

The SUGAR LINK

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MA. REGINA BAUTISTA-MARTIN:

Maneuvering the wheel of Sugar

Regulatory Administration with hope

The effectiveness of the Sugar Regulatory Administration mandated to rev up the sugar industry has been tested with several male, macho-dominated administrators. In contrast, a soft-spoken, fragile-looking lady was appointed to hold its helm, Gina Bautista Martin, by President Benigno (Noynoy) S. Aquino, Jr. last July 2010. Sugar stakeholders, planters, and farmers have mixed feelings about the SRA Chief: delight for those who know her and skepticism for those who don't.

Armed with grace (an avid-practicing Catholic, who initially wanted to be a nun), equipped with fine character qualities: faith in God, compassion, courage, and determination, Gina undoubtedly can stir the helm of SRA to the right direction. She has impeccable credentials having been educated in prestigious educational institutions: Assumption College, University of Santo Tomas, Asian Institute of Management. She is credentialed and experientially competent (having administered and managed her father's farm for long) to wheel out SRA from the rut. Honed by her stint as administrator and

manager of her father's sugarcane farm (a responsibility reserved for macho - male), she adeptly knew the ins and outs of the sugar industry. The wisdom she gained from theories and experiences in the sugar business, coupled with determination and courage enabled her to face the unabated sugar smuggling in the guise of "premix sugar" that debilitated the domestic sugar, hence severely affected the small sugarcane planters. She has the courage, not blindly overlooking danger but seeing and trying to conquer it.

She is willing to do without witnesses, everything that she is capable of doing before all to the world. That is what fine character is all about, doing the right things and doing things right, whatever the price or cost maybe. Her compassionate heart, devoid of oligarchic attitude, moved her to assist small sugar farmers (who own 10 hectares and below) by having organized the SIMAG Foundation where she got the farmer beneficiaries of CARP to organize themselves into plantation-size operation, owning a total of 4,000 has. Furthermore, during "tiempos muertos," (dead non-milling season-June-August) she provided livelihood programs in coordination with the Department of Agriculture for funding. Long before the popular campaign of Pinoy, "kung walang kurap, walang mahirap," Gina had already sincerely lived this adage in her life. Deep in her heart, she hopes for the best, wearing the breastplate of compassion for the poor and iron hand for the smugglers. This is clearly manifested when she issued an order classifying the "premix sugar" as C sugar or reserved sugar. Empowered by EO 18 to establish and maintain a balanced

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relationship between sugar production and sugar requirements, ensuring stabilized prices at levels reasonably profitable and fair to consumers, Gina staunchly faces the sugar crises. She might be the "Joan of Arc" of the 21st century for the sugar industry fighting for her "king." She gives hope for good governance that will extricate SRA from sunken track.

With the unequivocal support and cooperation from the sugar stakeholders and consumers, her relentless networking with LGUs, sugar businessmen and foreign investors, the rise of the sugar industry (like the proverbial phoenix) will be a delightful sight to be held. With hope in our hearts, we can conquer, we who believe we can with Gina Bautista Martin in our midst. (MFT Logroño)

PHIL 97-3933 and other 5 SRA varieties still performs best despite El Niño occurrence in Leyte/Ormoc

The occurrence of El Niño phenomenon (during early/vegetative stage) in Leyte/Ormoc but Phil 97-3933 produced an average of 164.64 LKg and 92 TC per hectare. The data was taken from the area of a progressive and very innovative farmer, regional winner of Gawad Saka 2009 – Engr. Hermenegildo R. Serafica.

In Ormoc, Engr. Serafica has grown 6 Phil. Varieties from LGAREC in 27.80 has., to wit: *Phil 97-3933* (4.15 has.), *Phil. 99-1793* (1.0 has.), *Phil. 93-1601* (17.83 has.), *Phil. 97-1123* (1.61 has.), *Phil. 2000-2569* (3.05 has.), and *Phil. 98-0255* (0.12 has.).

