

# SIBYO

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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE  
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## the Team

### CONSULTING EDITORS

Hazel Grace T. Taganas  
*Center Director*

Melinda P. Petalcorin  
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### CONTRIBUTORS

Jonalyn G. Saulan  
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Bethel John L. Sinon  
*Media Production Specialist II*  
Christian Keruel Y. Laurente  
*Information Assistant*

### GRAPHICS/DESKTOP PUBLISHING/WRITERS

Ahra Bravo  
*ATI-RTC 8 Intern*  
Kate Roa  
*ATI-RTC 8 Intern*  
Sascha Oliverio  
*ATI-RTC 8 Intern*

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# Growing Futures: Students learn Urban Agriculture

Amidst the active cities and concrete landscapes of the country, a green revolution is taking root as urban agriculture gains momentum. As the population continues to grow and available land diminishes, innovative and sustainable solutions are needed to ensure food security and promote a healthier environment. In this urban jungle, a new wave urban farmers is transforming rooftops, vacant lots, and even vertical spaces into thriving lush gardens. From community-based initiatives to high-tech hydroponic systems, urban agriculture is reshaping the way Filipinos connect with their food and paving the way for a greener and more self-sufficient future.

Recognizing the importance of fostering a connection between young

people and the environment, a series of seminar on urban agriculture was recently conducted by the ATI-RTC 8. It aimed to introduce the wonders of cultivating crops in urban areas and to empower students by equipping them with the knowledge and practical skills needed to embrace urban agriculture and contribute to a greener tomorrow.

The series of seminar training consisted of five batches comprising 5 phases, held in various locations in Leyte. These locations included Brgy. Bato, Biliran in Biliran; Cortijo Del Valle Agricultural Farm in Pambujan, Northern Samar; Brgy. San Jose in Ormoc, City, Leyte; Brgy. Lawaan in Eastern Samar; Ichon National High School in Macrohon, Southern Leyte; Ramon T. Diaz National High School in Gandara, Samar. The

seminar duration spanned from March until May 2023.

During the seminar's earlier phases, students were introduced to the diverse world of urban agriculture. They learned about different types of urban gardens and the immense health benefits associated with growing vegetables. The participants gained insights into recycling home and farm waste, highlighting the importance of sustainability in gardening practices.

As the seminar progressed, hands-on experiences took center stage. Participants actively engaged in seed sowing, seedling care, and maintenance, developing practical skills essential for successful container

gardening at home. They also learned to classify vegetables based on their families and uses, further expanding their knowledge in the field.

In a significant phase of the seminar, participants were introduced to hydroponic systems—a groundbreaking approach to urban agriculture. Although hydroponic supplies were not readily available to some areas during the seminar, participants embraced the concept and expressed their interest in setting up their own systems in the future. This demonstration showcased the potential of hydroponics in addressing food shortage issues.

The seminar concluded with a focus on







incorporating homegrown vegetables into everyday meals. Participants were introduced to various vegetable recipes, recognizing the economical and nutritional value of consuming their own produce. Additionally, they received essential garden tool sets, including sprinklers and gardening equipment, to support their ongoing gardening maintenance activities.

Ms. Jay Ann Abelis Estrelles, a student participant, expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to take part in the urban gardening activity seminar. She stated, "We are thankful for the supplies, snacks, and seedlings provided, as well as the guidance from the agricultural experts who taught us. We appreciate the opportunity to learn and recognize the efforts of everyone involved."

Furthermore, Municipal Agriculturist Joselito G. Egargo, along with the School Coordinator Rev. Father Dindo Catalo, and Mr. Nelson Mendros, the Executive Secretary to the Mayor, expressed their gratitude for the seminar. They also reassured the students of their ongoing support in various areas related to the seminar they attended. Additionally, certificates and awards were presented to the participants, bringing smiles to everyone's faces as the event came to a close.

With the seeds of knowledge sown during this seminar, these enthusiastic participants are now equipped to become stewards of sustainable agriculture, cultivating a greener and healthier future for urban areas.



# MEL Tool Regional Roll Out: Enhancing Development Impact

In a groundbreaking endeavor aimed at monitoring government interventions in rice farms, the DA- RFO 8's Research Division and Planning together with the ATI -RTC 8's Information Services Section recently piloted a successful training session on the Regional Roll out of the Use of Outcome-based Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) tool. The farmer respondents, equipped with essential skills in outcome-based Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) activities, are set to revolutionize data collection and analysis in the agriculture sector.

