More Than Just Rice and Corn

Sugar Cane may be ranked next to rice and corn (begrudgingly!) in terms of importance among plantation crops. However the amount of support it gets from government (aside from SRA, of course) may be nothing compared to these two.

Like other plantation crops, sugar cane needs a lot of water during certain stages of its growth. The industry’s annual cane crop however largely depends on rain for its water source, as only a handful of districts, and farmers for that matter, actually irrigate their cane fields. Past surveys reveal that only 9% of sugar cane farms in the whole country apply irrigation. Of course this does not include the few which receive “fertigation”, that is, (usually) distillery wastewaters, or slops, treated/spiked or otherwise, being applied to cane fields as irrigation water.

The practice is popular in Batangas farms where distilleries abound, and also in Bukidnon, using mill wastewaters. The practice may actually be more functional for the mills and distilleries as they acquire ready and handy recipient of factory wastes/discharges. But then it must be considered that while the canes may only need water on certain periods, the factories discharge waste in their everyday operation.

When approached for possible irrigation projects/arrangements, the National Irrigation Administration (NIA), DA’s prime institution for irrigation, would distant itself instantly (but reverently, nonetheless) from the discussion saying that their mandate is only for rice and 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 (Continued on p. 8)
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 Merculio (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.

The Bicol OPSI was warmly received as well. LAREC’s Ms. Alicia Burcer, Senior Science Research Specialist delivered the Welcome Remarks. She cited the importance of the three-day training, saying that it would greatly help the Bicolano planters in obtaining higher productivity. Since it was the participants’ first time in LAREC, Ms. Burcer acquainted them with the place through her AVP presentation which featured the center’s main areas and its respective function. She wished everyone a fruitful stay and hoped for the event’s success.

Newly-appointed Pensumil MDDC Chair Engr. Raul Carreras delivered the inspirational talk. He said that the OPSI training was a vital undertaking for their group, in order to gain more knowledge on technology. He encouraged the body to focus on the seminar, apply/adopt the technology they’d learn and eventually share it with other members of their association. Engr. Carreras advised the participants as well to practice “vertical expansion”
to combat the problem on AFTA when 2015 ushers in. This means taking good care and cultivating the existing farm in order to gain higher yield, 40%-100% for it to be profitable. Engr. Carreras, himself a Gawad Saka Award recipient as Outstanding Sugarcane Farmer in 2004 also revealed to the group’s delight the propagation of the variety Phil. 99-1793 and come June next year, these will be released to Pensumil planters.

After Engr. Carreras’ insightful message, Pensumil’s Chief Chemist Ms. Salud Bustamante took the floor to give some vital mill updates. Following said topic was “Sugar Situationer in the Philippines” as presented by Chief Agriculturist (L & M) Dr. Dina Padilla-Fernandez, “How Sugar is Being Made and Shared in the District” as tackled by Mr. Joel Ronario (Mill District Officer, Tarlac) and “SRA’s System of Regulating Sugar” as explained by Mr. Rahman Dunton (Regulation Officer assigned in Pensumil).

The following day started with a farm tour in LAREC in which the attendees enjoyed and learned a lot about several sugarcane varieties in the center. They were guided by several LAREC personnel. After this, a meaty and lengthy lecture from SRA Board Member Pablito Sandoval about “How to Increase Sugarcane Production and Productivity: A Farmer’s Practice” followed. Said topic was warmly received by the attendees since Ka Lito’s rise as a model farmer is inspiring. Again, he revealed his success formula. As his parting shot, the respectable Board Member challenged the audience to overcome the odds no matter what.

From there, the Extension team went into full flow in the presentation of their respective lecture. Mr. Joel Ronario started the ball rolling with his topic on “Understanding the Sugarcane Plant” followed by Ms. Evelyn Estanislao, Senior Science Research Specialist who discussed “Soil & Nutrient Requirements of Sugarcane” and Ms. Agnes Casupanan, Science Research Specialist from LAREC who tackled “Pests and Diseases of Sugarcane.” The participants truly enjoyed each session as they admitted it was like going back to school and learning the basics of sugarcane growing.