Unfavourable climatic weather condition is a very important factor to consider. However, following an approved and recommended cultural practice in growing sugarcane production, proper/timing application of lime/fertilizer, plus modified technology or other farm innovation i.e. A "Paratell" concept has created a big role in the performance of the varieties with less effect for the said natural calamity. (J. Alao)

Production per hectare of Phil varieties at Serafica Farm, Ormoc

PHIL Variety	Area (has.)	TC/Ha.	LKg /Ha.	LKg/TC	Remarks
97-3933	4.15	*92.0	*164.64	1.80	PC/RC
99-1793	1.00	87.47	164.30	1.88	PC
93-1601	17.83	74.75	150.63	2.03	9PC/ 5RC
97-1123	1.61	73.71	133.98	1.81	PC/RC
2000-2569	3.05	62.65	118.44	1.90	PC
98-0255	0.12	41.88	80.56	1.92	PC

Iloilo MDDC's One Million Lot

Three years ago, the office of Iloilo MDDC was constructed at a four-hectare rented lot at Barangay Imbang Grande, Passi City, formerly owned by Passi-Iloilo Sugar Central, Inc. Thru efforts of IMDDC board of directors led by Chairman June D. Sargado, with full the support of Mr. Orlando Dalipe, former IMDDC Chairman and from the PISCI board of directors, the rented lot is now fully owned by IMDDC at a ground level price of 1 million pesos.

Congratulations to the officers of IMDDC for obtaining the lot at a very low price when it could be bought by other private individuals 2-3 times greater than the amount IMDDC was offered. The 4-hectare lot was awarded to IMDDC because the owners of the lot (mostly sugarcane planters) saw the noble purpose of IMDDC in helping the sugarcane industry through its various existing projects such as: tractor services, HYV nurseries, bio-organic fertilizer production, etc. (C.S. Fortin)

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8th OPSI Alumni National Convention at SRA-LGAREC

The 8th OPSI National Convention with the theme *"Enhancing Productivity through Alternative Inputs Best Practices and Updated Technologies"* was held at Balay OPSI, SRA, La Carlota City on October 14-15, 2010.

The theme underscored the role of OPSI graduates in pushing the sugarcane industry towards meeting the challenges to survive in the competitive world of sugar production.

The two-day affair featured science & technology exhibits and series of lectures on climate change affecting cane culture, application of rock phosphate as a source of phosphorous, the use of beneficial micro-organisms (BMO), production of muscovado sugar and update on bioethanol among others.

Addressing the participants and guests during the opening program, Hon. Ma. Regina Bautista-Martin, SRA Administrator, challenged everyone to take advantage of the high price of sugar at the start of the crop year 2010-2011. She stressed that there is a need to increase the sugar production by at least 20%. *"Today," she said "we are given the opportunity to prepare to be efficient and productive at a lower cost especially by 2015 and beyond."*

As an OPSI graduate herself, the Hon. Administrator took pride in convincing the participants and guests to "spread the good news to every planter that the first step to increase

productivity is by going back to the basics." OPSI, she disclosed, "is the right venue for this opportunity."

This is also in line with the OPSI-National Convention's move to make the latest SRA research outputs available, accessible and affordable to all sugarcane farmers. (M.C. Dejecacion)



Gearing up initiatives for AFTA 2015 & beyond updated target for 2015 & beyond

A. Production

Targets:

- i. Area Planted: 450,000 hectares
- ii. TC/Ha. 75 tons per hectare; GTCM: 33,750,000 tons
- iii. Lkg/TC: 2.1 Lkg/TC
- iv. Production: 3,543,450 MT; 70,875,000 Lkg

Strategies:

- i. Increase area from 382,000 has. To 450,000 ha.
- ii. Increase productivity from 52 TC/Ha to 75 TC/Ha
- iii. Improve Lkg/TC to 2.1
- iv. Block farms will be the center of increasing production

Activities:

- i. Determine area needed to maximize utilization of mill capacity
- ii. Campaign for expansion areas of sugarcane with priority in areas with under-utilized mill capacity
- iii. Provide technical assistance to farmers in increasing production
- iv. Promote planting of HYVs
- v. Establish ARCs as block farms; accredited block farms
- vi. Provide technical and financial assistance to accredited block farms

