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IN THIS ISSUE

JANUARY - MARCH 2023

NEWS

- 02 LFTs Level-Up Skills with Rice Training
- 04 CFIDP Info Caravan hits Various E. Visayas Spots
- 05 More Heeds The PGS Call
- 06 ATI 8 Grooms Coconut Specialists
- 07 Hurrah for the Tree of Life
- 09 March is for Empowered Women
- 10 "Contribute, Deliver" reminds Dir. Recoter to NLP Focals

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LFTs Level-Up Skills with Rice Training

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is implementing various programs to address issues in rice production. On the ground, these are implemented by agricultural extension workers (AEWs), private partners, and local farmer technicians (LFTs), among others. DA deems the LFTs to be among the frontliners in delivering agricultural extension services.

The Agricultural Training Institute continues with its mandate to capacitate AEWs and LFTs so they can also extend excellent services to clients. ATI RTC 8 opened the first quarter of 2023 with training activities for LFTs to refresh and further capacitate them on important aspects of rice production.

Diversified integrated rice-based farming

Twenty-three (23) LFTs trooped to ATI RTC 8 in VSU, Baybay City, Leyte on Jan. 30 – Feb. 3, 2023 for the Capacitating the Local Farmer Technicians (LFTs) on Diversified-Integrated Rice-Based Farming System. The training equip

the LFTs with the knowledge and skills on diversified and integrated rice-based farming system.

The Center-based activity saw the LFTs learning about the different Integrated Rice-Based Farming System (IRBFS), the concept, principles, and components of Palayamanan plus, and the upland rice ecosystem and its recommended technologies. They also learned about Region 8's existing upland rice production for variety Kalinayan. Rounding up their activities for the training duration was a presentation on best practices for upland rice from each participant.

The LFTs appreciated their experience specifically the hands-on activities in the field. Although the training duration was marred by unfavourable weather condition, the LFTs actively observed and performed the during SALT and vermicomposting activities at the Eco-FARMI in VSU, Baybay City. They also took part in individual hands-on exercise for mushroom production.



Pest and Disease Management

Pest and disease management is an important aspect of rice production that should be given importance to ensure good harvest. Two batches of the Capacitating Local Farmer Technicians (LFTs) on Rice Pests Management and Field Diagnosis were conducted for LFTs on Feb 6-10, 2023 and March 6-10, 2023 both conducted at one of ATI RTC 8's Extension Service Providers, the Villaconzoilo Farm

School in Jaro, Leyte.

The training aimed to equip LFTs with the knowledge and skills on rice pests and diseases identification and management. Forty-three LFTs (22 for Batch 1 and 21 for Batch 2) were trained on identification of insect pests and diseases of rice and its corresponding control and management options. They were also introduced to the concepts, principles, and practices of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). In addition, the LFTs demonstrated pest and disease damage assessment, Agro-Ecosystem Analysis (AESA), and responsible use of pesticides. As DA is also implementing programs geared towards digital agriculture, ICT diagnostic tools applications (SPIDTECH, Rice Doctor Beta, and e-Damuhan Apps) for pests identification were also introduced during the training.

The DA-Regional Crop Protection Center (RCPC) requested the LFTs to assist AEWs when they conduct pest monitoring and surveillance in the different municipalities in the region.

LFTs lead in the farmer-to-farmer approach of sharing best practices in agriculture. Hence, attendance to training levels up their capacities to perform the tasks delegated to them. According to Mr. Andres Abarquez, an LFT from San Sebastian, Samar, he will be going home to his municipality armed with added knowledge and skills to share with fellow farmers.

Mr. Reynaldo Gabornes, an LFT from Lawaan, Eastern Samar, echoed the sentiments of Mr. Abarquez. Further, Mr. Gabornes also mentioned his appreciation for the training and how it was training them to be "brothers/sisters" in the service of agriculture. The camaraderie born during the training was something he will always cherish. The challenges faced by the rice industry in the country need to be addressed not just with knowledge and skills. It must be dealt with accordingly with combined efforts from various stakeholders. ***(MPPetalcorin)***



CFIDP

INFO CARAVAN

HITS VARIOUS E. VISAYAS SPOTS

ATI RTC 8 continues to disseminate information about the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan (CFIDP) as implementation of its component programs are underway.