An orientation of the regional roll out of the use of outcome-based MEL tool was held on April 24, 2023 at Hotel Estrella in Tacloban, City. The event was attended by the Learning Site trainers and staff. Following the said orientation, a comprehensive series of interview on various municipalities was conducted.

The primary objective of the said activity was to familiarize the participants with the outcome-based MEL activities associated with the 4D Farms project. Through engaging sessions, participants gained a

thorough understanding of the project's purpose and its role in monitoring government interventions in rice farms across the region. The training emphasized the significance of employing effective MEL tools and methodologies to ensure accurate assessment and decision- making.

A key aspect of the training involved guiding participants through the process of creating user credentials and logging into the Resource Conservation Monitoring and Assessment System (RCMAS) website.

The participants'



achievement during the training were remarkable. Armed with their newly acquired skills, they successfully interviewed and monitored over 200 farmers from three municipalities in Leyte. The data collection efforts encompassed 87 farmers from Alang-Alang, 56 from Carigara, and 57 from Abuyog. These encompassing interviews and monitoring activities provided valuable insights into the real-world impact of governmental interventions in the regions rice farms.

The training session marks a significant milestone in the effective monitoring, and evaluation of government interventions in rice farms. Equipped with a comprehensive understanding of outcome-based MEL activities, participants possess the necessary skills to revolutionize data collection and analysis in the agricultural sector. The collaboration between participants, the project team, and the RCMAS website's maintenance team ensures a seamless implementation of the data collection efforts. With their collective willingness to contribute further, the participants stand ready to assist in expanding the project's reach and foster a sustainable agricultural development in the region.



The new rice Program Focal Person of DA-RFO 8, Ms. Maria Rufelie Gula, highlighted the Department of Agriculture's new strategic directions, stressing digitization in agriculture. Participants were assigned the role of front-liners, providing ideas through 4D Farms to inform decision makers about interventions at the ground.

The MEL tool is utilized within the 4D Farm project, which serves as a digital platform to facilitate data driven decision making. This platform supports the Departments of Agriculture's (DA) fertilization strategy by providing cloud-based Rice Crop Manager Advisory Services and monitoring of rice extension interventions.



# RISE OF DAIRY CATTLE FARMS

As demand for meat and dairy across the globe rises, the Department of Agriculture encourages more and more people– farmers in particular– to express interest in dairy cattle management and operations. Since most cattle in the Philippines are grass fed and often raised in backyards or small family farms, dairy cattle are not as popular or commonly raised in large scale farms.

Livestock farming is also most typically carried out in backyards as opposed to commercial farms. That is why the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) conducted a training course that spanned 5 days starting from April 24 to the 28th, in Villaconzoilo Farm School, Jaro, Leyte. The program opened with Mr. Darwin Hernandez of PCA Region VIII giving an overview of the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development, which was then followed by a discussion on the dairy cattle industry in the region by Ms. Isobelle Salvoro, the Dairy Technician of National Dairy Authority (NDA) of Region VIII.



Dairy cattle farming in the Philippines faces several challenges, including limited access to quality breeding stock, high feed costs, and infrastructure for milk collection, processing, and distribution.

However, through this activity, the promising industry of dairy farming in the region that is still untapped was promoted and encouraged. The demand for dairy products in the Philippines has been steadily increasing due to a growing population, changing consumer preferences, and rising awareness about the nutritional benefits of dairy.

Ms. Lourdez Palconit and Mr. Allen Goroy discussed animal breeding, genetic improvement, and stock management. The topics taught participants about the importance of proper selection of animal breeds and its genetic improvements, and basic animal management that is necessary information for anyone looking to manage livestock, particularly cattle.

Dr. Ivy Fe Lopez from Sugar Regulatory Administration of the Professional Regulation Commission (SRA-PRC) further elaborated on this discussion the effects of animal management neglect, and things to look out

for in managing and treating Animal Diseases. Common pests and diseases that dairy animals tend to have and attract were talked about in her discussion, which also included how to control and prevent it, especially on large ruminants. Following that topic was animal nutrition and forage establishment, because breed and diseases can only go so far without proper nutrition and shelter. Mr. Francisco Gabunada served as resource person on the basic nutrition required by dairy animals.

Since cattle produce a variety of dairy products such as fresh milk, pasteurized milk, cheese, yogurt, and ice cream, Resource Persons from the of the National Dairy Authority (NDA) explained the basic principles of milk, and the different ways of testing the quality of milk. Of course, milk production comes at a cost, so participants learned to calculate the costs and return in order for them to know if they are gaining more than they've lost.