A.1. Crop Estimate

Target:

Crop estimate system that uses satellite images, farm data, weather conditions

Strategies:

- i. Satellite-based estimate
- ii. Integrate planting data of each farm
- iii. Consider effect of weather

Activities:

- i. Parcellary mapping of all farms, including collection of field data (variety, plant crop, date of planting, type of planting)
- ii. Acquire satellite images for crop estimate
- iii. Adopt estimate protocol/model using satellite images, farm data, weather as inputs
- iv. Install weather stations at right location

A.2. HYV Adoption

Target:

100% adoption of HYV

Strategies:

- i. Develop better HYVs
- ii. Produce planting materials through MDDCs
- iii. Determine HYV adoption per mill district, then program adoption increase per year until 100% adoption

Activities:

- i. Revive the National Cooperative Testing
- ii. Determine adaptable HYV for each mill district
- iii. MDDCs to operate farms to produce planting materials

A.3. Farm mechanization

Targets:

- i. One tractor with basic implements, for every 30 hectare
- ii. Develop a mechanical harvester fitted to Philippine setting

Strategies:

- i. Compute tractor requirement on a per mill district basis assuming that farms with areas 10 hectares and less are included
- ii. Priority beneficiaries are block farms
- iii. Engage with investors in developing mechanical harvesters

Activities:

- i. Register the members for each block farm
- ii. Tap government agencies in developing mechanical harvesters
- iii. Identify fund sources (loan, grant, investments, etc.) to fund farm mechanization

A.4. Fertilizer Support

Targets:

- i. Full dose of fertilizer for each crop (combination of organic/ & inorganic)
- ii. Develop locally-produced fertilizers (organic & non-organic)

Strategies:

- i. Fertilization is based on soil-analysis & leaf analysis
- ii. Advocate and support production and use of locally-produced organic fertilizers
- iii. Conduct studies on optimum combination of fertilizers to be applied per farm or farm zones

Activities:

- i. Prepare a fertility map that is updated at least every three years
- ii. Identify effective organic fertilizers and promote its proper use
- iii. Identify less expensive source of fertilizer or process of securing fertilizer

A.5. Farm-to-Mill Roads

Targets:

- i. All farm-to-mill roads are all-weather roads
- ii. Main highways leading to the mills are cemented

Strategies:

- i. Map out all farm-to-mill roads and identify sections for improvement
- ii. Estimate the cost of improvement per mill district and present same to DA for inclusion in road program
- iii. Funds will be from national government, LGU, and other fund sources

Activities:

- i. Conduct survey and mapping of roads and make standard presentation of the areas for rehabilitation in each mill district
- ii. Lobby for funds from DA farm-to-market roads
- iii. Campaign for counterpart funds from each LGU, and other fund sources

A.6. Irrigation and Drainage**Targets:**

- i. Comprehensive irrigation plan for each mill district
- ii. Comprehensive drainage plan for each mill district

Strategies:

- i. Involve each MDDC in the planning
- ii. Gather inputs from each farm
- iii. Identify potential irrigation sources

Activities:

- i. Coordinate with NIA and LGUs to identify potential irrigation sources
- ii. Commission technical parties to prepare comprehensive plans
- iii. Include irrigation and drainage information in planters directory and farm list per mill district

A.7. Block Farming**Targets:**

- i. At least one block farm with minimum 30 hectares area per MDDC
- ii. Productivity of block farms are above targets

Strategies:

- i. Work for consolidation of ARC and small farms
- ii. Provide all farming support to each block farm
- iii. Link block farms to financial institutions

Activities:

- i. Conduct survey and parcellary mapping of each block farm
- ii. Establish baseline data of each block farm
- iii. Lobby for funds from DA farm-to-market roads
- iv. Campaign for counterpart funds from each LGU with identified road section for improvement

B. R & D**B.1. Variety Improvement****Target:**

- i. A variety that is 120 TC/Ha and 3.0 Lkg/TC from new plant to 5th ratoon, based on experimental tests.