In the third and final day of the OPSI training, the participants had the chance of visiting a progressive farm in Murcia, Concepcion, Tarlac courtesy of Mr. Joel Ronario. This was the Vulcan Sugar Farming Corporation with Mr. Edgar Sumat as Operations Manager and Mr. Romy Corpuz as Farm Manager. They were able to witness various farm activities and practices observed during the visit like planting using a mechanical planter and harvesting using a mechanical cane harvester. They also marveled on the varieties planted there. The Pensumil farmer leaders were really thankful for the experience during their three-day seminar. According to them, it was a perfect combination of learning and fun and that they would surely apply all the learnings they gained when they go back to Bicol.

Meanwhile, the last OPSI training in Cagayan proved to be as triumphant. Mr. Martin Alviar, Operations Manager of the Carsumco Sugar Central delivered the Welcome Remarks in which he cited the importance of the seminar and encouraged the

(Continued on p. 5)
EWA Seminars Staged in Bukidnon

For this particular quarter, several EWA seminars were successfully conducted at the Bukidnon Mill District for the benefit of the sugarcane planters in the area. These were sponsored by the BUSCO Sugar Milling Company, Inc.

On November 19, 2014, a “Sugarcane Technology Seminar” was held at Jocel’s Garden in Valencia City. The total number of participants was 33, with 26 males and 7 females.

First to take the floor was Mr. Edgar D. Grino, Jr., AVP-General Administration Group and Cane Supply Officer of BUSCO who presented an overview and gave some pertinent updates about their company. He even lectured on some of the technologies relevant to sugarcane farming.

In the afternoon session, Bukidnon Mill District Officer Mr. Wilfredo Mapano and agriculturists Mr. Arthur Saludes, Mr. Alan Buque and Mr. Ismael Braga took turns as they discussed the following essential topics: “Land Preparation and Planting and Variety Programming”, “Cultivation and Weeding”, “Pests and Diseases Control”, “Soil Sampling”, “Liming and Fertilization” and “Harvesting and Ratooning.”

The same seminars were also held at the Kiharong Barangay Hall in Maramag on November 25, 2014; November 26, 2014, at the GUE’s Garden in Poblacion, Quezon and finally, on December 3, 2014, at the Barangay Hall of Linabo in Malaybalay City.

SRA Conducts Demo Farm Projects
- Adel Catuira

The Sugar Regulatory Administration recently conducted demo farm projects on the mill districts of Tarlac, Davao and Bukidnon. Said undertakings focused on the utilization of recommended varieties of sugarcane in increasing cane and sugar production in the different mill districts in Luzon and Mindanao. Each demo farm was conducted on a one-hectare farm of selected co-operators and used varieties that proved to be productive and adaptable to the chosen district as the innovation for the demo against the farmer’s chosen variety. Every demo farm has a total budget of Php 90,000. A MOA for these demo-farms was executed between the co-operators and SRA (represented by the Administrator).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MILL DISTRICT</th>
<th>VARIETIES</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>Cooperator</th>
<th>DATE PLANTED</th>
<th>% Germination</th>
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<td>DAVAO</td>
<td>Farmer’s practice vs Phil 80-13</td>
<td>Talunan, Nagaoy, Davao del Sur</td>
<td>MDDC</td>
<td>1/19/15</td>
<td>84.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUKIDNON</td>
<td>VMC 2000-343 vs Phil 2003-1389</td>
<td>Calao-calao, Don Carlos, Bukidnon</td>
<td>Emma Braga</td>
<td>1/26/15</td>
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<td>BUKIDNON</td>
<td>VMC 2000-343 vs Phil 2003-1389</td>
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<td>Felix Berou</td>
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<td>81.48%</td>
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<td>PS 862 vs Phil 99-1793</td>
<td>Lourdes, San Miguel, Tarlac</td>
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<td>12/13/14</td>
<td>85.00%</td>
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(Tawag Pansin . . . mula sa p. 7)

Block Farm ay itinaguyod ng SRA upang mapaunlad ang anihing asukal ng mga maliliit na sugarcane farmers.

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Maligayang Pasko at Masaganang Bagong Taon!!!
Don Pedro MDDFI’s New Extension Office

The Don Pedro MDDFI inaugurated its new Extension office located at Guinhawa, Tuy, Batangas on December 12, 2014.

For its features, the new office boasts of a conference room, a receiving area and a dormitory that can accommodate up to six occupants. There is also a center section that can be used in the conduct of seminars/trainings. For this purpose, even a huge number of participants (like 50 people) can be accommodated in here.