To conclude the 5-day training course, Mr. Antonio Cadalin, the PAS-Section Chief, discussed transformational leadership that sparked motivation among participants into showing their leadership skills and initiative in cattle farming in the Philippines.



# Bees tell their Secret

The creation and management of bee colonies is apiculture, or more commonly known as beekeeping. It involves tending to the needs of bees, which produces honey, beeswax, royal jelly, pollen, and other bee-related products. Bees have irreplaceable roles when it comes to pollination—most of their lives are spent collecting pollen—where they are essential to the growth of various crops, fruits, and plants.

Since the Philippines is a country known for its rich flora and fauna, there are several bees that inhabit its islands. To educate aspiring beekeepers, the Agricultural Training Institute - Regional Training Center 8 conducted the program Bees Tell Their Secret: Training on Basic Beekeeping.

Starting on the 31st of May and ending on June 2nd, a total of 22 participants joined

the 3-day training program. It began with an introduction on bees, including the ways of propagating and division of colonies, as well as the common species of bees in the country. One bee type in particular was the source of many discussions during this program: the stingless bee, a group of bees found in the Philippines that, as the name implies, lack stingers, and are therefore harmless to humans but are as important to pollination as their other counterparts. The program explored all the benefits that comes with beekeeping for agriculture, along with its profitability for farmers and beekeepers.

Farmer-entrepreneur Vincent Jule Acayen noted that this training program was the first one he—and many others who participated—ever attended for beekeeping. He was a hobbyist interested in beekeeping, but after the training







course, he stated that he was more knowledgeable about the business aspects of beekeeping, and was more interested in its potential for the economy while still maintaining its profitability. The program did not stop at farmer-entrepreneurs though, as extension workers also expressed their appreciation and interest in beekeeping thanks to the training course.

They voiced concerns over their passion for beekeeping not being sustainable for the environment, but were rest assured that beekeeping in the Philippines is as financially lucrative as it is environmentally sustainable. Personal experiences from participants were disclosed as they recalled childhood memories of them destroying honeycombs and playing with bees, not knowing that those bees did more for the environment than they did at that age. These kids grew up to be extension workers with careers in beekeeping who are incredibly passionate about the work that they do.

Beekeeping in the Philippines is crucial to the continued growth and development of the state of agriculture, and ecosystem

in general. With a favorable climate and diverse flora, the country provides an ideal environment for beekeeping activities. As the industry continues to evolve, beekeepers and stakeholders work together to ensure the sustainability and growth of beekeeping in the Philippines.







# SORGHUM BECOMES JACK OF ALL TRADES FOR FARMERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Sorghum production has been rising in popularity among farmers in the Philippines as more realize the potential and benefits that come with it.

Sorghum is known for its ability to withstand harsh climates and limited water availability; sorghum has become a favorable alternative to traditional staple crops in many regions. Since the Philippines is a country visited by numerous harsh climates throughout the year, sorghum is an excellent crop to grow for personal and commercial use. The crop exhibits diverse genetic variations, resulting in different varieties with variations in height, grain color, and

maturity period. A training course conducted by ATI discussed and explored the many benefits of sorghum production in a country like the Philippines.

On May 23rd, the Training on Sorghum Production began, where it aimed to capacitate the participants about the necessary knowledge and skills needed to maximize the potential of sorghum production in Region 8, one of the regions in the country most frequently hit by typhoons.

Sorghum's inherent drought tolerance makes it well-suited to areas with erratic rainfall patterns. This was showcased to the

participants during their visit to the A&A Corn Farm, which was the demonstration area of DA-RFO 8.

Mr. Hermogenis Alvarez shared his experience on sorghum production. They invited LGUs. In addition to its ability to survive droughts and floods, sorghum exhibits remarkable heat tolerance, enabling it to flourish in high-temperature environments. As the program went on, it became clear that sorghum is a crop that is perfect for the Philippines.

Participants computed the cost and return of profits during the program. It was also made clear that there



are little downsides to the production, thus including sorghum to the list of crops farmers can produce in their respective farms.

Agricultural extension worker Danilo G. Mutya stated that before joining the program, he did his own research on sorghum, noting that it was not unlike corn, and that he hoped this fact would be enough to get farmers interested in it as he, and other AEWs imparted their knowledge of sorghum to them.

Anchienel A. Gonzales expressed similar concerns over the possibility of farmers not wanting to, or being hesitant about allocating farm space for sorghum. However, both AEWs were not discouraged as they looked forward to the near future. The Philippines heavily relies on a few major staple crops, such as rice and corn.