Strategies:

- i. Close cooperation of SRA and Philsurin breeding programs
- ii. The same protocol for testing
- iii. Share resources of both breeding institutions

Activities:

- i. Appoint a breeding manager to oversee both breeding programs
- ii. Allow sharing of breeding materials

- iii. Create a breeding team composed of staff from both institutions
- iv. Only one selection process for both breeding institutions

B.2. Variety Suitability**Target:**

- i. At least one variety recommended per planting zone of each MD, based on test results

Strategies:

- i. Identify unique planting zones per MD based on soil, elevation, weather
- ii. Conduct test of potential varieties for each zone together with MDDC

Activities:

- i. Gather data on soil type, elevation and weather for the MD
- ii. Do GIS to identify zones
- iii. Identify test areas for each zone, conduct test with MDDC
- iv. Select the recommended variety for each zone

B.3. Soil Fertility**Targets:**

- i. Increase OM level to __, N to __
- ii. Soil fertility map per MD updated every 2 years

Strategies:

- i. Intensified soil sampling collection based on representative area to scientifically generate a soil fertility map
- ii. Use GIS/GPS technologies

Activities:

- i. Review existing secondary data and prepare a soil sampling map
- ii. Plan out the gathering of soil samples per MD
- iii. Teach farmers how to properly collect soil samples
- iv. Engage a GIS specialist to encode the data and generate the fertility map

B.4. Nutrient Management**Target:**

- i. Protocol on plant nutrition management

Strategies:

- i. Develop capability nutrient requirement determination through leaf tissue analysis and satellite image analysis
- ii. Adopt other applicable techniques on nutrient management of sugarcane

Activities:

- i. Establish a leaf tissue analysis capability
- ii. Develop a program on application of leaf tissue analysis and nutrient management with MDDCs

B.5. Pest Management**Target:**

- i. Updated manual on pest management

Strategies:

- i. Improve existing pest management techniques
- ii. Continue to research better ways of handling pests and develop ways of addressing new-emerging pests

Activities:

- i. Review existing techniques and improve as necessary
- ii. Document and disseminate the techniques to farmers

B.6. Agricultural Engineering**Target:**

- i. Develop the industry capability in providing agricultural engineering services to farmers

Strategies:

- i. Establish an agricultural engineering services unit in the industry
- ii. Identify priority areas for research to increase productivity and/or reduce cost using agricultural engineering interventions

Activities:

- i. Hire personnel
- ii. Conduct survey of felt needs for agricultural engineering services of each MDDC
- iii. Prepare agricultural engineering intervention plan

C. Extension**Target:**

- i. Each MDDC provides full extension services to its farmers

Strategies:

- i. Prepare strategic plan of each MDDC for extension services
- ii. Provide funds and managerial assistance to MDDCs
- iii. Prioritize extension capability build-up of MDDCs instead of SRA and/or Philsurin

Activities:

- i. Revitalize/strengthen the MDDCs organizationally, financially and technically
- ii. Review and improve the coverage and jurisdiction of each MDDC
- iii. Conduct strategic planning of each MDDC
- iv. Establish targets and goals in line with overall industry goal for each MDDC

C.1. Cost Reduction**Target:**

- i. Establish the standard cost for each MD based on various farm sizes and planting zones in the MD

Strategies:

- i. Survey the different cultural practices in the MD and determine the cost for each
- ii. Introduce possible cost reduction measures and improved cultural practice

Activities:

- i. Conduct survey on cultural practices
- ii. Conduct workshops to establish standard costs

C.2. Productivity Improvement**Target:**

- i. Implement a productivity improvement program for each MDDC

Strategies:

- i. Determine the gap between the ideal and actual productivity levels in each MDDC
- ii. Conduct planning sessions to draw up the productivity improvement program.