Now in its second year of implementation, ATI RTC 8 and the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) 8 conducted six more information caravans to promote CFIDP in Eastern Visayas. The info caravans aim to create awareness on the implementation of the CFIDP and encourage coconut farmers to participate in the various programs and services under the CFIDP.

The CFIDP is composed of various components to be implemented by the PCA, in partnership with other government agencies. The component programs are on social protection, coconut farmers organization and development, hybridization, community-based farm enterprise development: farm rehabilitation and improvement, integrated coconut processing and downstream products, innovative research projects and their practical application on coconut processing, production, and distribution, and other support services.

Under social protection, ATI along with the Technical Education and Skills and Development Authority (TESDA) is tasked to conduct training to capacitate coconut farmers and their families.

The 6 info caravans were conducted in Javier, Leyte (Feb. 20, 2023), Naval, Biliran (Feb. 21, 2023), Calbayog City, Samar (Feb. 23, 2023), Jaro, Leyte (Feb. 28, 2023), Gen. MacArthur, E. Samar (March 9, 2023), and in Sogod, S. Leyte (March 22, 2023). There were 50 coconut farmers and farmer leaders per batch. Each info caravan was conducted with the assistance of respective PCA provincial staff and municipal agriculture office.

Each information caravan was an avenue for coconut farmers and other present stakeholders to ask questions from implementing agency representatives. Questions ranged from crop insurance, pest management in coconut farms, distribution of free coconut seed nuts, to requirements for the certification as learning site for agriculture (coconut).



More heeds the PGS call

ATI RTC 8 supports the Organic Agriculture Act of (Section 2 of OAA as amended by RA 11511) of promoting and implementing the practice of organic agriculture. One way is capacitating farmers and AEWs on Participatory Guarantee System (PGS).

PGS is a system built on a foundation of trust, social network, and knowledge exchange. It focuses on local quality assurance system developed and practiced by the farmers engaged in organic agriculture. PGS is used to certify producers and farmers as active practitioners of organic agriculture.

The Center conducted the Training on Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for Farmer Groups (Batch 1) from

Feb. 7 –24, 2023 with 4 AEWs and 18 farmer-participants from Mercedes Upland Farmers for the Development Association (MUFDA) of Silago, S. Leyte and Bagong Silang Farmers Association of Macrohon, S. Leyte . The training aims to capacitated the participants on the establishment and operations of PGS groups consistent with the organic agriculture standards and corresponding technical regulations.

Resource Persons were Mr. Franklyn Diongzon, MA of Dulag, Leyte and Ms. Graciela Gacutan, OA focal of ATI_RTC 8. Mr. Diongzon shared his expertise on Organic Standards while Ms. Gacutan discussed the PGS certification processes.

The participants were oriented on the processes in becoming a

certifying body for PGS for the S. Leyte province. They were also guided in the drafting of their internal Standard and Manual of Operation.

Mr. Christian Ferdinand Borneo, an AEW from OPA-Southern Leyte, expressed his gratitude for being a participant to the training. He said that the challenge now lies with the participants to advocate, encourage and convince every Southern Leyteño farmers do organic farming, produce safe and healthy foods for every table, and be a certified organic farmer.

The training was Center-based with sessions in Silago and Macrohon in S. Leyte. **(MPPetalcorin)**



ATI 8 GROOMS COCONUT SPECIALISTS

The coconut has often been called the tree of life. However, for so many years the Philippine coconut industry has been plagued with challenges thus resulting to a dwindling production rate.

In 2021, the Republic Act 11524, widely known as the Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund (CFITF) ensures the funding for programs with the aim to increase the revenue and productivity for coconut farmers and growers, alleviate poverty, improve the quality of education and equality in the society,

Eastern Visayas. The training course aimed to capacitate AEWs with knowledge and skills to become resource persons who can deliver topics on the various steps, processes, and theories related to the coconut value-chain.