Introducing sorghum as an alternative crop diversifies the agricultural sector and reduces dependence on a limited range of crops. This diversification can enhance the resilience of the food system, as it decreases vulnerability to pests, diseases, and climate-related risks, as well as being a new source of income for those just starting out farming or those looking to diversify the crops they sell to reach an even larger demographic.

Sorghum's ability to thrive in harsh climates is a testament to its remarkable adaptability. The crop's drought tolerance, heat resilience, and capacity to adapt to variable climates make it a valuable asset in regions facing environmental challenges.



# GO FOR GAHP IN LIVESTOCK-BASED FARM

On May 9, 2023, the Agricultural Training Institute -Regional Training Center VIII (ATI RTC 8) conducted a 3-day training from May 9-11, 2023, for Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs) specifically Livestock Extension Workers. The training aimed to capacitate AEWs on the principle and practices in the Good Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP) and its benefits to a livestock-based farm.

Good Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP) incorporates all measures executed at the farm that set out the principles and good practices, from procuring and rearing healthy animals to maximize the welfare of livestock to final slaughter or milking, it constitutes in providing a greater confidence in consumer's expectation that the products are safe and fit for human consumption. While upholding the health, safety and comfort of the farm workers and animals, it ensures that no harm will be caused to the environment to really set out the general principle of good practices for food production and utilization.

Resource persons were Ms. Marilyn Ritaga and Mr. Joel Lacandazo of the Department of Agriculture Regional Field Office 8 (DA-RFO8)

who shared their expertise on Good Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP). Ms. Ritaga discussed the GAHP- scope while Mr. Lacandazo discussed the Animal Welfare Act (Republic Act No. 8485 of 1998).

The participants were first briefed prior to learning about the necropsy procedure and other related activities, including the discussion of livestock projects with GAHP and its benefits. They also had a supplemental topic on record keeping. They also accomplished a workshop where they filled-out a GAHP Application sample form. Mr. Jimmy Lou Tebrero, an AEW from LGU-Tanauan Leyte, showed his heartfelt gratitude and takeaways by saying, "This training helped me to broaden my knowledge on Animal welfare and good animal husbandry Practices (GAHP). We are now ready and have enough knowledge to disseminate or re-echo this to our farmers and FCAs".

The training was conducted at Julita Farms, Julita Leyte. The participants extended their gratitude to ATI-RTC 8 training management team for the successful and fruitful training.







# UP-SKILLING AEWs THRU EDS TRAINING

“This training is an opportunity for us, as an agricultural extension agent, to become more effective, efficient in conveying to our clients the new trends and technologies in agriculture, and mostly, how to perform well in the field. We really appreciate all the resource persons in the 5-day activity because they are experts and knowledgeable. We absorbed the topics and lessons they imparted to us”, said Mr. John Paul Pace an extension agent after completing the Training on Extension Delivery System (EDS) at ATI-RTC 8, Visca Baybay City Leyte on June 5-9, 2023 for the first batch with 20 participants. The second batch followed on June 26-30, 2023 with 18 participants.

The training on Extension Delivery System (EDS) aimed to equip participants with the basic knowledge and skills in extension delivery system. ATI-RTC 8 tapped Prof. Milagros C. Bales from the Department of Agriculture and Education and Extension (DAEE-CAFS) of Visayas State University as a resource speaker in the said training. Prof. Bales shared her expertise by discussing the

basics and trends of agricultural extension, different approaches, strategies and methods of agricultural extension. She also led the participants in training needs assessment and in developing an extension plan using ATI's format in training design.

As a CPD-accredited training, licensed agriculturists earned 28 credit units for completing the training. Ms. Mildred Bregildo a participant from Inopacan, expressed her heartfelt gratitude for being one of the participants of the training. She was also appreciative of extension work and described AEWs as a bloodline in the agricultural value chain who can extend more and become an excellent extensionist.

Mr. Gilbert Ocon, another participant, couldn't help himself as he expressed his appreciation not only for the food and accommodation provided to them but mostly for the excellent service of the Training Management Team.



Visayas State University Campus, Visca, Baybay City, Leyte  
Phone No. (053) 563-7635  
Email: [atirtc8@ati.da.gov.ph](mailto:atirtc8@ati.da.gov.ph)  
URL: [www.ati.da.gov.ph/rtc8](http://www.ati.da.gov.ph/rtc8)  
Call: 1-800-10-982-2474 | Text: 0920-9460-2474