Activities:

- i. Conduct productivity baseline survey of all farms in the mill district
- ii. Identify the hindrances to productivity improvement and identify activities to hurdle them
- iii. Prepare work and financial plan to implement the productivity improvement program

C.3. Pest and Disease Control**Target:**

- i. Implement a Pest and Disease Control Program for each MDDC

Strategies:

- i. Identify the prevalent and potential pest and diseases in the MD
- ii. Establish a prevention and control protocol to address each pest and disease problem

Activities:

- i. Conduct survey on what pest and disease can occur in all farms
- ii. Identify personnel who can readily address each pest and disease during an outbreak
- iii. Provide standby fund for pest control program.
- iv. Include preventive measures in the pest and disease control program

C.4. Crop Management**Target:**

- i. Manual Good Crop Management for each MDDC

Strategies:

- i. Expand adoption of good crop management practices already used in the MDDC
- ii. Introduce possible improved practices that are scientifically-proven

Activities:

- i. Conduct an inventory of effective crop management practices in the MD
- ii. Document the good practices
- iii. Research on other possible improvements to the crop management practices

C.5. MDDC Operations**Target:**

- i. Locally-managed MDDC operations

SRA seeks fees collected by NFA from sugar importers

Sugarcane industry stakeholders will ask the Aquino administration to turn over funds collected by the National Food Authority (NFA) from the current sugar importations to the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) so that the SRA can use the funds to further mechanize the sugarcane industry.

The money comes from the performance bonds and fees collected by the NFA for the current sugar importations.

The money, sugarcane stakeholders said, could bankroll their needs.

The sugarcane industry will submit a resolution to Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala, for his consideration and endorsement to President Aquino for approval.

The request was aired during a recent dialogue called by Alcala with sugarcane industry stakeholders at the SRA offices in Quezon City.

Aside from the need for additional equipment, the sugarcane industry stakeholders acknowledged that ethanol production from sugarcane is part of the future of the industry.

About 100 sugarcane industry stakeholders attended the dialogue-consultation last week.

Alcala initiated the dialogue to address major concerns and map out the industry's future direction.

This involves increasing the production of sugarcane for both sugar and ethanol; achieve stable domestic supply and prices of sugar, and increasing farmers' incomes.

According to Alcala, those goals will make the country's sugar industry globally competitive following of the effectivity of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA).

Tariff rates on imported sugar from competing ASEAN countries will be gradually reduced from the current 38 percent to only five percent by 2015.

By 2012, tariff rates will further go down to 28 percent, then down to 18 percent by 2013 and 10 percent by 2014

As such, Alcala stressed, "We have to prepare the country, sugarcane farmers, and everyone," adding that "we, therefore, have to increase the production of sugarcane for both sugar and ethanol."

Sugarcane farmers, particularly members of sugar Mill District Development Committees (MDDCs), urged the Aquino administration to provide necessary equipment particularly, tractors, irrigation systems and trucks. . *(Reprinted from the "The Philippine Star", August 9, 2010 issue by Marianne V. Go) ®*

(Gearing up... continued from page 5)

Strategies:

- i. Strengthen the managerial capability of the MDDC
- ii. Adoption of an MDDC Manual of Operation
- iii. Phisurin and SRA personnel will only be support staff

Activities:

- i. Conduct strategic planning of the MDDC
- ii. Improve the organizational capability of the MDDC by hiring personnel and/or training of personnel
- iii. Conduct semi-annual assessment of MDDC operations

C.6. Development communication

Target:

- i. Communication plan for each MDDC

Strategies:

- i. Draw up the communication Plan for each MDDC
- ii. Engage the services of development communications experts to prepare an effective plan

Activities:

- i. Identify the key communication actors in the MDDC
- ii. Establish the communication lines especially in the dissemination of information, technologies, etc.
- iii. Link with other institutions for other important information that will be useful to the MDDC

Sugarcane farm management seminar at BM-TS Mill District

United South VMC Sugarcane Planters Association, Inc. (USVMCSPA) in cooperation with the Sugar Regulatory Administration conducted a seminar on Sugarcane Farm Management at the Office of Senior Citizens Affairs, Murcia on July 21, 2010. It was attended by 81 members of the association from Bacolod City, Murcia, Don Salvador and Bago City.