Interestingly, the new Don Pedro MDDFI Extension Office was built primarily to serve the clientele better, proximity-wise, considering that it’s just near the main office.- Celso Ersando

The new Don Pedro MDDFI Extension Office can accommodate even up to 50 or more participants in their training hall and can accommodate few guests.

SRA Stages Livelihood Technology Training in Kalinga

The Sugar Regulatory Administration successfully conducted one livelihood technology training for sugarcane farmers in Kalinga on October 22-23, 2014.

The team composed of Mr. Marcelino Guevarra (LAREC Chief), Mr. Benjamin Manlapat (Senior Science Research Specialist), Ms. Rosa Tan (Engineer II) and Mr. Lito Caranguian (Mill District Officer, Cagayan) was warmly received by participants from Tinglayan.

As an opener, no less than Hon. Mayor Johnny Maymaya, Sr. officially welcomed everyone to the occasion. He expressed gratitude to the SRA contingent for the undertaking and hoped the select audience will learn a lot and enjoy the lecture. After which, Mr. Guevarra and Mr. Manlapaz took turns in discussing the day’s important topics under “The Sugarcane Plant and Cultural Practices in Sugarcane Growing” namely, land preparation, planting and re-planting, fertilization, cultivation and weeding, irrigation and drainage.

In the afternoon, topics tackled were: pest and disease control, harvesting and post harvesting practices, ratoon and nursery management. Capping the day’s activities was the lecture of Mr. Caranguian on farm planning and recording plus issues on the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), ASEAN Economic Integration and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

The second day was more interactive as it was devoted to the discussion and actual demonstration regarding livelihood projects like: wine/basi-making, vinegar-making and muscovado processing. Ms. Tan was the point person for said activities.

The participants were also taught on the actual proper planting of cane points in the field. They planted fifteen sacks of cane points consist of fifteen types of HYV’s in just one lot to monitor the adaptable variety in the area.

Before receiving their Certificates of Participation, the attendees were made to join an open forum followed by the organization of their cooperative. Mr. Caranguian led the election of the new set of Board of Directors along with the MAO of Tinglayan.- Lito Caranguian

(Last Quarter OPSI... from p. 1)

participants to adapt new farming technologies in order to obtain higher yield. The same set of topics was tackled with resource speakers Mr. Sandoval, Dr. Fernandez, Ms. Estanislao, Mr. Ronario, Mr. Catuira and Mr. Nelson Cacayorin, Regulation Officer for Carsumco.- Joseph Peter Gonzales
To show support to the nationwide campaign against child labor, the SRA Gender and Development TWG and select RDE personnel (Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao) recently attended a “Trainers’ Training on Child Labor” sponsored by World Vision. The successful event was held at the nature-themed Balay Indang in Cavite.

With the main goal of obtaining a broader and deeper understanding on the timely and relevant topic of “Child Labor” that would be integrated in next year’s Gender Awareness Trainings and OPSI’s, the participants learned a lot from the modules presented by the speakers/facilitators coming from ABK 3 LEAP at World Vision Development Foundation, Inc. headed by Mr. Jason Befus (Operations Manager), Ms. Daphne Culanag (Project Director), Mr. Dan Braza (Program Coordinator, Sugar Industry Foundation, Inc.) and Ms. Judy Ann Gonzaga (Advocacy Consultant).

Dr. Dina Padilla-Fernandez, SRA-GAD Vice-Chair and ESD Chief for Luzon and Mindanao, welcomed the group and gave a brief background of the activity. She noted that SRA is mandated to uplift the living condition of its sugarcane workers. As such, the agency shall devote huge attention and ensure the welfare of its sugarcane farming families especially the children.

The opening topic was “Perspectives on Child Labor and Hazardous Work in Agriculture” which was discussed by Ms. Culanag. She shed light on the rights of children, reasons why children work, what hazardous work is for children and why working children are more vulnerable. She followed it up with the “Legal Framework for Eliminating Hazardous Child Labor” that tackled the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, ILO Convention 138 and 190, Philippine Laws related to Child Labor like RA 7610, RA 7658 and RA 9231.