Group activities found participants making a farm plan, planting coconut seedlings in the National Coconut Research Center (NCRC) demo farm, installing 1 x 1 log trap for the rhinoceros beetle, and making a re-entry plan for the farmer-level training



empower the rehabilitation and modernization of the coconut industry towards productivity. From RA 11524, the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Program (CFIDP) came to be.

Support has finally come for the tree of life. Under its social protection component, the Agricultural Training Institute shall conduct Training of Trainers (TOT) at the national and regional levels to equip various stakeholders such as the ATI-Regional Training Center (RTCs) and personnel from other CFIDP IAs, the Agricultural Extension Workers (AEW) from the Local Government Units (LGUs), and farmer-leaders with the proper knowledge and harness their skills on coconut production across the value chain. To start with, ATI RTC 8 conducted the Coconut Specialist Training Course on March 6-17, 2023 at VSU, Baybay City, Leyte to 21 participants from various municipalities/cities in Region 8. ATI-RTC 8 sought the assistance of PCA in identifying the first batch of TOT participants, which included representatives from the Top 20 Coconut Producing Cities/Municipalities in the

to be conducted in their respective municipalities. After undergoing various hands-on activities and lecture-discussions, each participant presented a topic in a micro-teaching session proving their mettle in coconut production and communication skills.

Mr. James Cruz, a participant representing Yadads Integrated Farm, shared how he was pressured by the words coconut specialist, "I don't know that much about coconut plus, I'm not even an agriculture graduate." However, he was happy to have gained friends during the 11-day training, friends who share the same goal of boosting the coconut industry. He further shared that lacking the knowledge about agriculture is not a hindrance since ATI trainings can fill the gap.

The Coconut Specialist Training Course is among the many training activities in store for AEWs and coconut farmers under CFIDP.



Hurrah for the Tree of Life

The implementation of the Coconut Farmers Industry and Development Plan (CFIDP) has seen a rise in interest for coconut production and value-adding. CFIDP has also put in place plans to help improve the conditions of the coconut farm families.

ATI RC 8 believes that while AEWs and coconut farmers are given capacity-building opportunities, the youth should also learn about the tree of life the creative way. The youth play a big role in agricultural development. For the youth to take steps toward that direction, they must first learn to appreciate agriculture by taking part in 3As: Appreciating Agriculture thru Arts.

3As was conducted on Feb. 28, 2023 at ATI RTC 8, VSU, Baybay City Leyte with 58 participants. The program engaged the youth in showcasing coconut, including its by-products, in creative formats such as folk dance, jingle-making, and photography.

The 3As participants toured the production and processing facilities of the National Coconut Research Center in the Visayas State

University. While at NCRC, they learned about the various strategies being done to improve and expand the coconut industry in Eastern Visayas.

During the activity, it was found out that selected high schools with Arts and Design departments in the City of Baybay were open to collaborate with agencies that allow them to showcase their students' talent and skills. Further, coaches of the participating schools inquired whether visual arts was included in the contest categories. It was identified later that the A&D department also has its sub-units: Multi-media and Visual Arts. This will eventually play a crucial role in the ATI RTC 8's development of programs that cater to the youth. Students and teachers are looking forward to the inclusion of Canvas Painting as one of the contests future 3As.

Ms. Chelsea A. Bongo, a youth participant, was thankful to have participated in the activity. She shared, "Thank you to ATI, for inviting us and for giving us the warmest welcome that we ever received. I am thankful for my coach for choosing us to represent our school. The

saying is indeed true that we are in good hands here in ATI. We students and teachers are very much thankful for this new and unforgettable experience. We were able to learn new things and meet new people. I am beyond thankful for being given this opportunity."

Ms. Princess Via P. Managbanag of Baybay City SHS was thankful for the award she received. She said, "I didn't expect that we could win an award. Thank you to the facilitators who provided the needs of the participants and the teachers. I was very thankful and happy because I learned a lot of things today, not just because I saw new art and talents from my co-student and participants, the people are also friendly. Thank God for this opportunity to get experience from people."

Outputs for the activity included 4 photos featuring coconut, 4 jingles and lyrics, and 5 folk dance performances. **(by MPPetalcorin)**





March is for Empowered Women

Despite the challenges faced by women in agriculture, concerted efforts are being made to bridge the gender gaps and empower women in this vital sector. Policies, strategies, and opportunities are continuously being implemented to create a more inclusive and gender-equal agricultural community.