Topics discussed were; Proper Cultural Management Practices (land preparation, planting, weed control, cultivation, fertilization, harvesting & ratooning), Mitigating the Effects of "El Niño," Cost Reduction Measures, Organic Fertilizer Production, Use of Beneficial Microorganisms, and Factory Operations. Speakers were Dr. Bonifacio Cerbo, Ms. Helen Lobaton, Ms. Ma. Lourdes Dormido and Ms. Corazon Ledesma of SRA. *(R. Velasco & D. Paglumotan)*

Sugarcane management seminars at Bais-URSUMCO Mill District

Updating the sugarcane farmers on the latest technologies and practices of growing sugarcane to increase their production was long envisioned by the URC-URSUMCO management and the Sugar Regulatory Administration.

In line with this, a series of seminars, attended by 126 sugarcane planters, majority of which were small one, were conducted on August 24, 25, 26, 27 and 31, 2010 at URSUMCO. URC-URSUMCO Agriculturist Solveto Tugdang presented a topic on Farm Management specifically in the proper handling of farm resources with sound planning and suitable plan execution; SRA Agriculturist Edgardo M. Adalia, discussed the land preparation, planting, cultivation, harvesting and milling; SRA Mill District Officer Fernando C. Sauro, Jr. handled topics on soil sampling, liming, fertilizer application, weed control, pests/diseases control, variety programming, and SRA sugarcane variety updates; Mr. Abhishik, an Indian Consultant of URC-URSUMCO, gave a lecture on increasing sugarcane production and supply through improved agronomy practices, intercropping, and good ratoon management.

ISO-Certified URC-URSUMCO presented updates on mill improvements, this is done every year to further improve its mill efficiency. Mr. Godofredo V. Talatala from the Mills and Process Department discussed the processes involved in the manufacture of raw sugar and further explained the effects of processing sugarcane juice extracted from poor quality and deteriorated canes. Ms. Vivian R. Lopez, Quality Assurance Manager, also presented the advantages of delivering fresh, clean, and mature sugarcane vis-avis the disadvantages of delivering trashy, immature, burnt and deteriorated sugarcane.

A Certificate of Attendance, signed by the SRA MDO and URC-URSUMCO Operations Manager Mario G. Palma, and pack of URC products were given to each participant. It is the hope of the SRA Mill District Office that through these seminars, an increase in production will be achieved and more quality sugarcane will be delivered to the mill. *(F.C. Sauro, Jr.)*



Series of seminars on Sugarcane Farming at Passi Mill District

Universal Robina Corporation (URC) Passi, in cooperation with the Sugar Regulatory Administration Passi/Santos-Lopez Mill Districts conducted 9 batches of Sugarcane Technology seminars which commenced on September 1, 2010 and ended on October 28, 2010. A team composed of the personnel of SRA Passi Mill District Office led by Mill District Officer Consuelo S. Fortin and the URC group headed by URC Cane Supply Manager Rico Vasquez gave lectures in the different barangays of Passi City, San Enrique, Calinog, Dueñas and Anilao. Participants totalled to 637. Three Indian consultants/observers under the leadership of Mr. Krepal Singh were also with the URC group.

Topics discussed were Organic Farming, Ratoon Management, Land Preparation/Planting, Fertilizing, Harvesting and Variety Programming. A video on correct farm practices was also shown.

The seminars ended with an open forum to clarify some issues and concerns both on milling and farming. *(C.S. FORTIN)*.

Eighty-six Planters attend Sugarcane Management seminar

The Sugar Regulatory Administration in cooperation with the Independent Planters of BISCOM Inc. conducted a seminar on Sugarcane Management last October 20, 2010 at the Binalbagan Municipal Gym. This is to update the sugarcane planters on the latest sugarcane practices.

