Animal growth, care, and management.
- 23. Plants used for their appearance.
- 24. Space and mass around us.
- 25. All aspects of water conservation and management.
- 26. Chemistry as it applies to living matter.

Down

- 1. Raising of finfish, shellfish, and other aquatic animals under controlled conditions.
- 2. Use of modern principles and practices in animal growth and management.
- 5. Science of soils and field crops.
- 6. Teaching and program management in agriculture
- 8. Use of cells or components of cells to produce products or processes.
- 9. Application of science to an industrial or commercial objective
- 11. Science dealing with the characteristics of elements or simple substances.
- 13. The turf grass plant and soil immediately below it.
- 14. Use of modern principles in growing and managing crops
- 15. Management of agricultural resources, including farms and agribusinesses.
- 20. Commercial firms that have developed with or stem out of agriculture

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