In celebration of National Women's Month, ATI RTC 8 took the initiative to organize the Symposium on Women in Agriculture. Held on March 9-10, 2023, the event aimed to raise awareness about gender sensitivity, promote gender equality, and foster harmonious relationships between men and women in the farming community. With the theme "Rural Women in Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality and Inclusive Society," the symposium aimed to showcase the remarkable achievements of rural women in advancing the agricultural sector and the significant impact they have made on their communities.

Women farmers and members of Rural Improvement Clubs eagerly gathered at ATI RTC 8 to participate in the symposium. The event provided a platform for participants to share their accomplishments and inspire others with their success stories. Distinguished resource persons, including Ms. Emelie B. Cahingcoy from Brgy. Tigbao, Carigara, Leyte; Atty. Jonalyndie B. Chua from DSWD FO 8; Dr. Wayne P. Gunhuran from the Baybay City Health Office; Ms. Gravela O. Rele from Farmvhel, Brgy. Sabang-Bao, Ormoc

City; and Ms. Josephine L. Hipe from DOH-PITAHHC, Brgy. Bagacay, Tacloban City, shared valuable insights during the symposium. Topics ranged from discussing the rights stipulated in the VAWC and Anti-Bastos Law to exploring traditional and alternative healthcare through herbal soap and ointment making. Furthermore, a mini agri-fair was organized, where Rural Improvement Clubs and local farms showcased innovative and processed products for sale.

Participants like Ms. Rosita Arbiol and Lolita Eder expressed gratitude for their attendance at the symposium, emphasizing how such activities have helped them improve their communication skills and gain confidence as women farmers. They appreciated the opportunity to learn from and network with other women who share similar experiences and challenges.

The symposium, held at ATI-RTC 8, VSU, Visca, Baybay City, Leyte, attracted a total of thirty (30) participants. The event served as a testament to the commitment of ATI RTC 8 and its partners in promoting gender equality and empowering women in the agricultural sector. By recognizing and celebrating the achievements of rural women, it is hoped that more opportunities and support will be provided to further their contributions to agriculture and create a more inclusive and prosperous farming community.

(MPPetalcorin)



“Contribute, Deliver” reminds Dir. Recoter to NLP Focals

The livestock sector in the Philippines has emerged as a crucial driver of economic development and poverty reduction, particularly for small-scale livestock growers. With its contribution of approximately 16 percent to the gross value added in agriculture, the sector has gained recognition for its potential to uplift rural communities. Recognizing this importance, new policy initiatives have been introduced to address the evolving impact of livestock production on various aspects, including economic development, social equity, the environment,

and public health. In a notable move, the Livestock Program has received increased funding allocation in line with its significant contribution to the agricultural sector's gross value added (GVA).

To further enhance the sector's growth and ensure effective planning for the years ahead, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) recently conducted a Consultative Planning Workshop in collaboration with the National Livestock Program (NLP). The workshop, held from February 13-17, 2023, at ATI-RTC 8, brought together key stakeholders, including livestock program point persons, Center Directors from the ATI network, and representatives from the National Livestock Program.

During the workshop, Dr. Ruth-Miclat Sonaco, ATI National Coordinator for Livestock and DA NLP Director, shed light on the impact of African Swine Fever (ASF) on the swine population from 2019-2022. Additionally, she presented the livestock roadmap and policy directions to guide future initiatives. The event also provided a platform for participants to share best practices, experiences, and challenges encountered in projects such as the Swine Multiplier Farm and SWAIB project, which aim to improve the livestock industry.

Engr. Remelyn Recoter, OIC-Director of ATI, graced the national workshop and emphasized the need for market-focused training programs in the coming years, emphasizing a mechanized approach and innovative solutions. She urged all participants to strive for excellence in their assigned roles, emphasizing the importance of contributing to the sector's growth and successfully executing their tasks.

As the livestock sector continues to evolve and drive economic progress, these efforts and collaborations between key stakeholders will play a crucial role in shaping the future of Philippine agriculture and bringing about positive change in rural communities.
(BJSinon)



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