Resource speakers were Efren D. Landoy, Chief Agriculturist; Valeriano Monton, MDO-Ormoc Mill District; Jade Villarias, MDO-SONEDCO; Ma. Lourdes Dormido, Chemist IV; and, Wilfredo M. Abada, MDO BISCOM. *(W. Abada)*

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The Sugar Link Editor

SRA-LGAREC's enjoyable tree-planting diversion

On July 10, 2010, SRA-LGAREC employees planted 500 seedlings of *acacia mangium* at the water impounding area. Mr. Rex Jinon facilitated the procurement and hauling of the seedlings from the Provincial office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Bacolod City.

After the activity, the participants felt a sense of happiness and fulfilment in doing their share in saving the environment from pollution and flash floods, protection of the water in the impounding area, and in cooling the environment.

The activity was followed by a satisfying lunch with RD&E-Visayas Manager III Dr. Rodrigo E. Tapay. Everybody was grateful for the lunch of beans, langka with pork from the butchered "poor, little" piglet won by Mr. Renato Parohinog and company during the "Sinadya sa La Granja" and one sack of rambutan for dessert.

The participants all hope and pray that the seedlings will grow so that they can proudly say someday that "ONE OF THESE TREES WAS PLANTED BY ME." This will likewise serve as a legacy for the next generation LGAREC family.

Mabuhay! Let us plant trees to rehabilitate the denuded forests and restore the beauty of nature, God has given us. (E.V. Linco)



We planted trees... OPSI Batch 110

Five OPSI participants of Batch 110 Sugarcane Farm Management Training from the Passi Mill District, namely: Marco Berbano, Rogelio Araneta, July Amemerog, Romeo Bullag, Jr. and Nonito Bolido together with Eufemia Linco, Training Specialist I planted 10 seedlings of *acacia mangium* at the eastern side of the OPSI Dormitory on July 10, 2010.

This OPSI tree planting activity materialized when OPSI Batch 110 participants noticed several holes at the eastern side of the OPSI dorm. Eager to leave a sort of legacy, the participants volunteered to plant

the seedlings already laid in their respective holes. These seedlings were scheduled for planting by the officers of Batch 110 but, due to their hectic schedules, the activity was done by the Passi Mill District participants who opted to stay for another day.

This was with the hope that when they return to SRA La Granja several years later, with the seedlings fully-grown, they can proudly say that they planted these trees. (E.V. Linco)

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) yesterday advised the public to prepare for above normal rainfall in the last quarter of the year because of the onset of La Niña phenomenon.

Flaviana Hilario, Chief of Pagasa's Climatology and Agrometry Division, said La Niña is expected to bring more than average rainfall in most parts of the country from October to December. "Based on recent trends and model forecasts, La Niña is likely to persist up to the early part of 2011," Hilario said in a media briefing at the Pagasa head office in Quezon City.

La Niña is defined as cooler than normal sea surface temperatures in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean and is usually associated with the excessive rainfall.

Pagasa senior weather specialist Daisy Ortega said the areas likely to receive above normal rainfall this month are the Cordillera Administrative Region; Region I (Ilocos); Region 2, specifically Cagayan, Isabela and Nueva Viscaya; and Region 3, including Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac and Aurora.

Above normal rainfall is also expected in Region 4-B, composed of the provinces of Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Romblon, and Palawan; and in Region 5 (Bicol) this month.

PAGASA issues La Niña warning



For November, Ortega said areas expected to experience above normal rainfall are CAR, Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, National Capital Region and Region 4-B.

For December, above normal rainfall is expected over the entire Luzon, Region 9 (Zamboanga peninsula), as well as Panay island and Eastern Visayas. Ortega, meanwhile, said above normal rainfall in November would replenish water levels in reservoirs, including Angat Dam in Norzagay, Bulacan, which is suffering from critically low water level.

Angat supplies 97 percent of Metro Manila's water supply.

Hilario also said five to eight tropical cyclones are expected to enter the country in the last quarter of 2010 and are likely to pass through Central and Southern Luzon and the Visayas.