One of the affair’s vital presentations was about the project ABK 3 LEAP. “ABK” means Pag-aaral ng Bata Para sa Kinabukasan while “LEAP” stands for Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy and Protection to Reduce Child Labor in the Sugarcane Areas. Ms. Culanag proudly explained the integrated strategy being adapted by the group in its aim to reduce Child Labor in sugarcane areas. The said approach includes: access to quality education, skills training youth, employment, improved livelihood for families, improved social protection and services access, build capacity of institutions to effectively address Child Labor, increase knowledge through research, strengthen/enforce Child Labor policies, build partnership for greater impact and increase the awareness of stakeholders.

In the afternoon, Mr. Braza and Ms. Gonzaga alternately tackled “Child Labor in Sugarcane Farms: Children’s Work Environment” which tried to answer pertinent questions such as: “Where are the children in all activities/phases in sugarcane production,” Are there age and...
In anyayahan ng BAFESPA at LUZONFED (Planters’ Federation) ang kinatawan ng LTFRB noong Oktubre 14, 2014 upang linawin ang pagkuha ng prangkisa para sa hauling trucks ng mga sugar planters.

Ipinaliwanag ng mga sugar planters na ang ginagamit nilang panghakot ng kanilang tubo upang ipa-loo sa BSCI at CADP ay ari nila kaya hindi na dapat kumuha pa ng prangkisa sa LTFRB.

Lilinawin pa sa tanggapan ng LTFRB ang bagay na ito. Itinagubilin ng LTFRB na magdala sila ng listahan ng planters at pag-aari nilang truck na may plate at body number upang pagkasunduan ang patakaran ng LTFRB tungkol sa hauling ng tubo.

Dumalo rin ang kinatawan ng PAGASA na nagpaliwanag ng maaaring asahang panahon mula buwan ng Oktubre 2014 hanggang Mayo 2015. Tinukoy ang mga lugar na may ulan at walang ulan sa mga buwan na banggit.

Mahalagang malaman ang lagay ng panahon para sa schedule ng pagtatanim.


Ipinaliwanag ni SRA Board Member Pablito S. Sandoval ang ginagawa niyang diversification sa kanyang tubuhan tulad ng pagtagatanim ng kamatis at ampalaya. Dahil off-season kaya mataas ang halaga. Kumikita na ang kanyang mga tauhan kahit hindi pa nagpapa-loo ng tubo. Itinagubilin niya na mahalaga ang pananalangin upang pagpalain at umani ng karamat sa lahat ng itatanim. Huwag ding kalilimutan na ibahagi sa kapitbahay ang ilang bahagi ng aanihin.

Naging panahuhan pandangal si Adm. Ma. Regina Bautista-Martín ng SRA. Nagbibay siya ng ilang mahahalagang mensahe sa kalagayan ng industriya ng asukal. Sinabi niya na hindi dapat manganan sa magiging presyo ng asukal dahil taon-taon naman ay tumataas ang halaga nito mula 1,000/Lkg hanggang 1,400/Lkg tulad noong nakaraang taon.

Sa diversification naman, maraming paggagamitan ng tubo tulad ng ethanol production, bio-energy at distillery plant. Kailangan pa na nating pagbutihin ang sugarcane farming upang dumami pa ang aanihin.

Nabasa ko sa diyaryo noong Oktubre 12, 2014 na ang UPLB ay pinagkalooban ng Endowment Fund na halagang P7.5 million mula sa Roxas Holding, Inc. para sa Research and Development Initiative in the Sugar Industry. Ang kasusdanyay na nilagdaan nina Chancellor Rex Victor Cruz ng UPLB at Chairman Pedro Roxas ng RHI.

Sa isasagawang pananaliksik ng UPLB, pag-aaralan ang potential ng sugarcane upang tutaloy at makinabang sa kabila ng pagkawala ng taripa ng asukal na ipinatutupad ng ASEAN.

Ang RHI ang nangangasiwa ng pinakamalaking bio-sugar at bio-energy sa Pilipinas na nasa CADP Batangas at La Carlota at Roxol Bio-Energy Corp sa Negros Occidental.

Maganda ang ginawang office building ng DPMDDFI sa loob ng garahe nito na nasa Brgy. Guinhawa, Tuy, Batangas. Ang building ay dalawang container van sa mga sugar planters kung saan’y kasya ang 50 participants, may elevated platform para sa speakers at putting background para sa Power Point presentations.

