

## 2014 Pampanga and Tarlac OPSI Trainings

### *Successful OPSI Trainings for Pampanga and Tarlac Farmer Leaders Staged*

The SRA Extension team (L & M) staged successful back-to-back OPSI trainings for farmer leaders in the Pampanga and Tarlac mill districts at the Luzon Agricultural Research and Extension Center (LAREC) in Pampanga on October 8-9 and November 4-5, 2014, respectively.

In both occasions, LAREC Chief Mr. Marcelino Guevarra delivered the Welcome Remarks. He stressed the importance of holding such activity to the participants, especially when it comes to achieving higher productivity. He wished each batch a fruitful stay in LAREC and expressed hope that they would learn a lot from the seminar.

For the Pampanga OPSI, Mr. Enrique Villanueva, Vice-Chair of the PASUDECO Cooperative Marketing Association, Inc. gave some inspirational words, particularly citing the commendable effort from the SRA Extension team in putting up the two-day seminar. Meanwhile, Mr. Dean Guevarra, Resident Manager of Sweet Crystals presented some mill updates. According to him, they are already 80-83% ready for the next milling season and are investing on modern farm implements like the Boiler Travelling Grate, Head-on Cutter and Truck Tipper.



First day topics included “How Sugar is Being Made and Shared in the District” as presented by Mr. Fernando Corpuz (Manager III, RDE), “SRA’s System of Regulating Sugar” as explained by Ms. Celerina Ching (Regulation Officer assigned in Pampanga) and “How to Increase Sugarcane Production and Productivity: A Farmer’s Practice” courtesy of no less than SRA Board Member Mr. Pablito Sandoval.

Said topics were warmly received by the attendees especially Mr. Sandoval’s which is motivational for small farmers. He revealed his success formula starting with: Deep Tillage through Land Preparation, Early Crop Establishment, Use of HYV, Proper Fertilization, Pests and Disease Control, Timely Harvesting, Ratoon Management and Hard Work/Persistence. As his parting shot, the respectable Board Member challenged the audience, “There’s no such thing as barren soil, only barren minds. Go beyond the soil’s physical limitation. Farmers should be able to overcome the odds!”



The following day saw other members of the Extension team in full action as they handled the different topics for lecture: Dr. Dina Padilla-Fernandez, Chief Agriculturist (“The Philippine Sugar Industry Situationer”); Mr. Adel Catuira, Senior Agriculturist (“Understanding the Sugarcane Plant”); Ms. Evelyn Estanislao, Senior Science Research Specialist (“Soil & Nutrient Requirements of Sugarcane”); Ms. Agnes Casupanan,

Science Research Specialist from LAREC (“Pests and Diseases of Sugarcane”) and the tandem of Dr. Dina Padilla-Fernandez and Mr. Joel Ronario, Mill District Officer of Tarlac (“Management and Decision-making Skills in Sugarcane Farming”).

Interestingly, the same training was conducted for the Tarlac farmer-leaders and the Extension team received a warm reception once again from the participants. This time around, Mr. Edmund Yasay, the Regulation Officer assigned in Tarlac spoke on “SRA’s System of regulating Sugar.”

Two representatives from the Central Azucarera de Tarlac namely, Mr. Francis Hernandez (Field Technician) and Mr. Marco Mercurio (Head of Research and Development) took turns in giving mill updates, much to the interest of the attendees.



Their report zeroed in on intensification of sugarcane planting in the area, expansion of new areas and assistance on the following: loan, tractor and harvesting. Some of the participants voiced out their concerns like in the area of tractor assistance, there were services not rendered, which the CAT representatives attributed to lack of units. There was also the issue of ticketing. Since there is mill capacity to be observed, there are limited tickets. Everyone is given a ticket but sometimes, it’s not sufficient for their need. The suggestion given by Mr. Hernandez was that one cluster can give allocation of tickets to each member who is in need of more.

Acting as host for the two OPSI seminars was Mr. Joseph Peter Gonzales, Training Specialist II.