The La Niña phenomenon was last experienced in the country in 2007. The weather condition typically lasts for nine to 12 months and usually follows the occurrence of the El Niño phenomenon.

The brunt of El Niño was felt nationwide from the last quarter of last year to June this year. *(Reprinted from the "The Philippine Star", October 5, 2010 issue by Helen Flores).*

Armyworms, Again!

After the flood brought about by Typhoon "Frank" in 2008, armyworms swarmed the sugarcane plantations in Iloilo province. After a lapse of one year, "El Nino," a prolonged dry spell, stunted, and in many cases, caused sugarcane plants to die especially in elevated areas with thin top soil and in sandy soils without irrigation. After which, armyworms came to feed on the leaves of the growing plant.

Are calamities coupled with pestilence? Be it flood or drought, pests come after it. That is what happened in Passi and Santos-Lopez mill districts. As of this writing, two farmers came to report the incidence of armyworm infestation; both came from the municipality of Anilao, Iloilo.

A visit to the CRCI farms showed defoliated sugarcane plants, only the midrib was left in some of them. Worms can be seen beneath the leaf sheath and at the base of the plant, even hiding on weeds. Luckily, only 2.0 hectares of approximately 100 hectares was damaged until it was detected.

Since armyworms are nocturnal, night time spraying with either pyrethroid or phosphatic insecticide was organized, as recommended by SRA Mill District Officer Elmer Blandres. Manual weeding was recommended to expose the worms at the base of the plant to the spraymen and to the predators.

Controlling armyworms is easy if there is a vigilance and knowledge of their nature. Early detection and a weed-free plantation are factors that are most advantageous to the farmer in the control of armyworms. *(E.P. Blandres)*

SRA participates in GIS Application Training for Research and Planning



GIS Training participants

The Western Visayas Agriculture and Resources Research and Development Consortium (WESVARRDEC) organized and conducted, on January 19-21, 2011 in Iloilo City, a research revitalization program, Capability Building Training on Geographic Information System Application for Research and Planning, for consortium members. A total of 35 participants from different government agencies participated in the training including three personnel from the SRA Extension and Technical Services Division, namely: Irene Cruz, Paulino Oñal, Jr. and Ma. Lucia Sanchez.

Participants were given exercises on software familiarization, methods and techniques on GIS data conversion, GIS query and use of tables, map projections, georeferencing, GPS data integration into GIS, and vector and raster data overlays.

Application of the GIS technology, in the monitoring of areas planted to sugarcane, as well as in researches and other fields, is of great significance and benefit in the presentation of data both for the SRA clients and management. The three-day training program, altogether, was very informative but quite intensive. *(MLC Sanchez)*

BISDDFI hires new manager

The Binalbagan Sugar District Development Foundation, Inc. hired a new Manager after Mr. Crispin C. Guinalon resigned last November 2010. The new Manager is Joseph Quirico Ray G. Buenaflor of Brgy. Sn. Teodoro, Binalbagan, Negros Occidental, A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness from University of St. La Salle, Bacolod City, Mr. Buenaflor's last employment was with QUEDANCOR. He assumed his first day in office on November 17, 2010. Young, energetic and hard working, the new manager usually reports to office early and leaves around 8:00 – 9:00 in the evening, thus making BISDDFI efficient and putting it on a roll. *(P.M. Abada)*

BISDDFI holds Christmas party

The Binalbagan Sugar District Development Foundation Inc. held its Christmas party last December 1, 2010 at the SRA Bldg., Binalbagan, Negros Occidental. The party was attended by the members of the Board of Directors; Efren D. Landoy, Chief Agriculturist of, SRA-Visayas Extension and Technical Services Division; planters from the different Planters' Associations in BISCOM Mill District and families. The affair was not only highlighted by an inspirational message by Binalbagan Mayor Hon. Alejandro Y. Mirasol but also the giving of the 13th month bonus, food subsidy and door prizes to the employees. *(P.M. Abada)*

8th OPSI Alumni Convention



OPSI AFI officials with SRA Admin. M.R.B. Martin



GUESTS