Nakipagpulong ang mga enrollees ng tatlong Block Farms sa Don Pedro at Balayan Mill Districts sa kinatawan ng Philsucor at SRA noong ika-13 ng Oktubre 2014 sa CADP Compound, Nasugbu, Batangas.

Ang pulong ay pinangasiwaan ni SRA Board Member Pablito Sandoval. Humihiling ng Crop Loan ang mga Block Farms sa Philsucor para sa Crop Year 2014-2015.

Ipinaliwanag ng Philsucor na handa silang tumulong upang mapataas ang produksyon ng small planters na kasapi sa Block Farms. Ang mga dokumento na dapat ihanda upang mabayaran sa Crop Loan na may interest na 6% per annum ay ipinaliwanag.

Itinagubilin ni Board Member Sandoval na gawin efficient ang sugarcane farming upang matiyak na mababayaran ang Crop Loan sa takdang panahon. Sinabi na na ang
gender differences in their work,” and “What work-related problems do they experience?”

There was an active discussion on the Voluntary Code of Conduct (VCC) that highlighted the provinces which have VCC namely, Bukidnon, Batangas and Negros Occidental. In line with this, participants agreed that there ought to be a VCC per mill district and that there should be a section in the VCC which says that any violation may be prosecuted under RA 7610. The participants also enjoyed the role-playing portion in which they were divided into groups and made to dramatize the lives of some working children in sugarcane farms as a form of case study analysis.

The second day of the training started with Mr. Befus’ lecture on the “Occupational Safety and Hazard (OSH) Concerns for Children Working in Sugarcane Farms.” He presented the types of occupational risks and the matrix as to its degree, whether low, moderate or high.

The final activity was the making of an Action Plan in which the four teams (GAD-L & M and Visayas and Extension-L & M and Visayas) collaborated on how to disseminate awareness and help in the elimination of Child Labor in the sugar industry. In the plenary presentations, the following methods were cited: GST’s (Gender Sensitivity Trainings), Farm Management Seminars, OPSI, Child Labor Seminar for SRA Extension employees, EWA seminars, planters’ associations’ general assembly and the media (specifically, radio).

The SRA-GAD (L & M) will start integrating Child Labor awareness in their on-going GST’s for this year. For 2015, the group came up with the tagline: “Towards a Unified and Better Outreach (TUBO): Child Labor-Free Advocates for National Empowerment (CANE) Working for Sustainable Growth and Resiliency (SUGAR)” in which much more time will be devoted to the discussion of Child Labor in the seminar. For the Bacolod contingent, they will start the integration during the first quarter of 2015. In the case of the Extension teams, they will start during the last quarter of this year. World Vision was pleased with the turn-out of the training, learning that the participants were eager to push the advocacy. In fact, they asked for the formation of an SRA core group that will plan the design of the modules with them. They also asked for a full list of all GAD and Farm Management trainers, Extension workers and Mill District Officers to help them plan their next steps.

Joseph Peter Gonzales

(Edited... from p. 1)

corn. Additionally, NIA irrigation projects are usually big, as dams and impounding, thus smaller scale ones are suggested for sugar cane, such as shallow tube wells (STWs).

Sugar cane has a similar luck when it comes to farm mechanization. While the need for the same intensifies every year, what with the dwindling supply of farm labor, cane farms lag conspicuously to rice and corn at present in terms of farm horsepower-to-hectare ratio. And as harvesting is the phase where farm labor is mostly required in large numbers, cane harvesters/services are scarce, and expensive. For the longest time since its existence, the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) devoted its focus on various machineries for rice and corn. However, upon behest of SRA Board Member for the Planters Pablito “Ka Lito” Sandoval, times could, like the climate, be a-changing.

PhilMech, along with the Metal Industry Research and Development Center (MIRDC) of the DOST received late last year grants from the PCAARRD for the design and prototyping development of sugar cane mechanical harvesters which will be applicable for local operations. Already, these two government agencies have partnered with the SRA in these projects, with the objective of providing the industry with accessible and affordable mechanical harvesters which are adaptable to local cane farm practices and conditions.

These government institutions may have been subjected to the realization, albeit long time coming, that there is actually more beyond mere rice fields and corn lands in Philippine agriculture.